

Sexual Exploitation and Young People in Care

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New grooming scandal: Girls in care homes 'gang-raped'

Police investigate claims that gangs of Asian men abused vulnerable under-age girls in the North West

MailOnline

Scandal of care firms that failed to protect girls from grooming: Teenager in children's home died from overdose after being targeted for sex

By JAMES TOZER, DANIEL MARTIN and NAZIA PARVEEN

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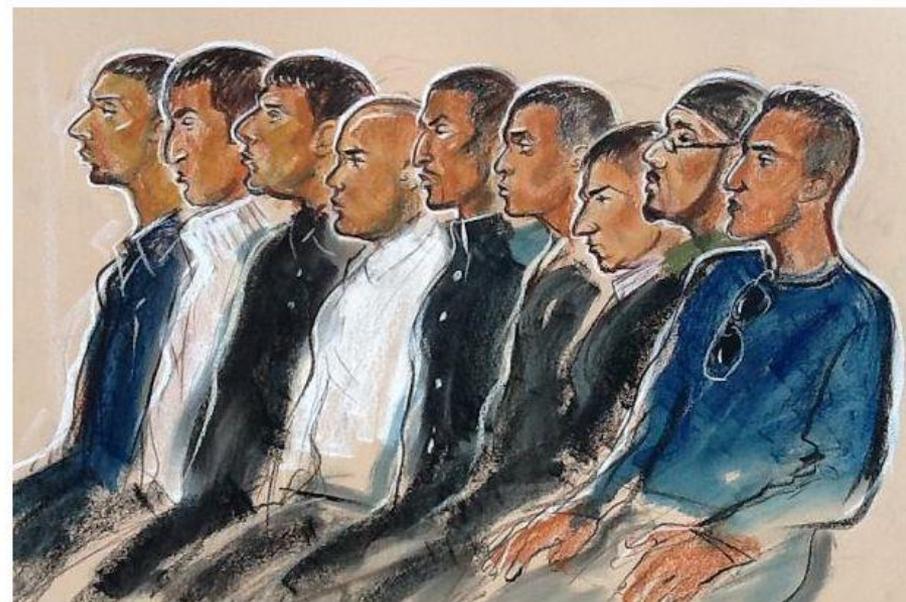
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A network of private children's homes was under fire last night over failures to protect youngsters from street grooming gangs.

As MPs accused the firms – which charge councils over £250,000 for each troubled youngster – of letting



Police knew girl went missing 126 times, grooming trial told



Andrew Norfolk

Last updated at 12:01AM, February 28 2013

A girl identified by care staff as the victim of an adult sex-grooming network went missing from her children's home 126 times in 15 months, a court was told yesterday.

Nine alleged members of a sex ring deny a total of 79 charges
Priscilla Coleman/MB Media

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The 13-year-old told Oxford residential workers in 2007 that she was

people > Safeguarding children >

Reforms to protect children in care from sexual exploitation - OCC report

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Updated: 01 November 2012

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What do we know

- Data suggests that while most sexually exploited young people being supported are not in care, a disproportionate number are (21% - Jago et al. 2011; 35% - CEOP, 2011)
- Historical links well established
- Existing vulnerabilities of this group
 - Within the context of worse outcomes for children in care
 - Disrupted family life, abuse, disadvantage, problematic parenting, disengagement from education, going missing, drug and alcohol misuse, poor health and well-being (Scott and Skidmore, 2006)
- These can then be exacerbated through risks that are found within the care system itself

Care as a risk factor (1)

- Insufficient supply of carers
- Hierarchy of placements – lack of early intervention
- Multiple moves/out of area placements
- Private care homes/connection to local safeguarding bodies and procedures

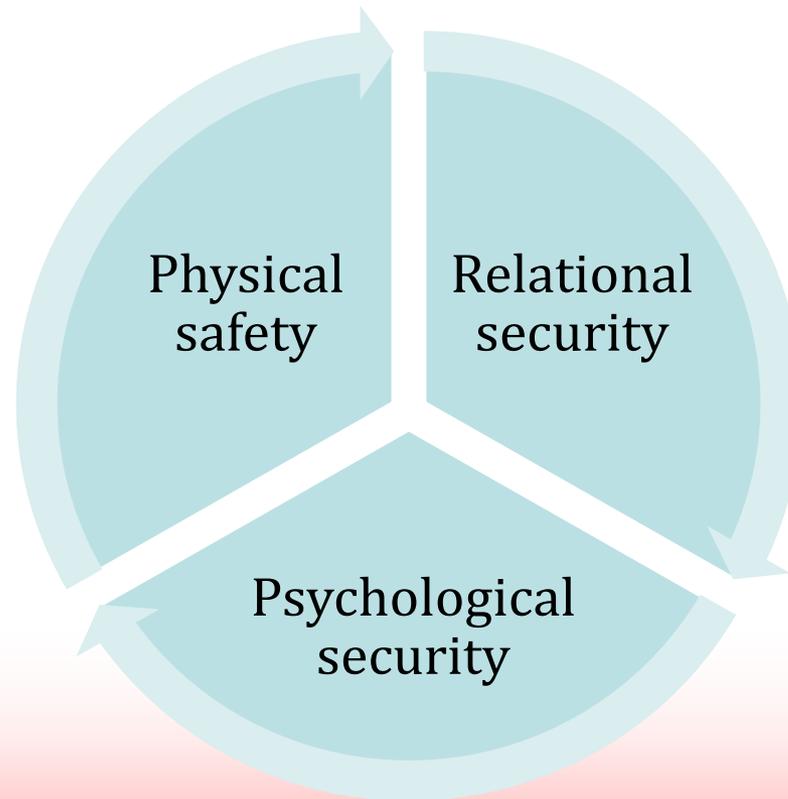
Care as a risk factor (2)

- Lack of training on CSE for staff and carer / Inappropriate perceptions of young people = poor safeguarding
- Lack of resourced, strategic partnerships
- Lack of specialist services/roles
- Concentration of young people in homes can attract abusers
- Peer recruitment and influence
- Going missing – recording, reporting, police response

The DfE/Barnardo's Safe Accommodation Project

- Barnardo's running a 2 year pilot project to provide safer accommodation to sexually exploited/trafficked young people
 - 16 specialist foster placements across six regions
 - Training for up to 440 LA practitioners each year
 - Direct work with 44 young people each year
- Aims: the provision of safe/stable accommodation that supports recovery from exploitative relationships and improving front-line practice in safeguarding
- Evaluation – comparative case study (interviews, logs)

Safety is multi-layered



From 'Constructs of Care for Looked After Children and Young People affected by Sexual Exploitation' : Forthcoming Shuker (2013)

Physical safety

- Remove child from source of harm – out of authority placements, secure accommodation
- Often described as a ‘sticky plaster’ - can create space and respite, but often abusive/risky relationships pick up when the young person returns to the area
- Short-term protective measures e.g. restricting movement, access to phones and internet
- Interpreted as punishment, reinforces negative labels
- **How can we attain physical safety in other ways?**
- Early intervention, safety work, harm reduction, disruption tactics and police action against perpetrators

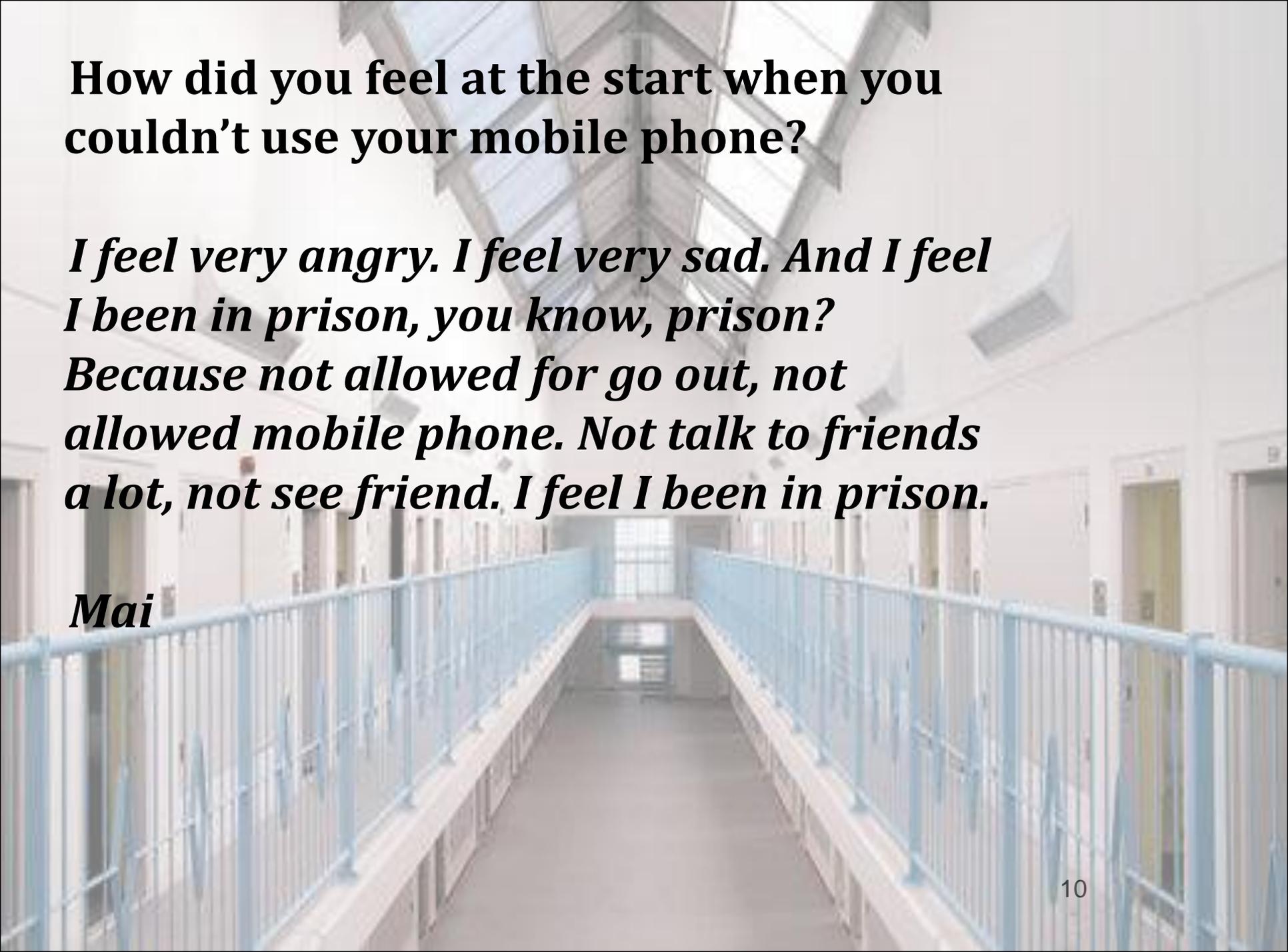
What safety measures can feel like

It reminds me, all this...do this, do this and not this, that's why it reminds me exactly what I was going through before. I cannot choose. I have no personality. Do what we tell you. Do it that way. Do it that way.

Clarisse

Worry for children too much, all the time try to hold me like a baby, give me a little bit freedom I want to tell . Some don't care about children. Some care. Some too high, some care too much. I just want medium .

Too tight . Tien



How did you feel at the start when you couldn't use your mobile phone?

I feel very angry. I feel very sad. And I feel I been in prison, you know, prison? Because not allowed for go out, not allowed mobile phone. Not talk to friends a lot, not see friend. I feel I been in prison.

Mai

‘Disruption by distance’. What is needed to hold young person in?

- Quick provision of appropriate education placement
- A directive carer with time and energy to be available 24-7
- ‘Front-loading’ a placement with activities that
 - Keep a young person occupied and not focused on what they have left
 - Enable a relationship with carers to be built more quickly
 - Provide element of excitement that may be otherwise achieved by going missing/putting themselves at risk
 - Can invest in their interests and build self-esteem
- Shared agreement of safety measures and risk level so young person can’t exploit poor communication

Safeguarding can be accepted when embedded in positive relationships

*Like, when I came here my phone was my world. I was gobsmacked they took it off me. And now, really, I'd be fine to have a phone back, but I'd be fine without a phone. But like, it did take quite a while to get to this point. I think it's like Jenny encouraging me, 'cause if Jenny weren't here, I'd still be doing weed, still smoking, still telling the police to go do one pretty much. I'd probably be in juvy or something. **Cara***

Javad and Molly they like have one rule which is if you're going out they like to know where you are. And for the first couple of months I thought it was one of the worst things, how rubbish is this rule?

Then I got to think, at least they know where I am and I'm safe . They'd pick me up and this and that

I've always wanted, like, a Mum and Dad who would love ya and that. I've never had that! And Javad and Molly made sure I've got that now.

Mohammed



Relational security

- Children in care already in need of a 'secure base'
- Social worker turnover is a recurring theme
- Multiple placement moves undermine continuity of relationships, and out of authority is even harder.
- Existing relationships may include peers and adults who present some risk to the young person
- Young people may already distrust professionals and need work that is flexible, creative and therapeutic
- **Young people need attachment to a consistent, supportive, non-abusive adult**

Relational security

It is not the one-off incident that might damage the young person's longer term ability to cope; it is the ongoing, somewhat relentless experience of abuse, rejection, change and instability that impacts negatively on the young person's ability to manage, to be resilient

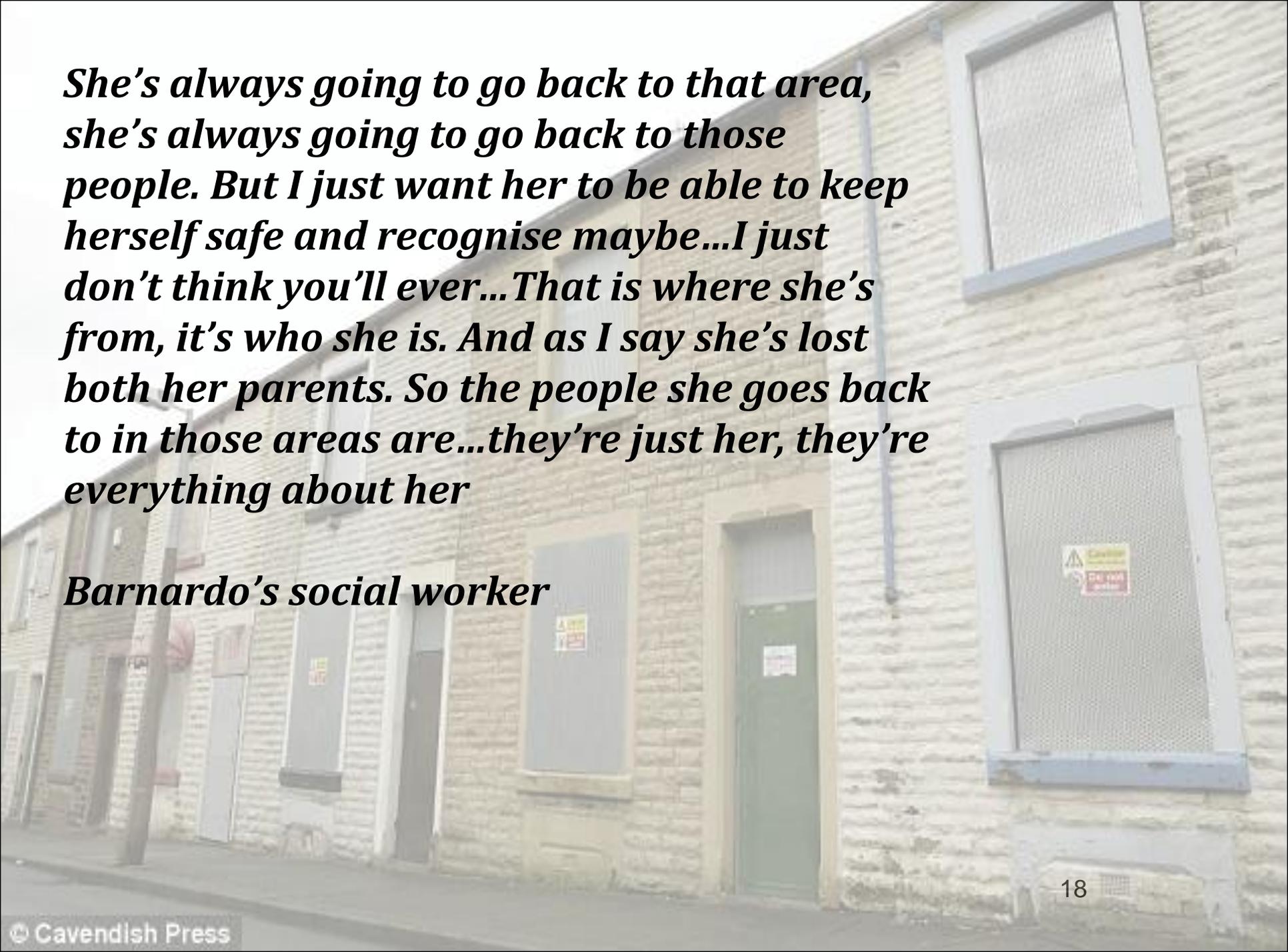
Pearce (2009) Young People and Sexual Exploitation: It's not hidden, you just aren't looking

I did try and sit her down and do face to face counselling but it wasn't something that she could engage in, she seemed all over the place, because there was no trust there, she wasn't really engaging and then I thought, "okay, we'll go to the park in the next session", so we went to the park and we went round the park and talked, then we sat down on a piece of grass by the lake and we talked so ... it was face to face counselling on a piece of grass outside!

Barnardo's counsellor

Psychological security

- Experiencing a coherent sense of your self identity – important process in adolescent development
- In conditions of relational instability, young people can develop ‘maladaptive behaviour’. Distancing behaviours, survivalist self-reliance, provoking rejection
- Stigma of care and sexual exploitation, not being normal
- Searching for a sense of self and a place to belong = a pull factor. Adaptation to risky networks.
- Also obviously undermined through abuse itself

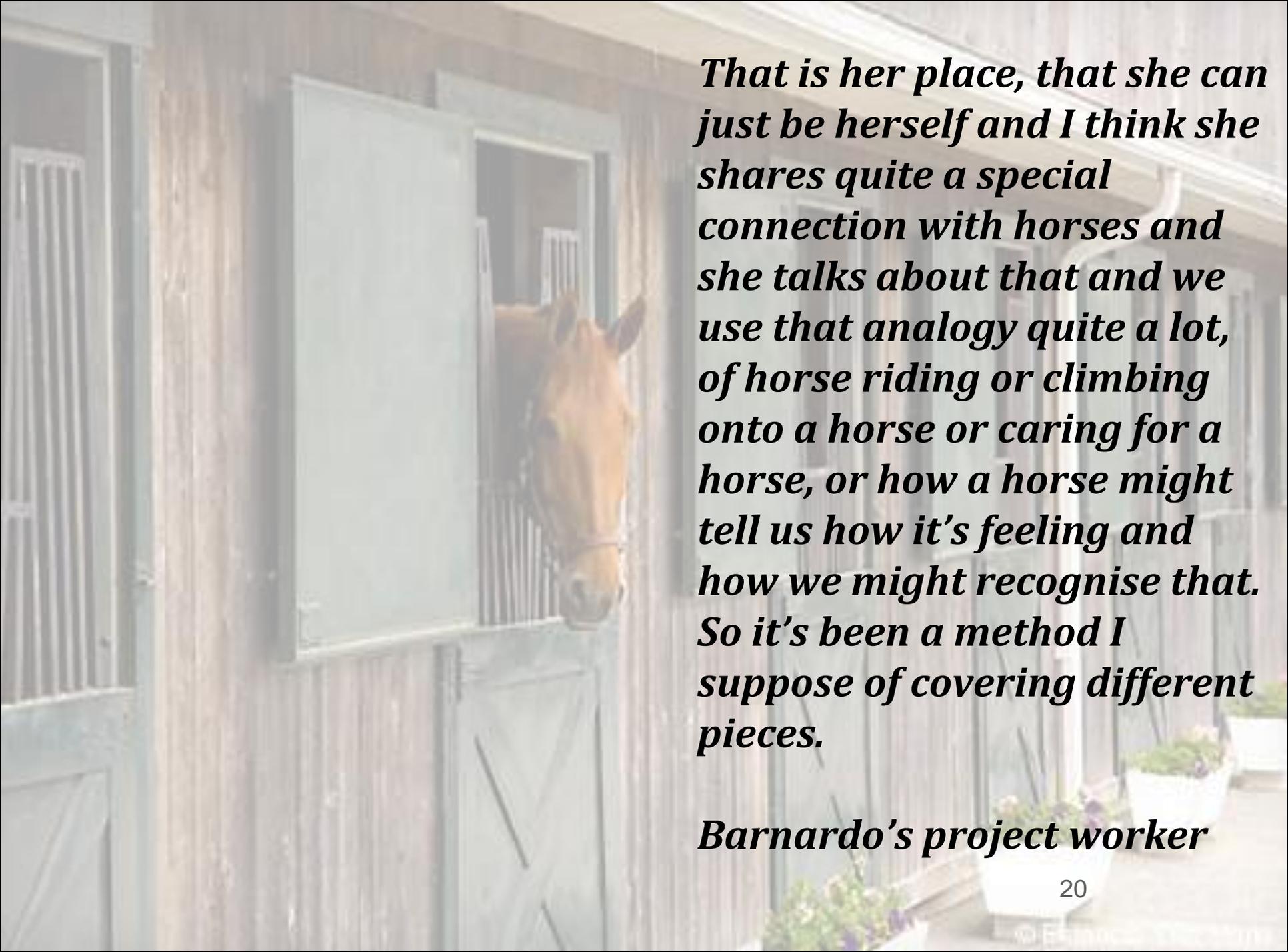


She's always going to go back to that area, she's always going to go back to those people. But I just want her to be able to keep herself safe and recognise maybe...I just don't think you'll ever...That is where she's from, it's who she is. And as I say she's lost both her parents. So the people she goes back to in those areas are...they're just her, they're everything about her

Barnardo's social worker

Avoiding stigma and working holistically

- Giving young people control
- Starting from their own view of their experiences
- Working holistically with their concerns as well as those of professionals
- Celebrating alternative and positive spaces of identity and belonging
- Identifying with the experience of being an adolescent

A photograph of a brown horse looking out from a stable stall. The stall has a wooden lower half and a metal upper half. The horse's head is visible through the metal bars. The background shows a wooden stable aisle with other stalls and some potted plants on the floor.

That is her place, that she can just be herself and I think she shares quite a special connection with horses and she talks about that and we use that analogy quite a lot, of horse riding or climbing onto a horse or caring for a horse, or how a horse might tell us how it's feeling and how we might recognise that. So it's been a method I suppose of covering different pieces.

Barnardo's project worker

Conclusions

- Safeguarding needs to recognise the multi-faceted nature of safety
- Early intervention can avoid the need to disrupt a young person's whole world
- Where this disruption is necessary care placements need to invest in relational security and psychological security alongside any restrictions or control
- Placements may need to be at least 12-18 months long as a result

Policy and practice implications

- Funding for specialist services that can work medium-long term with young people
- Supply and training of social workers, foster carers, residential workers who understand CSE
- Early intervention/preventative work in the community to avoid necessity of out of area placements
- Future funding for specialist foster care
- Raising awareness to increase understanding of safeguarding and risk factors
- Continuing to hold LAs to account on this agenda, particularly for strategic partnerships

Key research

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