

ECPAT UK Briefing

Media Reporting on Child Sexual Exploitation

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Introduction

Despite efforts by ECPAT, other organisations, institutions and individuals worldwide to tackle the issue, each year, scores of children are being sexually exploited; they are sexually abused in exchange for some form of money or gift (Greijer, & Doek, 2016; ECPAT, n.d.).

For instance, 'The Office of the Children's Commissioner's inquiry into child sexual exploitations in gangs and groups: interim report' states that over 2,400 children in the UK were victims of sexual exploitation in gangs and groups in the period from August 2010 to October 2011 (Berelowitz, Firmin, Edwards, & Gulyurtlu, 2012). The National Crime Agency (2016) reported that in 2016, there were over 360 children who were trafficked for child sexual exploitation in the UK. The number of potential victims of trafficking however is much higher. Moreover, worldwide 1.2 million children are trafficked every year, including many children who are trafficked for sexual exploitation (ILO, 2002).

The true extend of CSE is unknown due to its illegal nature and the underreporting of the crime (ECPAT, n.d). Many victims of CSE do not disclose their experiences of abuse to authorities within power. Often this is due to the lack of trust that the victims have in the authorities (Mahan, 2017; Paine, & Hansen 2002). Because of this, there is a lack of reliable data of the number of CSE victims (Wilson et al., 2016; Mahan, 2017).

All available evidence however indicates that the number of children being sexually exploited is higher than ever before. The rise of the Internet and the greater access to international travel have increased the risks for children as well as the 'demand' for sex with children (ECPAT, n.d.). Not only has the number of victims increased, but also the severity of the abuse (ECPAT, n.d.). Moreover, we increasingly see younger children being targeted (ECPAT, n.d.)

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is morally uncontroversial; everyone says it is a bad thing, but the abuse does not stop by the crime itself (Hickle, 2017). Victims of CSE are still further exploited by the media that report on CSE in ways that minimize the seriousness of the crime that has taken place, that fail to acknowledge the rights of these children and that put them at greater risk (Goddard et al., 2005). Media representations of CSE matter. The media plays an important role in how we understand the rights of the child as well as informs our actions to protect and implement these rights. The way the media frame child sexual

exploitation (CSE) influences how we conceptualise CSE and the issues connected to it, which of these issues we prioritise and how we respond to these (Greijer, & Doek, 2016).

Issues can be framed and interpreted in different ways. How the media represents an issue plays an important role in how we understand issues and our attitude to these. Furthermore, the media sometimes adopts frames that are used by politicians and the court system, however, politicians also often adopt frames that are used by the media (Chong, & Druckman, 2007). Media representations therefore have an influence on policy and laws and also on advocacy (Greijer et al., 2016; Goddard, Saunders, De Bortoli, & Tucci, 2005). Recognizing these significant impacts the media can have, ECPAT UK believes that the media should take its responsibility to portray CSE in an accurate and sensitive way (Mahan, 2017).

When analysing how the media reports on CSE it is important to recognize how this has advanced. The last few years, the media has advanced in actually reporting on the issue of CSE (Mahan, 2017). Only since the 1980s, the media started to report more on this issue (Kitzinger, 2004). Especially recent cases like in Rotherham (South Yorkshire) and Rochdale (Greater Manchester) and the Jimmy Savile Scandal have received much media attention and have increased the media attention for other CSE cases that followed (Tufail, 2015; Mahan, 2017). Moreover, the media has come some way in recognizing that CSE takes place in the UK and that it takes place within every community within the UK; within politics, within every institution, within the church, within the BBC and more (Mahan, 2017).

Despite the advances, the media still reports on CSE in many different problematic ways (Mahan, 2017). This briefing outlines the various problems with the current media representations on CSE and how these representations could be improved. Not only does it aim to educate media practisers and regulators, but also to better inform the public that consumes the media. Someone who is better informed about an issue is less likely to be affected by media representations that are problematic (Chong et al., 2007).

Problematic media representations on CSE

Terminology – Child prostitution, child pornography & child sex tourism

One of the most important things when looking at the media is the terminology it uses. It is important that the media uses the right terminology to describe cases of CSE to overcome the further exploitation of these children and young people who have experienced CSE, through “textual abuse” (Goddard et al., 2005, p. 275). The media still regularly uses terms that exploits these children, “minimizes the seriousness of crimes committed against them and fails to acknowledge their rights” (Goddard et al., 2005, p. 275).

In March 2015, after a national campaign demanding the removal of references to child prostitution from all legislation in the UK, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 was amended to replace any references to child prostitution and child pornography with references to the sexual exploitation of children. Anti-slavery and human rights groups in the US are also arguing for the removal of the term ‘child prostitution’ from legislation and other use (Greijer et al., 2016).

Despite the increased recognition that terms as child prostitution and child pornography are problematic, the media still frequently uses these terms, as well as child sex tourism, that also has become an increasingly debated term (Mahan, 2017).

Child prostitution

“Child prostitution occurs when a minor performs sexual intercourse in exchange for money” (Adelson, 2008, p.13). Concerns have been raised that the term child prostitution implies that it is a “legitimate form of sex work” (Greijer, & Doek, 2016, p 30). Moreover it implies that the child has consented to engage in prostitution or even assumes that the child has consented to his or her own exploitation (Greijer et al., 2016; Goddard et al., 2005; Swann, 2000).

It is important here to understand the definitions of trafficking in persons and child trafficking. “Child trafficking is defined in the United Nations Palermo Protocol as the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt” of a child for the purpose of exploitation” (ECPAT UK, n.d.; Palermo Protocol, 2000). In order for an adult to be considered as being trafficked, the adult has to be threatened or there must have been “use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person” (Palermo Control, 2000). This stage oftentimes also happens for children (any person under eighteen), however, even if this stage does not happen and she/he does fully understand what is happening and agrees to travel, the child can still not give informed consent to his or her own exploitation (Adelson, 2008; Cree, Clapton, & Smith, 2014).

Thus every person under the age of eighteen cannot consent to their own abuse and therefore child prostitution or any other similar term, such as juvenile prostitute, underage prostitute or child sex worker, should be reconceptualised as child sexual exploitation or abuse (Swann, 2000; Greijer et al., 2016). Sometimes the term ‘exploitation of children in prostitution’ is used. This term emphasises that children cannot consent to their exploitation, but are a victim of sexual exploitation and it provides the context in which the exploitation takes place (Greijer et al., 2016).

When we talk about child sexual abuse or exploitation, the absence of the child’s consent is clear. The child is perceived as a passive victim and the offender has been ascribed an active role. However, when we describe the child as a child prostitute, the child is ascribed an active role and appears to have some or all responsibility in the crime (Goddard et al., 2005). Moreover, abusers here are often described as “people who have sex with child prostitutes”, “customers” and “clients” (Goddard et al., 2005, p. 282). This clearly shows how the focus is shifted away from the seriousness of the crime and the child’s age to child prostitution as a form of labour and to the contractual and commercial nature of prostitution (Goddard et al., 2005).

An example of this could be found in an article by WWLP, which headline states ‘Two arrested for prostitution of minor’ and in which the reporter further explains how one of the two arrested “was arranging for a child in her early teens to engage in sexual acts for fee with a resident of Ware” (Asiamah, 2017). Another example could be found in an article by ABC15 with the headline ‘Scottsdale PD: Man caught in child prostitution sting, again’ (Enea, 2017). The article further states that “A Valley man has been arrested twice in the last

several months, both times while attempting to pay for sex with underage girls” (Enea, 2017). Nowhere in the article it mentions that this sex was sexual abuse and/or exploitation.

Often times words like sexual abuse and rape are mentioned alongside the term child prostitution or similar terms. An example of this can be found in an article published by the National Post: *“city police officers sexually abused her while she worked as an underage prostitute”* (The Associated Press, 2017). Using these terms alongside each other portrays both as being responsible for the crime. Readers are still less likely to feel empathy for the child when this language is used (Goddard et al., 2005). Moreover, sexual abuse here seems to be defined by the physical violence the victim has experienced rather than the issue of consent. It is violence that proves that there is a lack of consent, not the age (Goddard et al., 2005).

This assignation of responsibility to the child and the danger of this through using the term child prostitution can also be clearly seen from this example of a research conducted in the US. The research showed how in the US the same child doing the same thing could be considered a prostitute and become criminalized and face prosecution or could be considered a victim of human trafficking and receive protection treatment (Adelson, 2008).

Child pornography

The term pornography is mainly used for adults and referring to their “engaging in consensual sexual acts distributed (often legally) to the general public for their sexual pleasure” (Greijer et al., 2016, p. 38) but is also used a lot in the media for children (e.g. Irinici, 2017; Detman, 2017; Barr, 2017). While the term child pornography is still used in many countries and is still important to define a crime, the term has increasingly been questioned and alternative terminology, child sexual abuse material’ or ‘child sexual exploitation material’, has been suggested, based on the same reasons as just mentioned for child prostitution (Greijer et al., 2016). The term implies that the child has somehow consented to the abuse taken place and risks that the material is represented and perceived as “legitimate sexual material” (Greijer et al., 2016, p. 39). Also, pornography is increasingly normalised and “may (inadvertently or not) contribute to diminishing the gravity of, trivialising, or even legitimising what is actually sexual abuse and/or sexual exploitation of children” (Greijer et al., 2016, p. 39).

One media example could be found in the article of the Daventry Express, in which the reporter states that UK’s Government Communications Headquarters (GHCQ) figures show that “over the past three years in Northamptonshire there were 68 cases where cyber technologies enabled blackmail, six cases where it facilitated child prostitution or pornography and one case of slavery” (Johnston Press Investigations, 2017). The way the reporter has differentiated these forms of exploitation can be questioned. They are all forms of exploitation and forms of modern slavery. The way they have been differentiated here seems to imply a difference of seriousness of abuse. However, all of them are very serious forms of abuse and crimes.

Other terms to refer to this form of CSE that are even more problematic and should be avoided include ‘child porn’, ‘kiddie porn’ or ‘paedo-porn’ (Greijer et al., 2016; Mahan, 2017). Again, these terms minimize the seriousness of the crime and do not recognize that each time an image of abuse is shared, the child could potentially be re-traumatized again (Mahan, 2017). Examples of these in the media include the article by The Hour (2017) about Guatemala, in which the reporter states that “Child sex tourism, kiddie porn, and sale of

children became common” or the headline of an article by My Palm Beach Post: “UPDATE: Police raid of PBSO deputy’s home turns up slew of child porn” (Hitchcock, 2017).

Child sex tourism

Child sex tourism can be defined as “the commercial sexual exploitation of children by men or women who travel from one place to another, usually from a richer country to one that is less developed, and there engage in sexual acts with children, defined as anyone under the age of 18” (Semantics or Substance, 2005).

Although widely used this term has become increasingly debated. The term implies that this is some ‘fun’ and ‘legitimate’ activity and form of tourism that just happens to involve sex and it just happens to involve children (Greijer et al., 2016; Mahan, 2017). This ignores the inherent power dynamics between the children and the sex offenders and does not recognize that this is child sexual exploitation and thus a serious crime (Mahan, 2017).

An article by PRI mentions: “Many come to the city in search of girls aged between 12 and 18. The industry has made Kenya one of the world's hubs for child sex tourism, researchers say” (Onyulo, 2016). A Miami Herald’s headline states ‘How Cuba became the newest hotbed for tourists craving sex with minors’ and continues to explain how “Cuba holds unique allure for Western sex tourists. It is closer and cheaper than other sex destinations, such as Thailand”, still referring to sex with minors (Miami Herald, 2013).

What is also problematic is that by using the term ‘child sex tourism’ is that the crime might become associated with the entire tourism sector (Greijer et al., 2016). Furthermore, the term exclusively refers to tourism and tourists and with this “excludes many types of travelling offenders, such as business travellers and military personnel, and offenders in transit or residing out of their country more generally” (Greijer et al., 2016, p. 56).

Instead the term ‘sexual exploitation of children in (the context of) travel and tourism’ is recommended (Greijer et al., 2016; Mahan, 2017). This term highlights the fact that the child is being sexually exploited and that this exploitation has taken place within a certain context (Greijer et al., 2016; Mahan, 2017). Moreover, in contrast with the term child sex tourism, this term does not only captures tourism and tourists, but with the notion of ‘travel’ it also captures “business travel, cultural or other forms of exchanges, travelling workers and longer-term transits outside one’s home region/country” (Greijer et al., 2016, p. 55).

The term ‘webcam child sex tourism’ should be avoided for similar reasons as well. Webcam child sex tourism means that a person can order and watch child sexual abuse that is taking place in another country, on his/her computer without having to travel. The notion of tourism here is used to highlight the transnational character of this crime. However, this wrongly implies that it is the tourism sector, which should respond to this issue. There is no clear agreed upon alternative definition for the term webcam child sex tourism yet. Some suggestions include “webcam child sex abuse” in case a webcam is used to watch the online child sexual abuse or the term “live online child sexual abuse” which is broader and could therefore be more appropriate (Greijer et al., 2016, p. 48). More work needs to be done to come up with a more accurate term for this form of abuse (Mahan, 2017).

Victim-blaming

Victim-blaming can still regularly be found in the court and is often reproduced in the media. Furthermore, the media themselves can make suggestions that the children are responsible for the abuse that they have experienced, for instance through using the problematic terminology just discussed (Mahan, 2017).

The kind of terminology the media uses to describe a case of CSE for a great part depends on whether the child experiencing the crime is perceived a victim or not. The label victim is not only based on the experiences of those being harmed, but also the perceptions of the people who encounter those harmed and have the power to either accept or reject this label of victim (Hoyle, Bosworth, & Dempsey, 2011). Both within society and in the media narratives we can find a false dichotomy of the 'real' victim that has no agency and those who have some amount of agency and have been complicit in their own exploitation. This could lead to some victims not being recognized, (to some extent) being blamed for the abuse that has taken place, and not getting the justice and support they deserve and need (Hoyle et al., 2011).

Instead of this false dichotomy we should think of agency as "a continuum of limited autonomy to complete bondage" (Long, 2004, p. 6). There are children and young people who have absolutely no agency, might be locked in a room all the time and have no ability to leave or go or make any choices for themselves. But then along the continuum there are children and young people who make constraint choices. They choose that option that they believe will help them to best meet their needs, out of the limited number of choices they have in front of them. Furthermore, not recognizing this continuum ignores the existence of so called 'survival sex', when the child believes that having sex with adults is needed to obtain money, food or other necessities to survive (Adelson, 2008).

Another dimension of the notion of ideal victim is that of race. The media often reports on the non-white foreigner exploiting the white victim (e.g. Greenwood, 2013; Veevers, 2012; Lalille, & Topping, 2013). Cases in which non-white children are victims of crimes, including CSE, are underreported in the media (Greer, 2017). The media's selectivity is based on the assignation of the 'ideal victim' status. Non-white victims do not automatically receive the status of ideal victim. White victims, on the other hand, are more likely to receive this status (Greer, 2017). Those with the status of ideal victim receive high levels of media attention. Those who do not confirm the status of ideal victim, however, will receive little or no media attention at all (Greer, 2017; McAlinden, 2014).

A Google image search on child sexual exploitation, clearly illustrates the notion of an ideal victim. The Google image search results in many images of children who are very young, who are white, who look very sad and are often clearly being detained by this exploiter who is big and bad (Hickle, 2017).

This narrative of an ideal victim influences the public's understanding of CSE and who they think should be helped (Hickle, 2017). Furthermore, the construction of an ideal victim makes it hard for professionals to be on the lookout for a young person who is "being victimised through CSE, but is angry, doesn't necessarily want the help, doesn't see themselves as a victim and who is getting their need met by someone in kind of problematic ways, but still feel like they're getting their needs met" (Hickle, 2017).

Gender

Although we can increasingly see the media reporting on cases in which boys have been sexually abused and exploited (e.g. Gazette, 2017; Lerten, 2017; Recorder Staff, 2017; Lancashire Post, 2016), the media still often portrays CSE as an issue that almost exclusively involves female victims and male perpetrators (Alaggia, & Millington, 2008; Mahan, 2017). This underrepresentation of boys could partly be due to the fact that they tend to disclose their experience of abuse and exploitation even less than girls (Mahan, 2017; Cromer & Goldsmith, 2010; Chapleau, Oswald & Russell, 2008). However, it is also due to a myth within society that gets further reinforced through these media representations, that boys cannot be abused. Some news media portrayals even depict boys “as fortunate when an adult female has sex with them” (Cromer et al., p. 623; Alaggia & Millington, 2008).

It is important to be aware that both boys and girls can be victims of CSE and that they both deserve protection under the law and deserve the institutional support they need (Mahan, 2017). The media should thus report more on cases in which boys have been exploited or abused and do not imply that these boys are to blame for their exploitation or abuse. However, we should also recognize that there is a fundamental disproportionality between boys and girls. Age and power imbalances within society make girls more vulnerable to men. The number of girls being abused and exploited is thus much higher (Mahan, 2017).

Offender stereotypes

Paedophiles

One other way the media obscures the issue of child sexual exploitation is in its reporting on sex offenders. The media often uses the term paedophile when reporting on any abuse of a child under eighteen (Mahan, 2017). However, a paedophile could be defined as “an individual who fantasizes about, is sexually aroused by, or experiences sexual urges toward prepubescent children (generally <13 years) for a period of at least 6 months” (Hall, & Hall, 2007). This tends to misrepresent the abuse of children and fails to address the structural causes of child abuse including the sexualisation and commodification of their bodies.

It is also important to realise that there are both preferential offenders and situational offenders. Offenders who are paedophiles form one category of preferential offenders as they have a sexual preference for children and actively seek children to sexually abuse them. However, situational offenders do not have a distinguishable sexual preference for children, but can take advantage of a situation, such as in tourism, when they have easy access to the sexual use of a child and engage in CSE (Greijer et al., 2016, Mahan, 2017).

A clear example of the term being misused in the media is the article ‘Australia seeks to block paedophiles from leaving country for child sex’ (Cook, 2017). The ones who will be blocked from leaving the country are registered sex offenders. The article here makes it seem that all travelling sex offenders are paedophiles. The profile of sex offenders is much wider than the term paedophile implies. The misuse and overuse of the term paedophile leads to law enforcements and other agencies failing to respond to an entire group of other offenders (Mahan, 2017). Moreover, not all sex offenders are registered (Mahan, 2017).

Also, the overuse and misuse of the term paedophile lead to misconceptions that every paedophile is a sex offender (Greijer et al., 2016). Paedophilia is a clinical diagnosis. In reality, only a small percentage of offenders has been diagnosed with paedophilia (Greijer et al., 2016). The term helps the media to create a dichotomy of ‘normal’ and

'deviant'/dangerous people and ignores other risks and other people who could form a risk for children (McAlinden, 2014). It is therefore important to make a distinction between the clinical diagnosis of paedophilia and the crime of CSE (Greijer et al., 2016). Thus, the offenders should be called child (sexual) abusers (Mahan, 2017).

Race

Another stereotype that is perpetuated in the media is that most offenders are non-White (Cromer, & Goldsmith, 2010). We often see mug shots or pictures of perpetrators who are non-white. While we do not know prevalence data, arrest data shows that it is likely that the majority of CSE perpetrators are white. However, this does not fit into the media narrative of those who we are exposed to be scared of; "the immigrants and people who do not look like us" (Hickle, 2017). Furthermore, when the media is reporting on white offenders of CSE, they focus considerably less on the race, ethnicity, religion or faith of the offender (Tufail, 2015).

One clear example can be seen in how the media reported on the CSE case in Rochdale (Mahan, 2017; Tufail, 2015; Gill & Harrison, 2015). A huge number of children had been sexually exploited within their community within a period of 10 years. The media reported that a group of Pakistani men were responsible for abusing these children. Often times the focus was shifted away from the children being victims of CSE to the race and the profile of the perpetrators. 'Pakistani', 'Asian' and 'Muslim' male were portrayed as dangerous. The representations suggested that entire communities could have some deficiency or deviancy within their communities that makes them more likely to abuse children (Mahan, 2017; Tufail, 2015; Gill et al., 2015).

These representations of non-white offenders are fundamentally racist and dangerous and have serious consequences for their minority communities (Mahan, 2017; Tufail, 2015). Many minority communities, including the Asian community, for instance, have already for a long time been over-policed and under-protected in the UK (Tufail, 2015; Gill et al., 2015). Furthermore, these representations have contributed "to rousing fears of a racist threat of Muslim men" (and other minority communities) "towards white women" and children (Tufail, 2015, p. 39). This in turn has led to further "isolation, alienation, racist attacks and criminalisation" for these already marginalized communities (Tufail, 2015, p. 39).

Moreover, focusing primarily on race ultimately obscures the fundamental issue: that children have been systematically abused in their communities and the child protection system has failed to protect them (Mahan, 2017).

Statutory responsibility, focus on the individual and CSE as an 'easy problem'

The dominant media narratives on CSE describe the issue as a statutory responsibility; so social work, police, other authorities and the government have the main responsibility to tackle this issue (Wilson, & Brien, 2016; Hickle, 2017; Gallagher, 2017). This could for instance be seen in the many media reports on how statutory agencies have failed to protect children from sexual exploitation (Gill, & Harrison, 2015; Gallagher, 2017). One example can be found in an article by the daily mail: "Social worker failed to safeguard vulnerable young victims who were groomed by Rochdale child sex gang and closed their cases prematurely" (Burrows, 2017). The headline of an article in the Guardian states "Oxford child sex abuse ring: social services failed me, says victim" (Laville, Hill & Meikle,

2013). Former UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, also highlighted this statutory responsibility and this was further taken on in the media. The BBC (2015) for instance reported "Children in the UK have suffered sexual abuse on an 'industrial scale' with authorities failing to tackle the problem, David Cameron has said".

Not only is CSE here portrayed as a statutory responsibility but also as a problem that can be "easily fixed"; we just have to arrest and prosecute the individual perpetrators and provide services for the individual and young people who have been victimised (Wilson et al., 2016; Hickle, 2017). While recognizing this statutory responsibility, we should not ignore that CSE is more complex than this and is connected to much wider issues. If we want to effectively deal with CSE, we should recognize the wider context CSE takes place in and thus the responsibility of society as a whole in this issue (Wilson et al., 2016; Hickle, 2017). The wider context that CSE takes place in involves the fundamental inequality within relationships between people that are based on issues as poverty, racism and sexism (Hickle, 2017; Mahan, 2017). It involves the demand of sexual exploitation by people in positions of power who think they have a right to have sex with vulnerable people (Mahan, 2017).

Conclusion

While the media have improved in actually reporting on child sexual exploitation, there are still many ways in which they obscure the issue. Victims of CSE are still further exploited by the media that report on CSE in ways that minimize the seriousness of the crime that has taken place, that fail to acknowledge the rights of these children and that put them at greater risk.

It is important that the media uses the right terminology to describe cases of CSE to overcome the further exploitation of these children and young people who have experienced CSE, through 'textual abuse'. Therefore, the media should stop using terminology as 'child prostitution', 'child pornography' and 'child sex tourism' that imply that a child has consented to their abuse and exploitation. This is immoral and irrelevant. Children, under international law, cannot consent to their abuse.

Furthermore, we need to recognize the push and pull factors that lead children and young people into CSE. Ignoring these factors increases the risks of further abuse. We should therefore not portray those who have experienced CSE as one-dimensional victims, who confirm the notion of an ideal victim and have no agency at all, but recognize the continuum of agency and the multidimensionality of the victims.

The same accounts for the perpetrators. If we want to protect our children, we should not blind ourselves by myths that tell us who to be afraid of. This puts our children at risk as many potential offenders are ignored and harms whole communities, as they are accused of having some deviancy that leads them to be more prone to sexually exploit children.

Finally, if we want to understand and fight CSE, we need to recognize that this is not a problem that can be easily fixed and that the responsibility of dealing with this issue is and should be broader than that of a statutory responsibility.

Recommendations

Recommendations for media practisers

Education is key in improving the media representations on CSE. It is important to educate journalists, editors and other media practisers. We need to recognize that the media is focused on getting a story out that is more spectacular each time to gain more readers. This has led to very graphic depictions of CSE cases. Media practisers should become more aware of the risk of re-traumatization for victims of CSE by publishing the stories, as well as security issues, such as the risk of identification. However, they do not necessarily have a thorough understanding of CSE, these risks and how to report on this issue in a sensitive and accurate way and in a way that the anonymity and identity of the victims of CSE can be protected (Mahan, 2017). Moreover, the children's voices are often ignored. As also stated in the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, the voices of children should always be recognized and represented in their own way (Mahan, 2017).

To get better educated and improve their media representations, the media could do more to work together with professionals, researchers and organizations who work with victims of CSE, such as ECPAT UK, to learn more about the potential impact of their work on victims and on how to report on the issue in a sensitive and accurate way (Hickle, 2017; Mahan, 2017). Moreover, through these organisations, the media can work together with victims of CSE, listen to the children's stories and use these stories as the bedrock from which they work (Hickle, 2017; Mahan, 2017).

It is also important to publish the positive stories. Failures of social workers, police or other authorities often make up spectacular stories, but there are also many cases where they have done a great job (Hickle, 2017).

Recommendations for media regulators

There is a need for better monitoring and enforcement of the media to ensure that CSE is portrayed in more accurate and sensitive ways and in ways that protect the anonymity and identity of the victims. This could be done through media regulators such as the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) and IMPRESS.

Like for media practisers, media regulators might not have a thorough understanding of CSE and the ways in which the media could report on this issue in ways that are more sensitive and accurate, that protect the anonymity and identity of CSE victims, and that include their voices (Mahan, 2017). These media regulators could work together with organisations, professionals and researchers who work together with victims of CSE to create well-informed standards for the media on how to report on CSE (Mahan, 2017). ECPAT UK has already written both IPSO and IMPRESS to make suggestions for amendments to IPSO's Editors' code of Practice Consultation (Appendix A) and IMPRESS' Draft Standards Code (Appendix B).

Moreover, media regulators could refer to this briefing and the 'Terminology guidelines for the protection of children from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse' to inform their standards and guidance on reporting on CSE (Greijer et al., 2016).

Recommendations for media consumers

Media consumers could further educate themselves to become aware of the problematic ways that CSE is still portrayed in the media and how these could be improved. Someone who is better informed about an issue is less likely to be affected by media representations that are problematic (Chong et al., 2007). Moreover, they could then write the journalist or editor when they come across any media that involves problematic representations of CSE.

It is often thought that consumers do not have much power to influence media content, however each party (media, advertisers and consumers) has the power to influence each other. Consumer complaints and actions like media or advertisers boycotts can influence, and already have influenced in the past, media publications (Richards & Murphy III, 1996). Moreover, new outlets are mainly depended on advertisers for their profit. When advertisers suspect consumers to be offended by certain media content, they will not place their ads in articles including this content, even without the threat of a boycott (Richards et al., 1996). If more people voice complaints about the way the problematic ways the media represents CSE this could thus help to make the media and advertisers more aware of this context that offends consumers and lead to change.

One clear example of how consumer actions can influence the media could be seen in the long-lasting consumer boycott of The Sun in Liverpool following the Hillsborough disaster. The long-lasting boycott has already cost The Sun millions of pounds since 1989 (e.g. Kay, 2017; Lazenby, 2017; Brett, 2017).

To have a better idea of how to write a complaint letter, an example letter can be found in Appendix C. Moreover, below several tips are outlined.

When writing a complaint about a publication, it is important not to use any abusive or threatening language. Using a reasonable and reasoned approach makes it more likely that your complaint is taken seriously. Moreover, if you do not get a satisfactory response from the editor or journalist, you are in a stronger position to complain to media regulators such as IPSO and IMPRESS (MediaWise, n.d.).

Also, when you complain it is good to back up this complaint with evidence if you have it (MediaWise, n.d.). Furthermore, be clear about what you would like to happen; would you like an apology, a publication of a letter or a formal correction?

If you do not want your complaint letter to be published or broadcasted make sure you write 'Not for publication' across the top. To get your letter published, however, is a good way of raising awareness on the issue and to generate debate (MediaWise, n.d.). When writing a letter for publication, decide who you are writing it to (journalists or readers) and try to keep it short (under 150 words) and to the point (MediaWise, n.d.).

If you get an unsatisfactory or no response to your letter you can complain to the appropriate regulator. Note that you should always send your complaint first to the editor. If you send your letter immediately to the regulator, the regulator will forward your letter to the appropriate editor to wait for his/her response first (MediaWise, n.d.).

The different regulators have slightly different procedures. To make sure you follow their procedures correctly, read the information on their websites. For most local, regional and national newspapers and magazines, you can make complaints to IPSO. On their website

they provide a list of all the newspapers and magazines they regulate (<https://www.ipso.co.uk/about-ipso/who-ipso-regulates/>).

When you complain to IPSO make sure you mention in your letter which clause of their Editors' Code of Practice has been breached. Also, complain within four months of the publication of the article or of the behaviour that took place. On their website they clearly explain what you can complain about, who can complain, how you can complain and their process for dealing with complaints (<https://www.ipso.co.uk/make-a-complaint/#WhatCanIComplainAbout>).

IMPRESS regulates several news publishers as well. A list of them can be found here <http://www.impress.press/complaints/regulated-publishers.html>
Similar as for IPSO, you must complain within four months of the publication of the article or of the behaviour that took place. More information on how to make a complaint can be found here <http://www.impress.press/complaints/complaints-faq.html>
For complaints about programme broadcast on commercial television or radio, you can make online complains to the Office of Communications (Ofcom). Make sure you make your complains within 20 days of the broadcast. Find more on how to complain here: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv-radio-and-on-demand/how-to-report-a-complaint>

The BBC has its own internal Complaints Unit. You can call them (03700 100 222) or make a complaint online. More information on their procedures as well as complaints of others can be found here <http://www.bbc.co.uk/complaints/handle-complaint/>

About ECPAT UK

ECPAT UK is a leading children's rights organisation working to protect children from child trafficking and transnational child exploitation. We support children everywhere to uphold their rights and to live a life free from abuse and exploitation. We do this through our policy, advocacy and campaign work, our direct work with victims of CSE, our trainings we deliver to professionals working with children, the publication of cutting-edge research and briefings and through working together with other experts to raise awareness on CSE and identify strategies to combat child trafficking and the exploitation of children in tourism.

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Appendix A – ECPAT UK response to IPSO The Editors’ Code of Practice Consultation

IPSO (independent press standards organisation)
The Editors’ Code of Practice Consultation

ECPAT UK response
March 2017

About ECPAT UK

ECPAT UK is a leading children’s rights organisation campaigning to protect children from child trafficking and transnational child exploitation. We have more than 20 years’ experience working directly with child victims of trafficking in the UK; supporting professionals across Government to better protect trafficked children; campaigning to incorporate anti-trafficking and child protection measures in UK legislation; and producing cutting-edge research on child trafficking and child sexual exploitation in the UK and abroad.

Child exploitation and the media

ECPAT UK has worked with the UK and international media for more than 20 years, raising awareness of the issues of child trafficking, child sexual exploitation and modern slavery, as well as influencing media best practice on covering serious cases of abuse. While we have witnessed improved reporting of child exploitation, we continue to identify practices that place vulnerable children at risk and create a discriminatory environment for foreign-born children – including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children – child victims of sexual exploitation and children aged 16 and over; both of which have serious implications for legislative and policy-based child protection responses.

Recent cases have shown media outlets, including the Daily Mail, The Sun, the Daily Star and the Daily Express, publishing photos and personal details of unaccompanied young people, thereby risking their security and increasing their vulnerability to human trafficking and hate crime. These unaccompanied young people have been subjected to an unlawful “trial by media”, which challenges the validity of their rights to asylum by engaging in speculative assumptions about their age and bypasses established legal processes designed to protect those most in need (ECPAT UK, 2017).

Definition of a child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as a person aged 18 and under. This definition should underpin all references to a child in the IPSO Editors’ Code of Practice.

The Editors’ Code of Practice

- The guidance on the public interest which says “there is a public interest in freedom of expression itself” should be made balanced and should be scrapped or should say: “There is a public interest in freedom of expression itself, in the privacy rights of others in themselves and in the right of the public to accurate information.
- Under *Accuracy*, the code should reflect that the complaints of Third Parties should be considered without requiring the consent of the party(ies) directly affected,

unless that party explicitly objects.

- Under *Privacy*, specific regard must be given to the privacy rights of children and victims of crime, including human trafficking and sexual exploitation. The media must take all steps to prevent the publication of information that may reveal directly or indirectly the identity, names or locations of these persons without their express consent, and in the case of children without their consent and the express consent of their carer or guardians.
- An additional point should be inserted in the guidance on **Reporting cases of child abuse*. When reporting child abuse – including child trafficking, modern slavery, child sexual exploitation, child abuse imagery online and more, care should be taken to avoid printing graphic and voyeuristic accounts of child abuse, in order to prevent traumatising.
- Under *Children*, all reference to “children under 16” should be replaced with “children under 18”.
- The title *Children in sex cases* must be reworded. Any legal case referring to “children” and “sex” will implicitly involve the abuse of children. The wording must be changed to *Cases of sexual abuse of children* reflect the severity of these issues.
- Under *Children in sex cases (Cases of sexual abuse of children)*, all reference to “children under 16” should be changed to “children under 18”.
- Under *Children in sex cases (Cases of sexual abuse of children)*, a note should be made to prevent the use of all language, such as “child prostitution”, “child pornography”, “child sex”, “child sex tourism, and more, that serves to undermine the severity of the abuse suffered by children in these circumstances and speculates that children are complicit/consenting in their abuse. Under law, no child can consent to exploitation.
- Under *Discrimination*, point i) must be expanded to include immigration status and ethnicity in relation to prejudicial or pejorative language.
- Under *Discrimination*, care must be taken to avoid the use of dehumanising language in reference to migrants, refugees and unaccompanied children, including the use of “illegal immigrant”.

Appendix B – ECPAT UK written submission to IMPRESS on Draft Standards Code

Please find below a brief note on Clause 3 of the IMPRESS Draft Standards Code, submitted by leading children’s rights charity ECPAT UK.

ECPAT UK has more than 20 years’ experience working to uphold the rights of children abused in or at risk of child trafficking and transnational sexual exploitation.

In addition to the following suggested amendments to the Draft Standards Code, ECPAT UK has concerns regarding the continued use of “victim blaming” language on cases involving child sexual exploitation. Despite changes to UK legislation removing reference to abusive terms such as “child pornography” and “child prostitution” from law, the UK media continues to use such terms when referring to child sexual abuse and exploitation. We recommend an addendum on semantics be included in the Standards Code as follows:

Any reference to “child pornography” should be removed and replaced with “child abuse images”.

Any reference to “child prostitution” should be removed and replaced with “child sexual exploitation”.

3. For each sub clause within Clause 3 of the Draft Standards Code, we recommend that the age of consent be raised to 18, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

3.1 The injunction on identifying children under 16 (under 18) should also make reference to “jigsaw identification” (such information that makes a child identifiable), particularly when identifying children in the criminal justice system.

3.2 In accordance with the provision on payment in 6(iv) of the Editors’ Code, the IMPRESS Code should include the following: “Children under 18 must not be paid for material involving their welfare, nor parents or guardians for material about their children or wards, unless it is clearly in the child’s interest.”

3.3 The IMPRESS code must also make reference to the Editors’ Code provision of “not using the fame of parents as a sole justification for publishing details of a child’s private life.”

Appendix C – Example complain letter to journalists/editors

I write to register a complaint on the usage of the term “child porn” in the below referenced article on Jonathan Walsh, a serious offender and child abuser.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4331478/Paedophile-children-s-doctor-jailed-three-years.html>

The term “child porn”, used in this article on three separate occasions, greatly diminishes the scale of the abuse suffered by these children. With the usage of this term, there is a gross implication that children are “performers” in this abuse, rather than victims of serious crimes. This can have serious repercussions in the response to children by law enforcement and child protection, subjecting them to risks of victim blaming and further re-traumatisation, as well as potentially minimising the culpability of the abuser in the eyes of the law.

We request that you change this wording to “child abuse images” in accordance with current guidance – as in the link below – including from the UK government, on the issue.

http://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Terminology-guidelines_ENG.pdf