

Teenagers and their sexual partners: what age difference should raise concerns of sexual exploitation?

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Overview

- Background
- Why be concerned about partner age difference?
- What we did?
- Results
- Recommendations

Acknowledging my co-author

Dr Alison Mott, Designated Doctor,
Safeguarding Children Service, Public
Health Wales

Contraception & Sexual Health Service



What have I been doing?

Safeguarding young people

- Research led to the development of a Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) checklist
 - to be used in clinical settings
 - by busy health professionals
 - support them in making informed decisions about a young person's risk of sexual exploitation
- Referred to as CSERQ
- Adapted from All Wales SERAF¹



SEX & RELATIONSHIPS · RELATIONSHIPS

How Big of an Age Gap Is Too Big in Relationships?

BY ASHLEY ROSS
JULY 19, 2016 10:30 AM



Why be concerned about age difference between sexual partners?



Young people who are being sexually exploited...
...may have older boyfriends or girlfriends

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-exploitation/signs-symptoms-and-effects/>

2011: Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation

Significant risk indicators include:

- **older 'boyfriend' (or 'girlfriend) or relationship with a controlling adult**

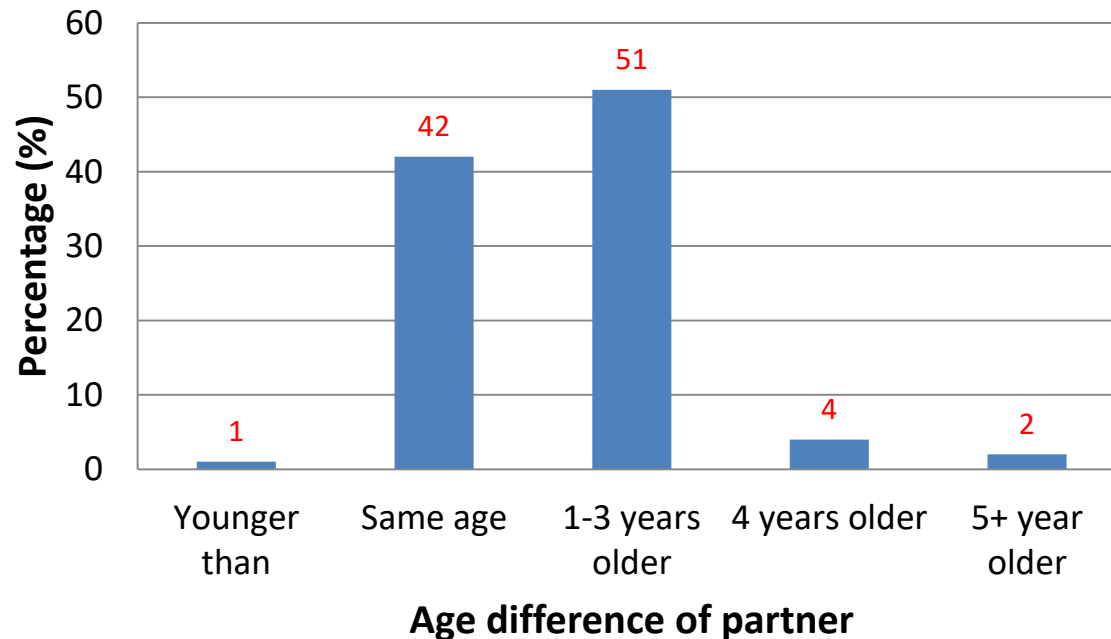


The screenshot shows the Welsh Government website. The header includes the Welsh Government logo and name, social media icons, and a search bar. The main navigation menu includes About, News, Topics, Consultation, Legislation, Funding, and Statistics & Research. The breadcrumb trail reads: Home > Topics > Health and social services > Publications > Social Services > Safeguarding of Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation. The main heading is "Safeguarding of Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation", with a sub-heading "Guidance to safeguard children and young people from being sexually exploited." and a "Last updated 22 January 2013" note. A sidebar on the right lists "Health and social services" with sub-links for Publications, Social Services, Circulars, Guidance, Reports, and Strategies.

How is 'older' defined?

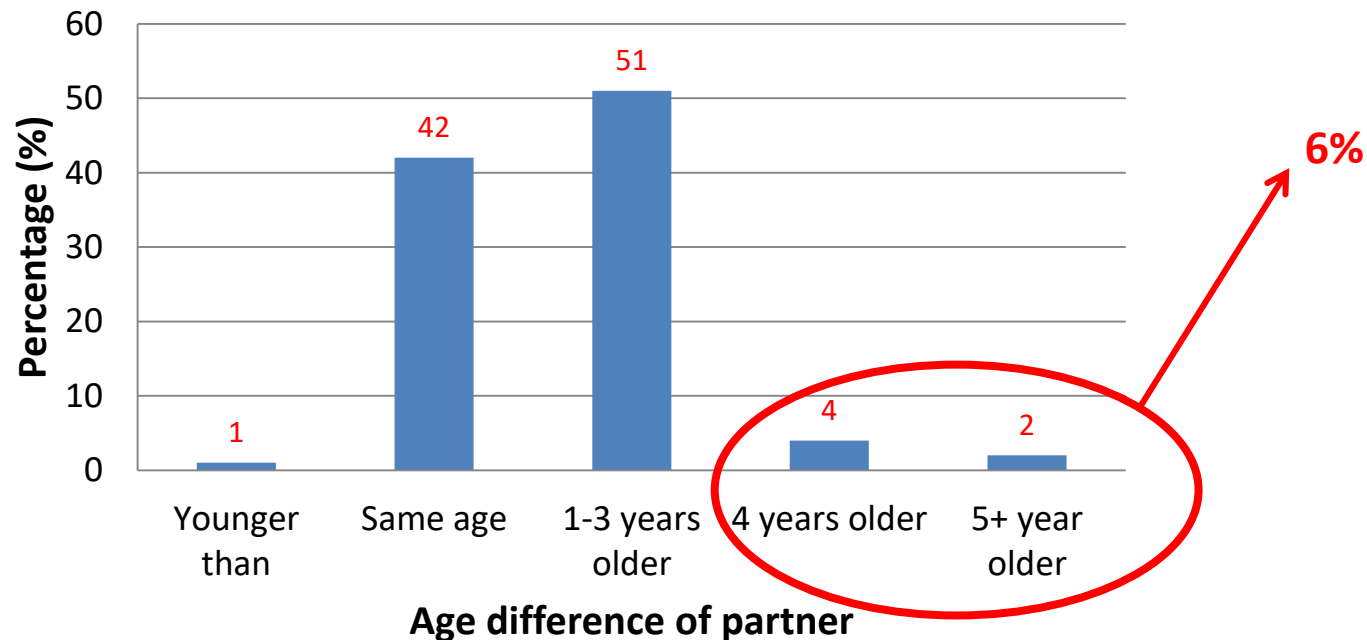
Audit of under-14s attending our contraception clinics during 2003¹

- 242 under-14s
- 598 visits
- partner age recorded at 29% of visits



Audit of under-14s attending our contraception clinics during 2003¹



- 242 under-14s
- 598 visits
- partner age recorded at 29% of visits







That was then, what about now?

Comprehensive electronic history sheet templates for under-18s

Consultation Details

Input Profile ● Integrated female history - 17 or under   Audit Information

Date and Time ● 06/02/2018 14:31   Quick Print

Episode None Selected  

Taken By

Reason

Overall Result

Consultation Data (74 items)

Highlight Changes

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Reason for attendance details | ● | |
| Symptomatic? | ● | |
| Limit of confidentiality discussed with young person? | ● | |
| UPSI since LMP? | ● | |
| CSERQ (Child sexual exploitation risk questionnaire) completed? | ● | |
| CSERQ-1 Have you ever stayed out overnight or longer without permission from your parent(s) or guardian? | ● | |
| CSERQ-a How old is your partner or the person(s) you have sex with? Please enter whole number only. If no current sexual partner enter 0 | | |
| CSERQ-2 If age difference between client and person(s) they are having sex with is 4 or more years, please tick yes. | ● | |
| CSERQ-3 Does your partner stop you from doing things you want to do? | ● | |
| CSERQ-4 Thinking about where you go to hang out, or have sex. Do you feel unsafe there/are your parent(s) or guardian worried about your safety? | ● | |
| If answered "yes" to any one or more of the CSERQ-1 and 4 questions this indicates that a child is at increased risk of child sexual exploitation | | |

CSERQ4 questions

| | CSERQ4 questions | Yes / No |
|--------|---|----------|
| CSERQ1 | Have you ever stayed out overnight or longer without permission from your parent(s) or guardian? | |
| CSERQ2 | <p>How old is your partner or the person(s) you have sex with? Age of partner _____ Age of client/patient _____ Age difference _____</p> <p>If age difference is 4 or more years then answer 'YES'</p> | |
| CSERQ3 | Does your partner stop you from doing things you want to do? | |
| CSERQ4 | Thinking about where you go to hang out, or to have sex. Do you feel unsafe there, or are your parent(s) or guardian worried about your safety? | |

ACTION: If one or more of CSERQ4 questions is answered in the affirmative then a child protection referral is indicated.

What age difference should raise concerns of sexual exploitation?



Reviewed records of all 13-17 year olds attending a sexual health clinic over consecutive six month period

Looked at:

- Age of partner
- Age difference between client and partner

What did we find?

1526 visits by 13-17 year olds

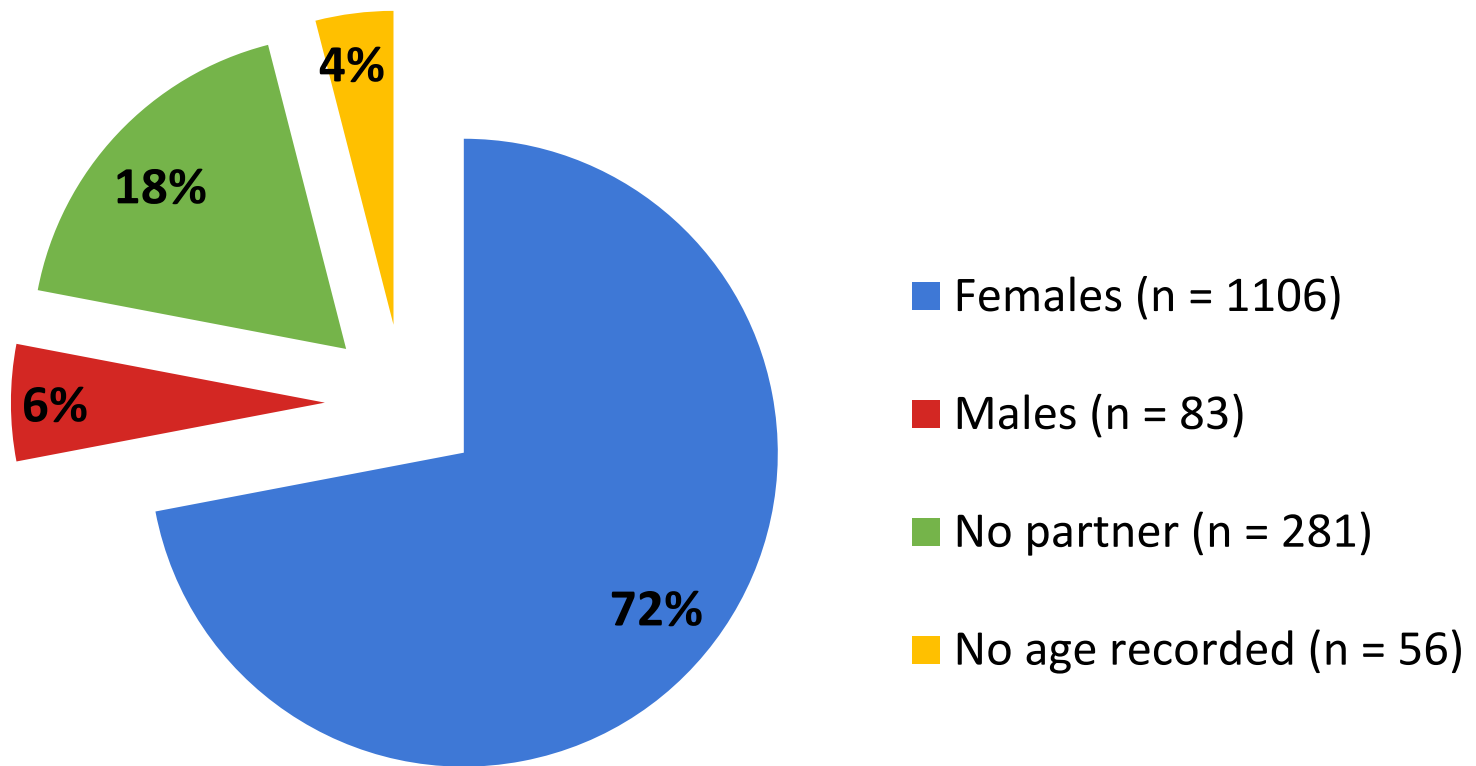


n = 1417 (93%)

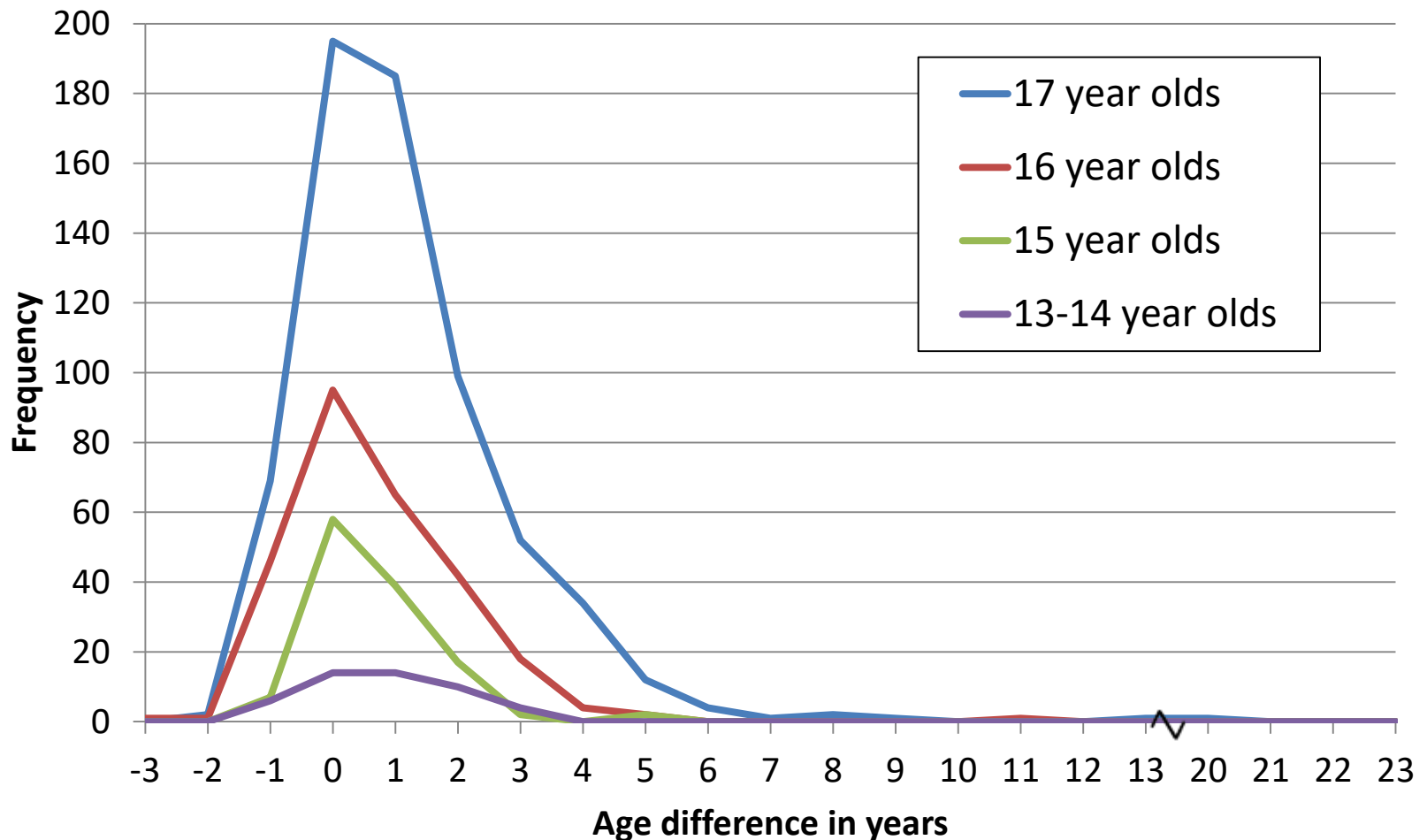


n = 109 (7%)

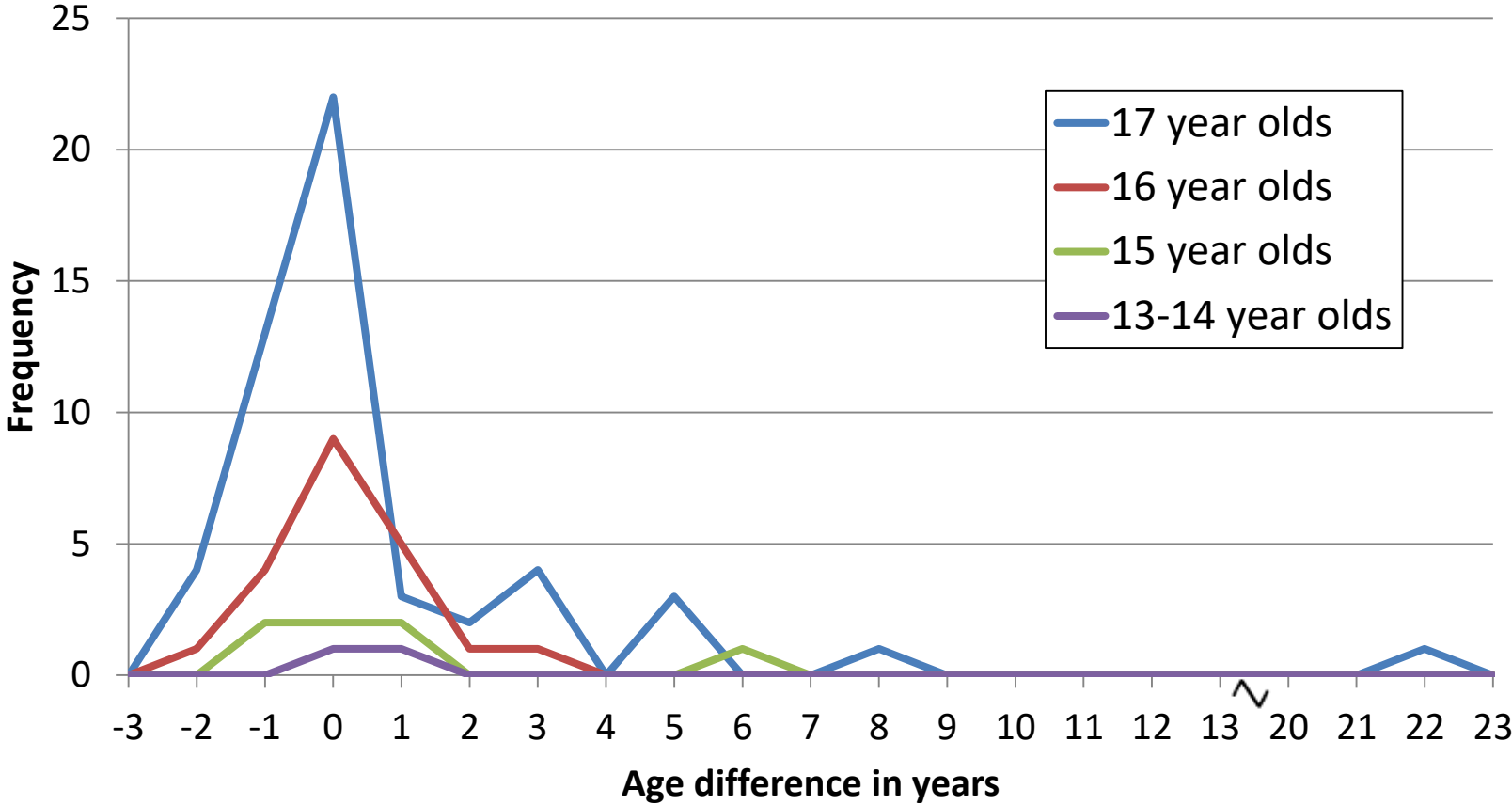
Proportion of visits where partner age was documented (n = 1526)



Partner age difference for female clients (n = 1106)



Partner age difference for male clients (n = 83)



How many referrals would result?

4 or more year
age difference

6 or more year
age difference

Potential % to
be referred

Clients aged
16yrs and under
(n = 478)

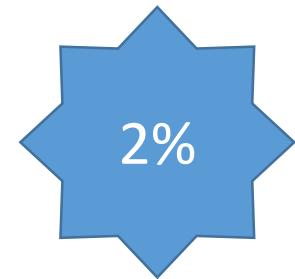
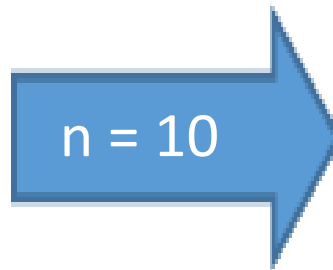
n = 10

2%

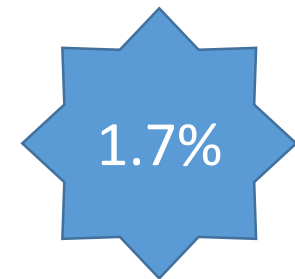
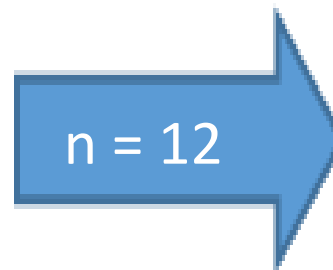
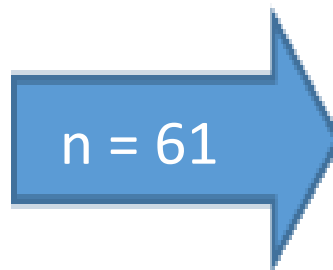
How many referrals would result?



Clients aged 16yrs and under (n = 478)



Clients aged 17yrs (n = 711)



Recommendations

- When considering a young person's potential risk of CSE we recommend that:
 - For 13-16 year olds a 4 or more age difference is significant, whereas
 - For 17 year olds a 6 or more age difference is significant
- We encourage clinicians to consider age difference as part of their holistic approach to assessing CSE risk
- Referral on grounds of age difference alone would not overwhelm statutory partners
- This has practice implications for all multiagency partners

Thank you for listening

Questions?

References

1. <http://www.childreninwales.org.uk/our-work/safeguarding/wales-child-protection-procedures-review-group/>
2. Cook L, Fleming C Audit of under-14s who attend sexual health clinics in Gwent, South Wales, UK: identifying young people at risk of abuse and exploitation BMJ Sexual & Reproductive Health 2007;33:27-30
3. <http://gov.wales/topics/health/publications/socialcare/guidance1/exploitation/?lang=en>