Centre of expertise
on child
sexual abuse

Mapping current research into child sexual abuse
Updated survey findings

January 2020
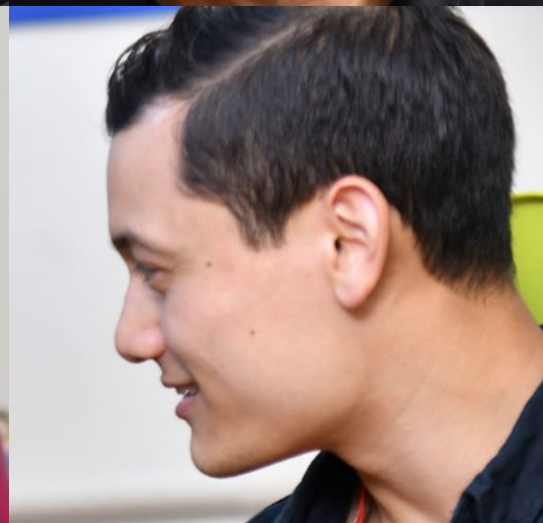
Acknowledgements

About the Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse

The Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (CSA Centre) wants children to be able to live free from the threat and harm of sexual abuse. Our aim is to reduce the impact of child sexual abuse through improved prevention and better response.

We are a multi-disciplinary team, funded by the Home Office and hosted by Barnardo's, working closely with key partners from academic institutions, local authorities, health, education, police and the voluntary sector. However, we are independent and will challenge any barriers, assumptions, taboos and ways of working that prevent us from increasing our understanding and improving our approach to child sexual abuse.

To tackle child sexual abuse we must understand its causes, scope, scale and impact. We know a lot about child sexual abuse and have made progress in dealing with it, but there are still many gaps in our knowledge and understanding which limit how effectively the issue is tackled.

Contents

Summary

Research aims and scope

The Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (CSA Centre) has identified that, while there is a significant level of research activity on topics related to child sexual abuse (CSA), there is a lack of coordination across the field. This risks duplication, wasted resources and missed opportunities for shared learning and collaboration.

In early 2018, the CSA Centre conducted a survey with the aim of building an understanding of the current research landscape related to CSA, including child sexual exploitation (CSE). The survey was repeated in mid-2019, and the findings from both surveys are presented in this report.

The online questionnaire used for the surveys was completed by a total of 68 professionals involved in the commissioning, funding or delivery of research related to CSA; these respondents worked across a range of organisations in academia, practice and policy. Details of 165 research projects were submitted, and additional input was provided via other stakeholder engagement during the first survey period. Information about all 165 projects is available in a spreadsheet on our website at **https://www.csacentre.org.uk/ resources/mapping-research/**

The surveys focused on ongoing and recently completed research. Their limitations are that they did not include older published research, and of course that the respondents were self-selecting from a population that may not have reflected the full extent of relevant research.

Key findings

The surveys were intended to provide an insight into the types and forms of research currently being undertaken within the field of CSA. Findings included the following:

‣ Universities were playing a key role in identifying, seeking funding for and delivering research in the sector.

‣ The majority of research projects involved primary research, much of which was of a qualitative nature.

‣ Little of the completed research appeared to have been publicly shared.

‣ More than half of the research studies focused on victims/survivors or those at risk of CSA, with most of the remainder focusing on adult perpetrators.

‣ The form of CSA most commonly researched was CSE, followed by online CSA. A small number of studies were investigating CSA in institutional settings, harmful sexual behaviour exhibited by children and young people, CSA in groups or gangs, and CSA in the family.

‣ Risk, prevention and disruption emerged as a key theme in research, along with the scale and nature of CSA, the motivations and behaviours of perpetrators, and the impact of CSA.

‣ There was a noticeable lack of focus on lesser-heard perspectives (e.g. of children and young people who are from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, in care, disabled or LGBT+) within the projects submitted, highlighting areas for future knowledge development.

Next steps

Building on the findings of this research mapping exercise, the CSA Centre will seek to:

‣ encourage those who commission and fund research to support studies investigating CSA in institutional settings, harmful sexual behaviour exhibited by children and young people, CSA in groups or gangs, and CSA in the family

‣ advocate for future research to take greater account of lesser-heard voices

‣ highlight the value of quantitative research, such as prevalence surveys, in increasing understanding of the scale of CSA

‣ encourage and support the sharing of existing research.

1. Introduction

The Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (CSA Centre) has identified through engagement with stakeholders that, while there is a significant level of research activity in England and Wales on topics related to child sexual abuse (CSA), there is a lack of coordination across the field. This risks duplication, wasted resources and missed opportunities for shared learning and collaboration.

To address this issue, in spring 2018 the CSA Centre conducted a 'research mapping' exercise; its aim was to gather information on research activity taking place in the field, in order to inform conversations at future CSA Connect Community events (see box).

The exercise was repeated in the summer of 2019, and the updated findings are presented in this report. These findings will feed into further work organised by the CSA Centre, as outlined in Chapter 4.

The Appendix lists all the research projects whose details were submitted to us.

The CSA Connect Community

The CSA Connect Community brings together key stakeholders involved in research related to CSA. It aims to improve knowledge and understanding of CSA, promoting collaboration and networking to enable more effective identification and confrontation of gaps in knowledge and evidence.

By facilitating shared learning and collaboration, and reducing duplication, the community creates opportunities for researchers, practitioners and policymakers in the field to shape research activities around CSA.

Details of future CSA Connect Community events will be published on our website at **www.csacentre.org.uk/about-us/events/**

> " The aim of the research mapping exercise was to gather information on research activity taking place in the field "

2. Method

2.1 Sampling and recruitment

In the initial 2018 mapping exercise, the CSA Centre used a self-completion voluntary online survey to engage professionals involved in the commissioning, funding or delivery of research in the field of CSA. Respondents were recruited through the CSA Centre's networks and via social media posts (Twitter and LinkedIn) and the CSA Centre's newsletter; additionally, 216 individuals were sent a link to the survey questionnaire via email and asked to share it among their wider networks.

For the repeat of the mapping exercise, the questionnaire was promoted again through the CSA Centre's newsletter and other channels in May 2019.

2.2 Data collection and analysis

An online questionnaire was developed for the 2018 mapping exercise, and was revised by an internal review panel which provided insight into both its content and its accessibility. The same questionnaire was used for the repeat of the mapping exercise, and was again made available for completion for eight weeks.

Individuals who completed the questionnaire were asked a number of questions about the research projects they were involved in or knew about. The questions covered:

‣ the aims, objectives and purpose of the research

‣ the timescales of research projects and related progress against these

‣ the agencies who funded, commissioned and delivered the research

‣ the focus of the research.

The questionnaire had been designed so that respondents could complete it as easily as possible; as a result, the quantitative results needed to be exported and cleansed within Excel. The quantitative data was then analysed manually to provide the key statistics presented in Chapter 3.

The qualitative responses to the survey questions were thematically analysed in an attempt to build a more in-depth picture; output from this exercise, together with further information provided by a number of stakeholders via email and social media, is provided under the heading of 'Insights' throughout Chapter 3.

2.3 Limitations

There were a number of limitations to this study:

‣ Response to each survey relied on respondents being made aware of the survey and having the time to complete it.

‣ The questionnaire was available for completion for short periods of time. There is, no doubt, other research under way that will not have been captured in this research mapping exercise.

‣ The exercise relied on respondents providing their own descriptions of their research projects – which, in a few cases, means that information was incomplete or unclear.

This report, therefore, does not claim to present a definitive summary of current and recent research projects on topics related to CSA. Nevertheless, we consider that it presents interesting and useful insights into work being undertaken in this field.

3. Findings

The initial survey in 2018 attracted responses from 101 people, of whom:

‣ 58 completed the questionnaire, submitting information about 163 research projects that they had worked on or were aware of within their own organisation

‣ 43 provided insufficient data for analysis, so their responses were removed from the data file.

The 2019 survey attracted responses from another 17 individuals, 10 of whom provided details of a further 12 research projects.

When the responses to the two surveys were combined, we reviewed the CSA Centre's own list of research projects submitted to the initial survey, and decided that a suite of related research publications should be considered as a single research project. This reduced the number of research projects from the initial survey from 163 to 153.

The analysis in this chapter therefore relates to responses from 68 individuals across the two surveys, covering a total of 165 research projects. A full list of these projects can be found in the Appendix.

3.1 Who is involved in research?

Given the aims of the mapping exercise, extensive demographic data was not collected from the 68 respondents; the questions relating to the respondents themselves focused on their professional capacity (their job title, the organisation they belonged to, etc.).

Respondents' areas of work

Figure 1 shows that respondents were working in a range of professions, with the most highly represented being academics (n=26) and practitioners (n=21). The findings are to be expected, given the topic of the survey; they also reflect the make-up of the CSA Centre's current networks, which we will bear in mind if this type of mapping exercise is repeated in the future.

A further breakdown of participants with regard to the field or discipline they work in can be found in Table 1. Diverse disciplines were represented, including academics focusing on criminology (n=7) and psychology (n=5), charity-sector practitioners (n=8) and PhD students (n=8).

Table 1. Respondents by discipline

Occupation	Expertise/field/sector	Number of respondents
Academic	Criminology/law	7
	Psychology	5
	Sociology	4
	Child exploitation	2
	Gender-based violence	2
	Social work	2
	Technology/communications	2
	Health studies	1
	Linguistics	1
Practitioner	Charity sector	8
	Healthcare	4
	Police	4
	Central government	2
	Safeguarding	1
	Trust/foundation	1
Researcher	Charity sector	4
	Central government	2
	Healthcare	1
	Policing	1
Student	PhD student	8
Consultant	Research	3
	Safeguarding	1
Policy	Criminal justice	1
	Education	1
	Total	**68**

Figure 1. Respondents by occupation
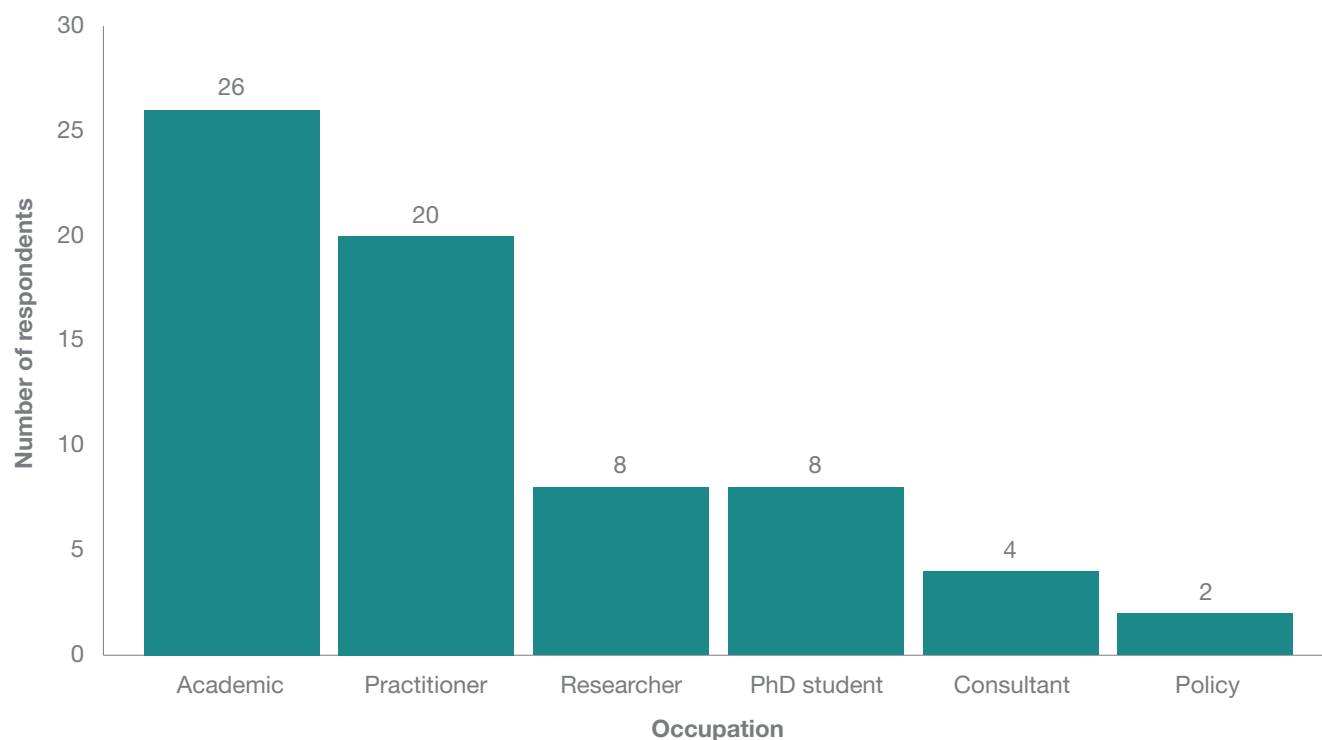
Note: n=68.

Figure 2. Respondents by organisation
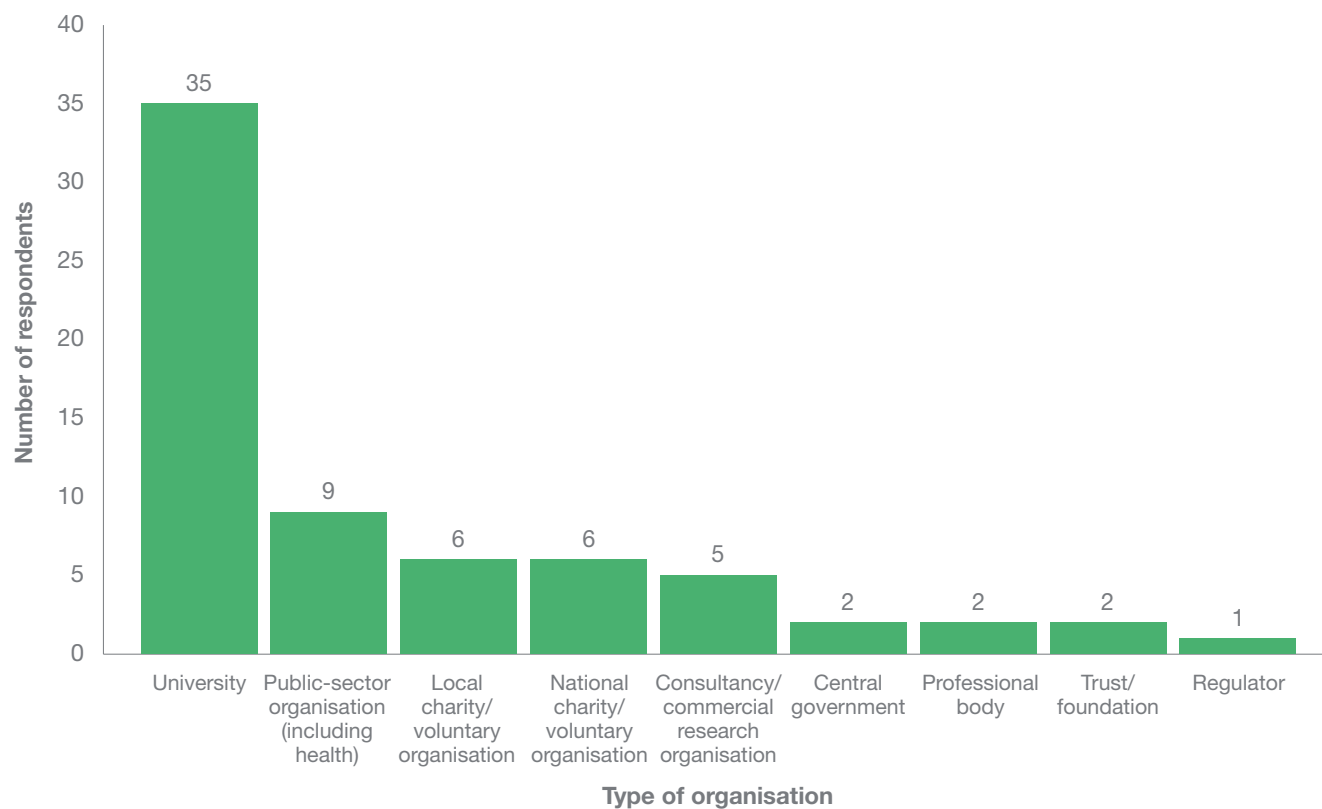
Note: n=68.

It appears that the topic of CSA is of interest to a number of different types of professionals across a variety of sectors and disciplines. While this provides a rich opportunity to develop knowledge of CSA from various angles, it also raises challenges in ensuring that such knowledge, developed by people who approach issues around CSA from very different perspectives and work in very different ways, can be consolidated to produce a coherent picture of CSA.

Furthermore, the questionnaire did not allow respondents undertaking dual roles (e.g. practitioner and researcher, or policy professional and student) to describe both roles. Further understanding of the professional networks and opportunities afforded to those involved in research as part of a hybrid role may provide insight into how individuals can utilise their diverse skills, networks and spaces to improve the research landscape. Nonetheless, Figure 2 shows that university staff represented by far the largest group of respondents, with more than half of the respondents (n=35) working in academic institutions.

## Who commissions, funds and delivers research?

For many of the research projects reported to us, the respondents provided information about the organisations that had commissioned, funded and carried out the research. Universities were identified as having had at least one of these roles in 82 projects.

As Figure 3 shows, public-sector organisations, national charities/voluntary-sector organisations and universities had most frequently *commissioned* research.

Similarly, those who provided *funding* for research were most likely to be public-sector organisations and universities; see Figure 4.

However, Figure 5 shows that it was predominantly universities that *carried out* the research.
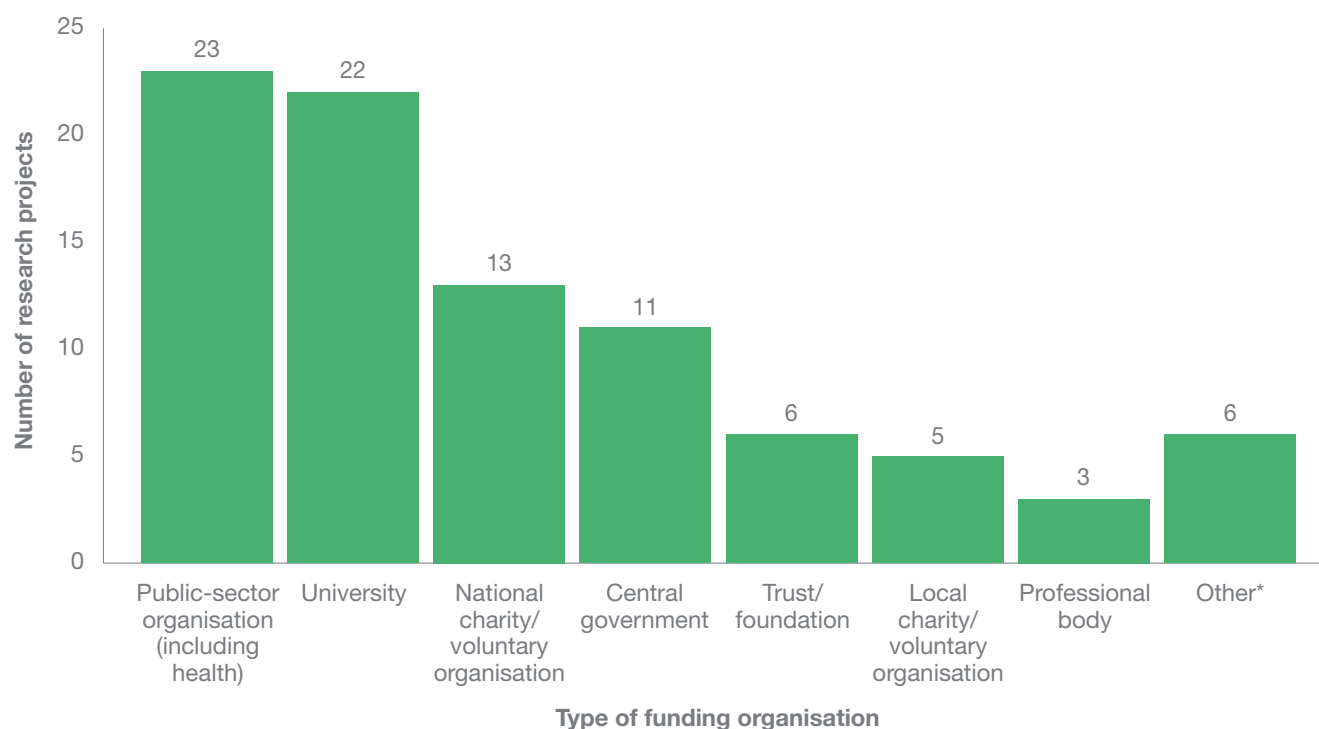
Figure 3. Who commissions research?

Type of commissioning organisation
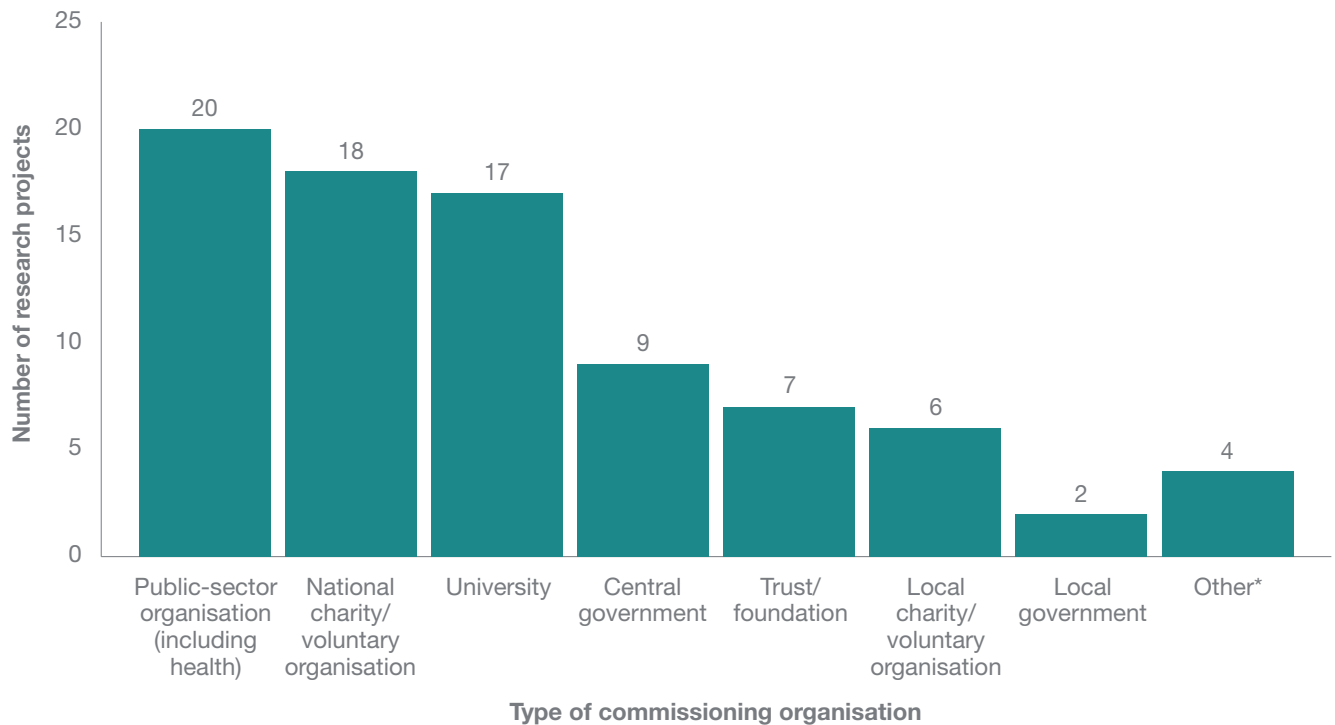
Note: n=83; the research commissioner was not specified for 82 research projects.
* 'Other' commissioners were a commercial research organisation, a professional body, an international charity and a private company.

Figure 4. Who funds research?

Note: n=83; the research funder was not specified for 82 research projects. Respondents could select multiple funders per research project.
* 'Other' funders were an international charity, a local government body, a commercial research organisation, a private company, the European Commission and the WeProtect Global Alliance.

Figure 5. Who carries out the research?
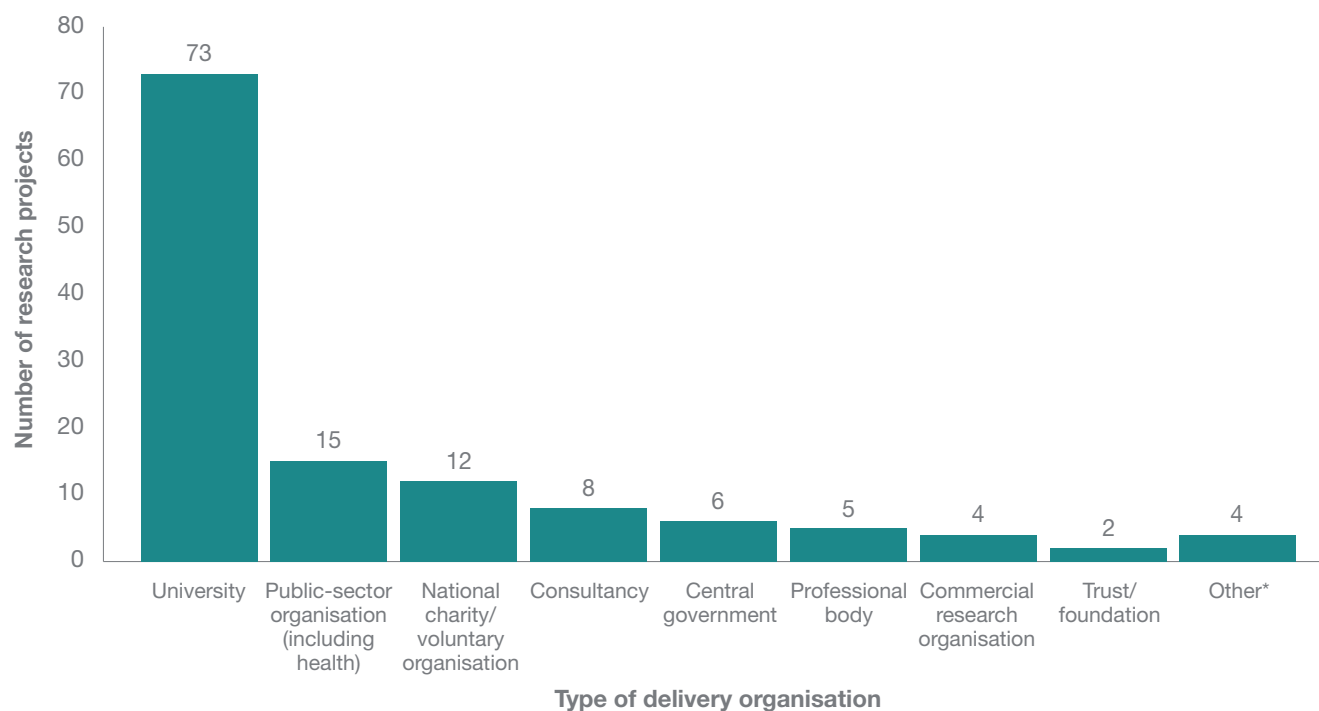

Note: n=111; the research funder was not specified for 54 research projects. Respondents could select multiple funders per research project.
* 'Other' delivery organisations were a local charity/voluntary organisation, an international charity, local government and an individual researcher.
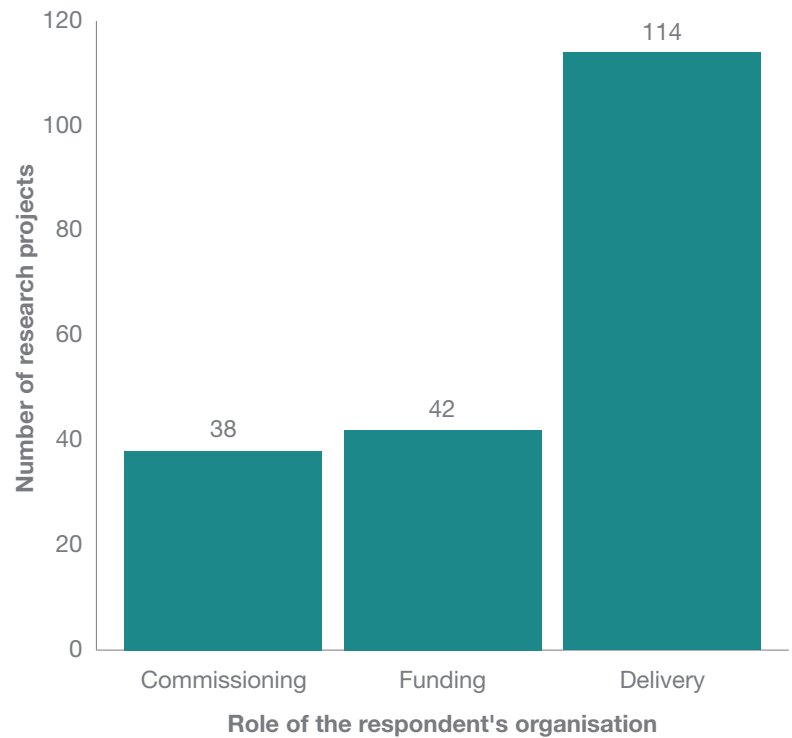
Respondents' roles in research

Respondents were asked about their own (or their organisations') role(s) in the research projects. As Figure 6 shows, they were involved in delivering four-fifths (n=114) of the 144 research projects for which this information was provided, with details of 42 projects provided by those whose organisations had funded the research, and 38 by research commissioners.

In 40 research projects, the respondent reported having multiple roles in the research; 'commissioning and funding' was the most commonly reported combination of roles.

3.2 Progress of research activities

As Figure 7 shows, two-fifths of the research projects described by respondents had been completed at the time of the respective mapping exercises (n=65), although many of these had not yet been published and only three respondents provided a link to a report.

Figure 6. Respondents' role in research

Note: n=144; the respondent's role was not specified for 21 research projects. Respondents could select multiple roles in each research project.

Figure 7. Status of research activities
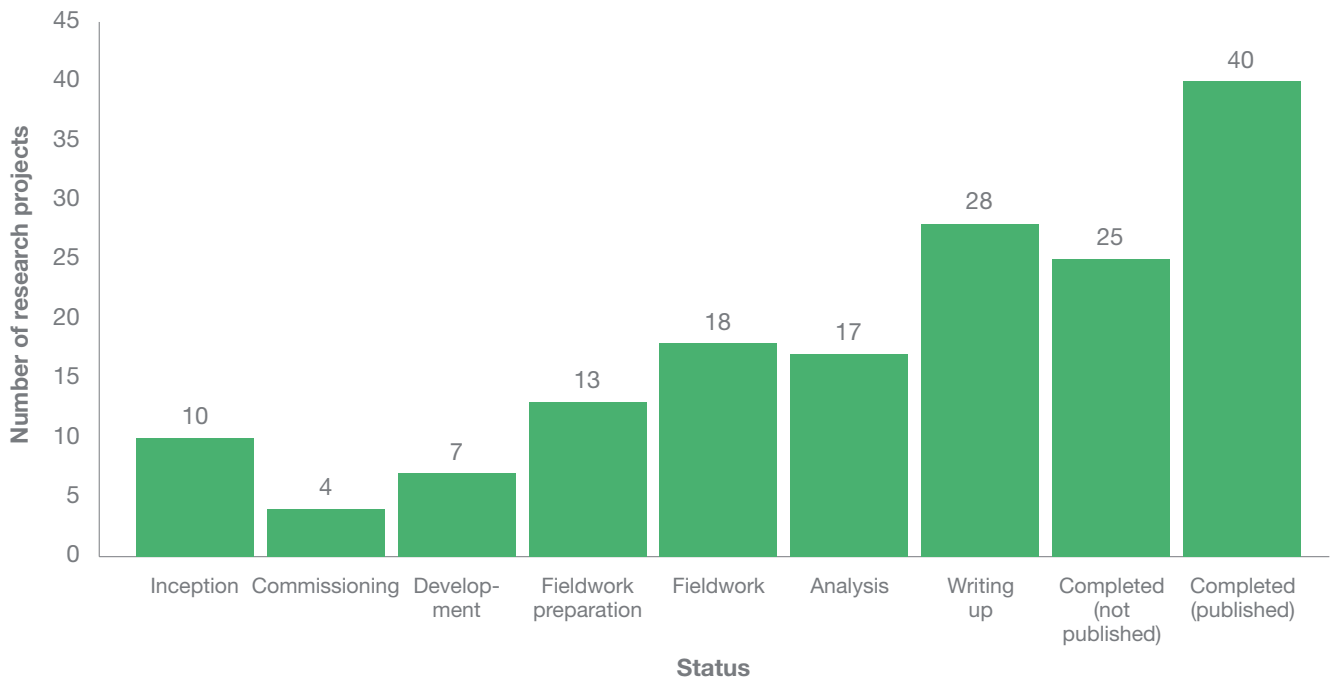
Note: n=162; one research project's status was not reported, and two were described simply as 'ongoing'.

3.3 What types of research are being carried out, and why?

Respondents provided details related to 165 research projects that were under way or recently completed. The purposes of 163 of these projects were provided; four-fifths (n=131) were considered to have more than one purpose, with 143 considered to be of use in supporting knowledge development (88%), 136 in informing practice (83%), and 100 in informing policy (61%) – see Figure 8.

Data on the type of research was supplied for 149 projects. Of these, nearly half (n=64) sought to achieve their purpose(s) by conducting primary research alone, with 17 projects using only secondary data methods and 68 relying on both primary and secondary research; see Figure 9.

Primary research

Figure 10 shows that qualitative studies were a feature of more than half (n=70) of the 132 projects involving primary research; this may reflect the exploratory nature of research into CSA. The existence of a number of evaluative and longitudinal studies indicates, however, that research into causality and effectiveness is feasible in this area.

Insights: Case studies

Respondents said 28 projects were using a case study approach or involved case studies. These included research focusing on women and girls who become pregnant as a result of CSA (VictimFocus), reviewing a year's worth of police case files related to CSE (University of Gloucestershire), and evaluating the introduction of a Child House model in London (Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime).

Insights: Longitudinal studies

Among the 13 longitudinal studies were a longitudinal evaluation of a CSE assessment tool (NWG), a study capturing numbers of female genital mutilation cases reported to the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, and an in-depth assessment of the impact of crimes in virtual reality environments for enforcement, criminal justice and therapeutic considerations (Oxford Internet Institute).

Figure 8. Purposes of research
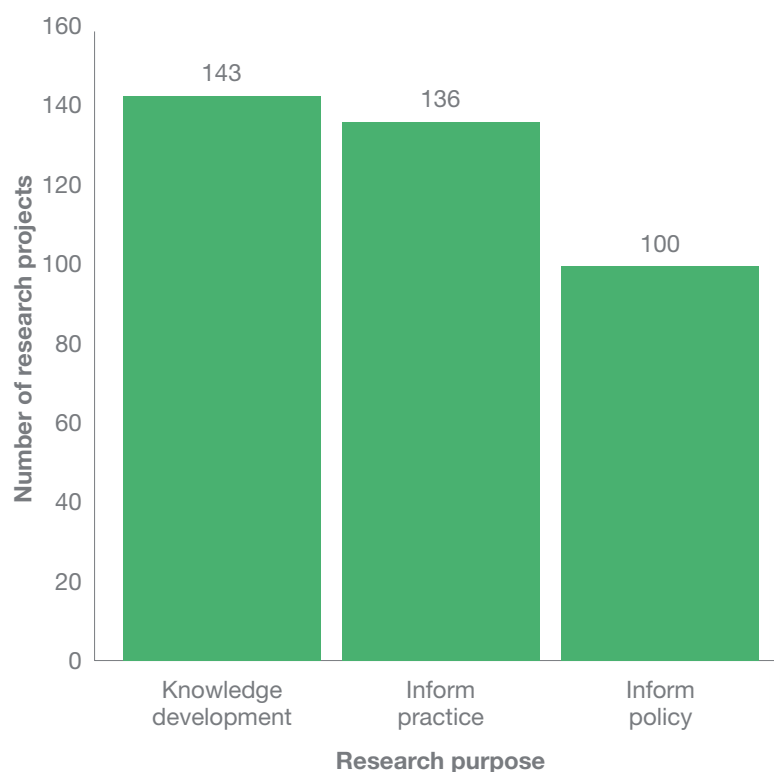
Note n=163; no information was provided about the purpose(s) of two research projects. Respondents were able to select more than one answer per research project.

Figure 9. Types of research
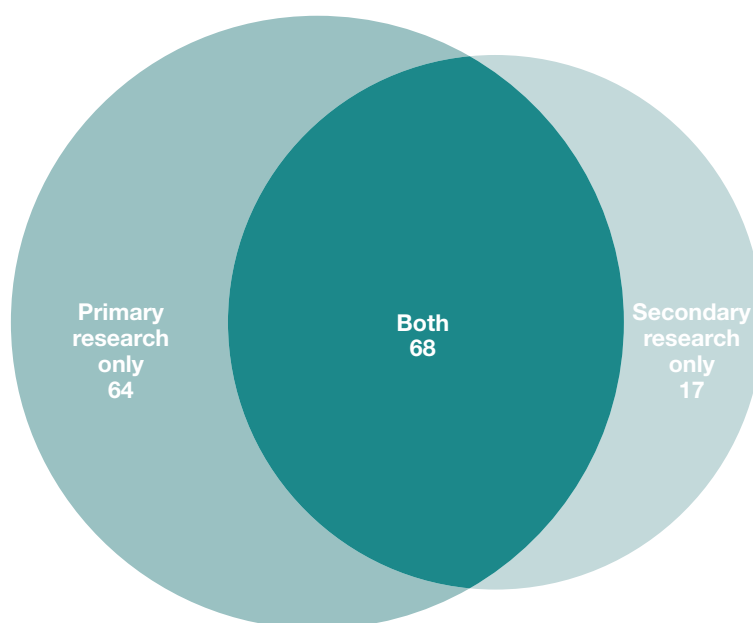
Note: n=149; the type(s) of research were not specified for 16 research projects.

Figure 10. Forms of primary research
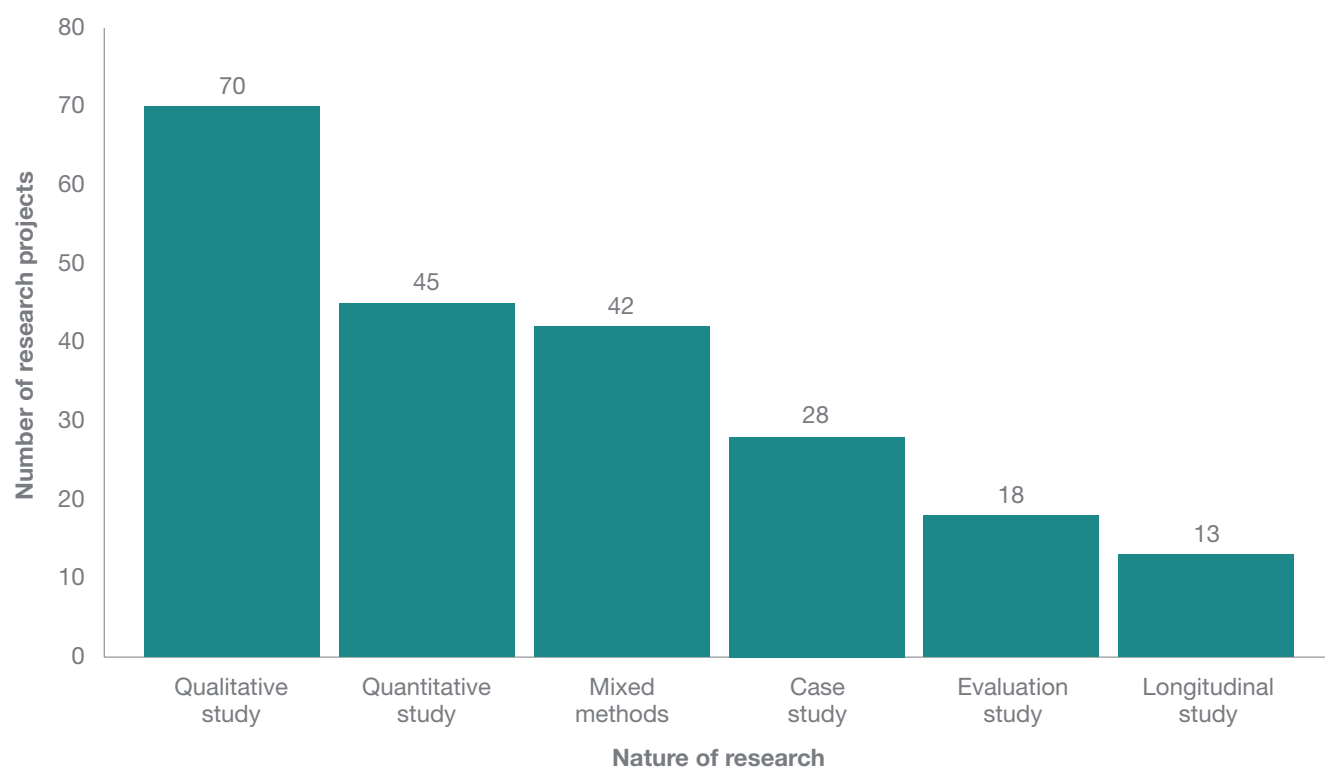
Note: n=131; information was not provided about the nature of one project involving primary research.
Respondents were able to select more than one answer per research project.

Figure 11. Forms of secondary research

Note: n=84; information was not provided about the nature of one project involving secondary research.
Respondents were able to select more than one answer per research project.

Insights: Evaluation studies

Of the 18 evaluation studies submitted through the survey:

‣ Fourteen focused on services or approaches aimed at victims/survivors (or those at risk), including interventions and programmes such as psycho-educational therapeutic support groups for survivors (National Association for People Abused in Childhood); an online support portal for survivors (London Metropolitan University); an evaluation of a programme preventing risk of CSE and HSB (Cardiff University); and an evaluation of the NSPCC's CSE 'Protect & Respect' programme.

‣ Three assessed the effectiveness of interventions with adult perpetrators – an evaluation of medication to manage problematic sexual arousal and an exploration of first-time offending (both by Nottingham Trent University), and an evaluation of a Police Transformation Fund regional CSE initiative (University of Bedfordshire).

‣ One study looked at the effectiveness of a funding strategy for work in the sector (The Blagrave Trust).

Four of the studies were specific to CSE, two covered Rape Crisis Centre initiatives and one looked at contextual safeguarding.

Secondary research

Among the 85 projects involving secondary research, the most popular form of desk research was a literature review (n=59), followed by secondary analysis of quantitative data and secondary analysis of qualitative reports; see Figure 11. The majority of the data reviewed in these secondary analyses came from practitioner organisations (e.g. police files, voluntary-sector data and health service records).

Insight: Practitioner-led research

Eight of the research projects involving secondary research originated from practice-focused organisations, including charities, the police and healthcare. This highlights a recognition of the value of data gathered by frontline workers. The majority of these projects were still under way at the time of the survey, which may suggest an increase in interest in this type of data and its use.

3.4 Which populations and topics are being researched?

Primary focus of the research

Respondents reported that three-fifths (n=98) of the research projects were focused primarily on victims and survivors of CSA (including those at risk of CSA); one-third (n=58) had adult perpetrators of abuse as their focus, with a few (n=8) concentrating on young people who exhibit harmful sexual behaviour (HSB).

Analysis of the qualitative data provided by respondents showed that a number of projects also incorporated the experiences and perceptions of practitioners in the field (primarily the police and social workers/charity sector workers), of the victims/survivors themselves, or of others close to them (e.g. parents).

Insights: Victims and survivors

On the whole, research projects focusing specifically on the victim or survivor detailed their experiences and views – of their abuse, the services they were involved with following the abuse, or their journey to becoming a survivor of abuse rather than a victim.

Projects that stood out here included one focusing on CSA's impact on victims as they go through fatherhood (Survivors West Yorkshire), and another focusing on children and young people as participants in research (University of Bedfordshire).

Insights: Perpetration and perpetrators

A key area of research in relation to perpetration was the profiling of offender behaviours and the profiling of adult perpetrators (based on either their characteristics or their motivations). The contexts in which these were explored included CSA in gangs and groups, with particular focus on the development and operations of networks of abusers (Soul Soup; Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse; PhD study, Coventry University; University of Hull). Projects were being undertaken to understand the thought patterns and perceptions of adult perpetrators; some of this work provided comparative accounts between those who had perpetrated abuse and those who had not (University of Leeds).

Insights: Children and young people who exhibit HSB

Studies focusing on children and young people who exhibit HSB included a study into young people's awareness and experiences of sexual bullying across five European countries (Leeds Beckett University), and two projects looking specifically at HSB in schools (University of Bedfordshire and the National Education Union). Leeds Beckett University was exploring young people's understanding of power inequalities within sexual relationships, while NHS England was mapping the provision and commissioning of HSB services in England.

Forms of CSA covered by research activities

Almost half (n=78) of the research projects were not reported as focusing on a specific form of CSA. Among the remaining 87, CSE and online CSA were the forms attracting the most research activity; see Figure 12.

> Three-fifths of the research projects were focused primarily on victims and survivors of CSA, including those at risk of CSA

Insights: CSE-specific research

Of the 45 research projects related to CSE, two-thirds (n=30) were focused on victims/ survivors and those at risk of CSE, while 14 focused on adult perpetrators and one on young people who display harmful sexual behaviour.

Projects looking at CSE victims/survivors and those at risk included:

‣ evaluations of secure and residential accommodation among young people with experiences of CSE, of the 'See Me, Hear Me' Framework for working with CSE (both by the University of Sussex), and of therapeutic group work with young people who experience CSE (Paradigm Research)

‣ inspections focusing on CSE and children going missing across a range of agencies (Ofsted) as well as an exploration of vulnerability to CSE across the lifespan of a child (Lancashire Constabulary)

‣ an evaluation of a pilot project addressing the emotional health and wellbeing of young people affected by CSE (Paradigm Research)

‣ an analysis of the outcomes of work with sexually exploited young people in Wales and an evaluation of the North Wales CSE Victim Support Pathway and Multi Agency Hub (both Cardiff University), and a critical exploration of responses to CSE in Scotland (Glasgow Caledonian University)

‣ interviews with professionals who have a range of experiences working with CSE, and a rapid evidence assessment to offer a balanced assessment of what is known about CSE services around the world (Coventry University)

‣ research to identify critical risks to community safety from CSE (Paradigm Research) and to develop a bank of digital resources to support practitioners and children and young people (NHS England North), as well as youth-led research to influence future provision in CSE services (the Blagrave Trust).

Projects looking at adult perpetrators of CSE included research to:

‣ explore the structure and nature of groups and networks involved in CSE (Soul Soup; PhD study, Coventry University) or to profile perpetrators of CSE (University of Central Lancashire), an exploration of CSE police case files (University of Gloucestershire), and an analysis of links between ethnicity, culture, religion and occupation of group-associated CSE offenders (University of Hull); there was also a review of research into characteristics and motivations of perpetrators of CSE (CSA Centre)

‣ examine structures and processes in police forces for responding to CSE (University of Bedfordshire), and explore predictive policing and risk assessment of localised (on-street) CSE (University of Huddersfield)

‣ understand perpetrators of CSE who operate in organised networks (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse), scope interventions for perpetrators of CSE (including online CSE) (CSA Centre) and assess the effectiveness of a CSE assessment tool (NWG).

Figure 12. Forms of CSA covered by research
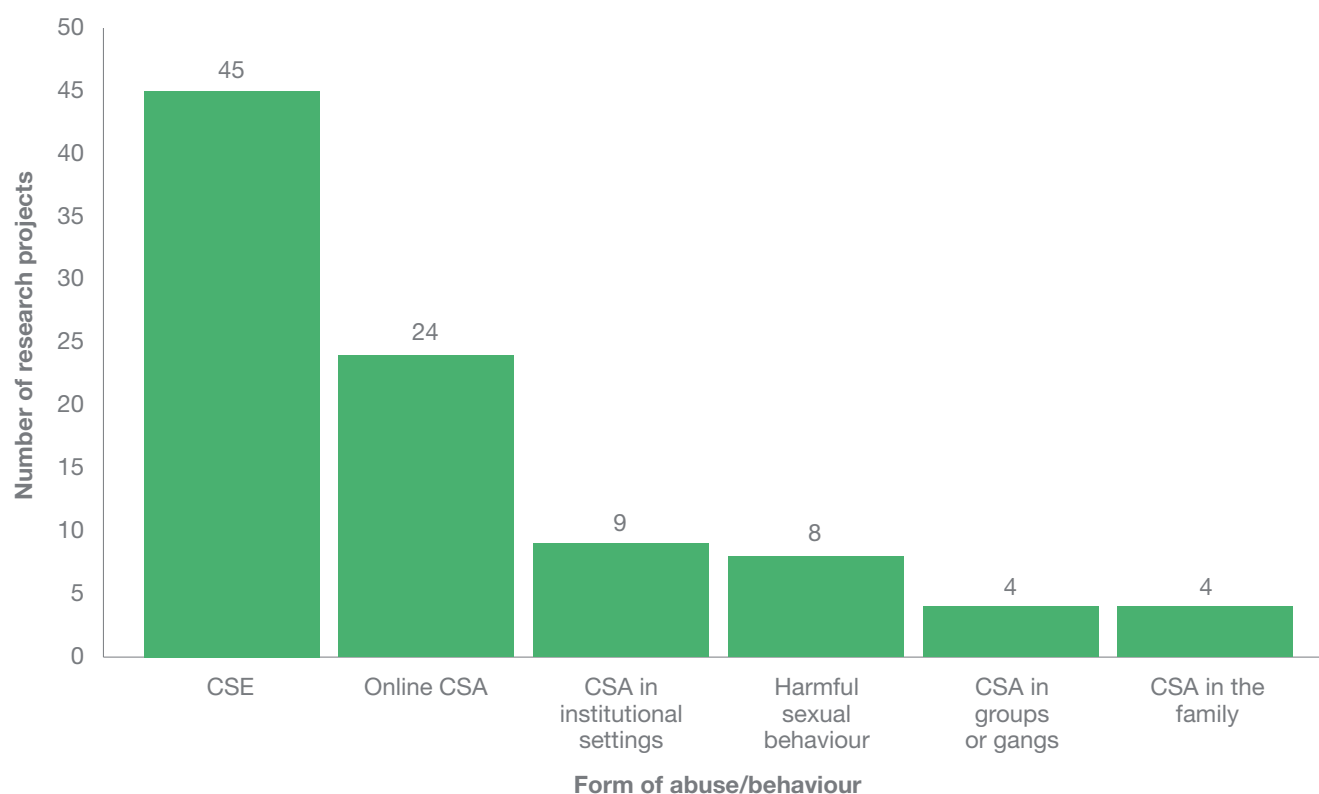
Note: n=87; information about the forms of CSA covered was not provided for 78 research projects. Respondents were able to select more than one answer per research project.

Insights: CSA in institutional settings

Nine research projects were considering abuse in institutions, with five projects (all at Edge Hill University) focusing on institutional abuse in a sporting context. A focus on how institutions, including in the youth secure estate and religious organisations, safeguard children and respond to those who have been abused was more evident as a theme across some projects. One research study was looking into female-perpetrated CSA in organisational contexts (Durham University), and another was exploring the experiences of victims and survivors of CSA in institutional settings (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse).

Insights: HSB exhibited by children and young people

Eight projects were exploring HSB, including two by the CSA Centre and a mapping of existing provision for children and young people in England who exhibit HSB (NHS England). One study was looking to identify a range of multi-agency and school enablers and barriers to preventing and responding to HSB in schools (University of Bedfordshire), while another school-based study was seeking to understand the prevalence and nature of sexism and sexual harassment in schools (National Education Union).

Insights: CSA with an online element

Research into online CSA featured in 24 of the studies reported. Much of this research focused on adult perpetrators, such as research to understand patterns of online grooming (Chanon Consulting; University of Birmingham), the language used to groom children online (Tarian Regional Organised Crime Unit), and the network-forming and offending trajectories of perpetrators of online-facilitated CSA (University of Huddersfield), as well as research exploring how to tackle online CSE (Oxford Internet Institute).

Research projects' objectives related to CSA imagery included understanding who accesses CSA images online and how such images are accessed and used (Tarian), and understanding the coping strategies of non-offending paedophiles (University of Kent).

A small number of projects included a focus on live streaming as a method of sexually abusing children (National Crime Agency; Internet Watch Foundation) and the role of technology in abuse more widely. Studies on this topic also sought to understand perpetrators' behaviours online and how they use technology to facilitate their abuse (e.g. a study by the Internet Watch Foundation exploring search terms used by perpetrators online).

In addition, the Office for National Statistics reported that it was expanding the 10- to 15-year-old Crime Survey for England and Wales to include questions on elements of cybercrime.

Other research looked at those at risk of online CSA, by understanding how the internet amplifies the risks of harm to children (London School of Economics), identifying risk factors that increase the likelihood of children and young people experiencing online sexual victimisation (PhD study, University of Central Lancashire) and developing interventions to prevent online grooming (Swansea University).

Themes covered by research activities

Knowledge development related to risk, prevention and disruption of CSA was a clear priority among research projects, with almost one-third (n=52) having this as a central focus; see Figure 13. Other popular themes included the scale and nature/forms of CSA and the motivations/behaviours of perpetrators.

Insights: Risk, prevention and disruption

Risk and prevention was a key theme across both survivor/victim and perpetrator research, featuring in 49 studies. In relation to victimisation, projects focused on contexts in which risk was high (e.g. online environments), and on determining risk factors that can support the identification of those who may be abused and how this abuse can be prevented. In relation to perpetrators and those who display HSB, there was a focus on the evaluation of risk assessment tools and developing a broader understanding of risks of reoffending.

Five studies had a specific focus on disruption (sometimes alongside risk and prevention), including research to test whether warning pages could dissuade potential online offenders from progressing to sites (University College London) and research into how better to disrupt transnational CSE (National Crime Agency).

Insights: Scale and nature

The prevalence of CSA was a theme in another 24 studies. The majority of these were exploring how different forms of abuse occur, patterns of abuse and abuse pathways (for both victims and perpetrators). For example, a sexual assault referral centre was undertaking analysis into the prevalence of particular injuries and physical signs of abuse among its attendees (St Mary's SARC).

On a much broader scale, the Office for National Statistics was analysing data, provided through its 2015–2016 Crime Survey for England and Wales, that relates to historical CSA; investigating the use of multiple systems estimation to estimate the number of victims/survivors of CSA; and carrying out a feasibility study to determine whether a prevalence study of child abuse could be effective. Meanwhile, the National Association for People Abused in Childhood was producing a calculation of costs to society (England and Wales) caused by CSA, while Edge Hill University was looking at English local authority data to assess the level of child protection and safeguarding concerns in sport and leisure settings.

Figure 13. Themes explored in research
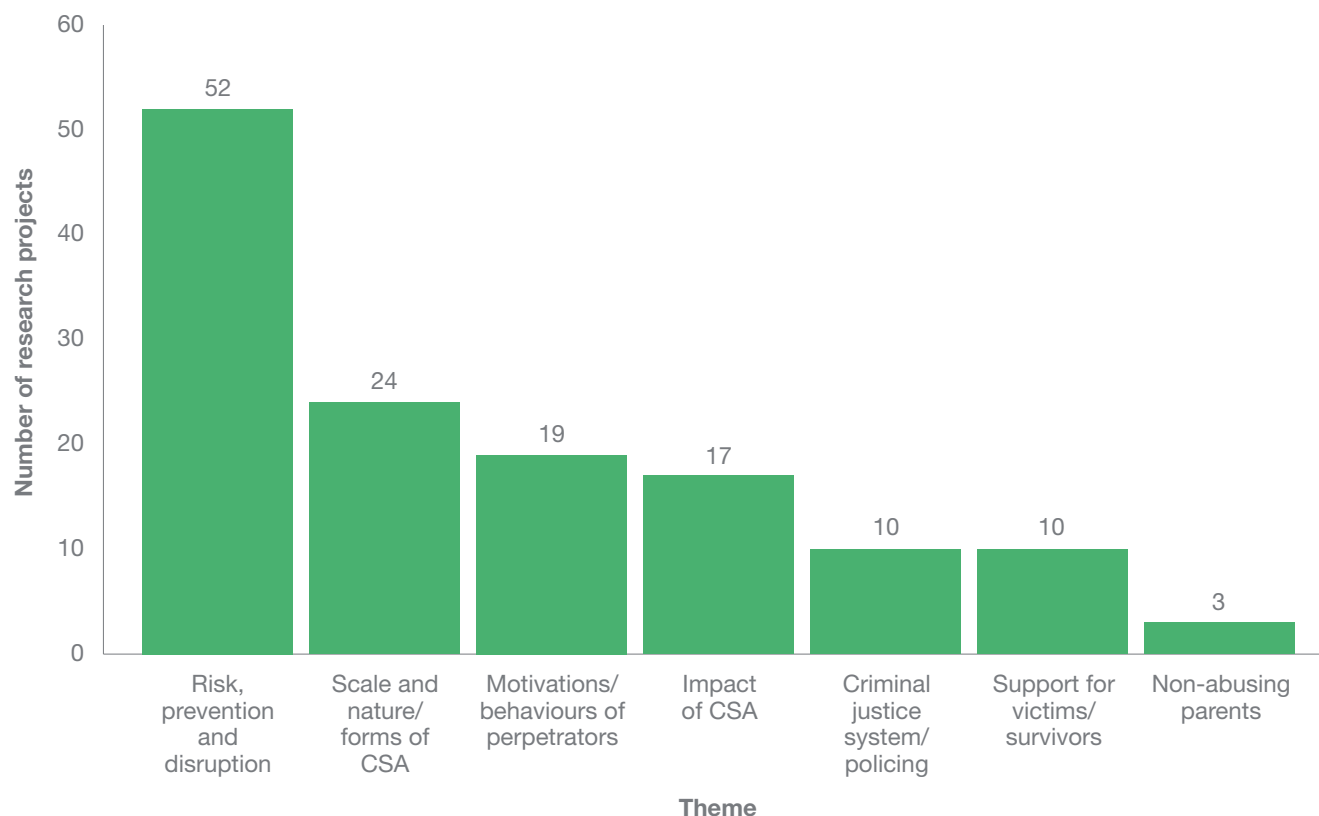
Note: n=123. Respondents were able to select more than one answer per research project; however, some projects did not focus on a specific theme or themes and are therefore not included here.

Insights: Perpetrators' motivations and behaviours

Nineteen studies were exploring the motivations and behaviours of perpetrators. While six of these studies were related to the prevention of CSA, others were seeking to gain an understanding of perpetrators' backgrounds, thoughts and activities. For example, one PhD study was looking into perpetrators' experiences of sexual victimisation in childhood (Swansea University). Another university-led study was exploring links between ethnicity, culture, religion and occupation in organised CSE (University of Hull).

The University of Leeds was carrying out a large-scale survey of male sexual thoughts, including thoughts of children or coercion, in order to identify 'types' of thought in a data-driven typology and examine the relationships between thoughts and experiences. And the University of Kent was examining the utility of various emerging methods used to assess forensically relevant sexual interests.

Insights: Impact of CSA

Seventeen studies were described as exploring the impact of CSA on victims/survivors. Around half of these were considering the longer-term impact of CSA and how it affects individuals in later life. For example, one study was looking into the experiences of adult male survivors of CSA who have experienced mental health problems (Savana). Another was exploring how people who have experienced CSA define and engage with recovery (University of Sheffield).

Research investigating the impact of CSA on young people included a study into the educational experiences of sexually exploited girls (Thyme Research and Consultancy), and research into young people's perspectives on how healthy child development can be supported following sexual abuse in adolescence (University of Bedfordshire).

Insights: Support for victims/survivors

Support services for victims/survivors were the focus of 10 studies. These included evaluations of structured psycho-educational therapeutic support groups and a support line for survivors (National Association for People Abused in Childhood), and of a recovery service for young people who have experienced CSA (Chanon Consulting). One study was looking at the influence of cultural norms which may make disclosure and reporting difficult (University of Kent), and a study by the CSA Centre was exploring professional understanding of medical examinations and development of improved resources.

Insights: Criminal justice system/policing

Ten studies were looking at aspects of the criminal justice system and policing in relation to CSA. These included research looking at special measures for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses (St Mary's SARC), a PhD study into the police's role in assessing and managing men on the sex offenders' register (Leeds Beckett University), a study looking to ascertain trajectories through formal and informal justice systems and identify victim/survivor perspectives on what justice is (Bristol University), and research looking at social work policy and practice around serious case reviews of sexual abuse and exploitation cases (PhD study, University of Gloucester).

Insights: Non-abusing parents

Three studies specifically included a focus on parents: an evidence review of support for parents of sexually exploited young people (CSA Centre); an evaluation of Safer London's Empower Families programme, which provides support to parents of victims of CSE (University of Sussex); and a study to develop an approach to CSE prevention with a community that did not speak English as a first language (NSPCC).

Research into interventions

Research into different types of intervention emerged as another key theme in current and recent research into CSA, with two-fifths (n=65) of projects having this as a focus. These projects were broken down further according to the subjects of the intervention being researched. Three-quarters were focused on interventions for victims/survivors (n=49), with interventions for adult perpetrators or young people displaying HSB being far less commonly researched (n=16); see Figure 14.

Figure 14. Focus of research into interventions
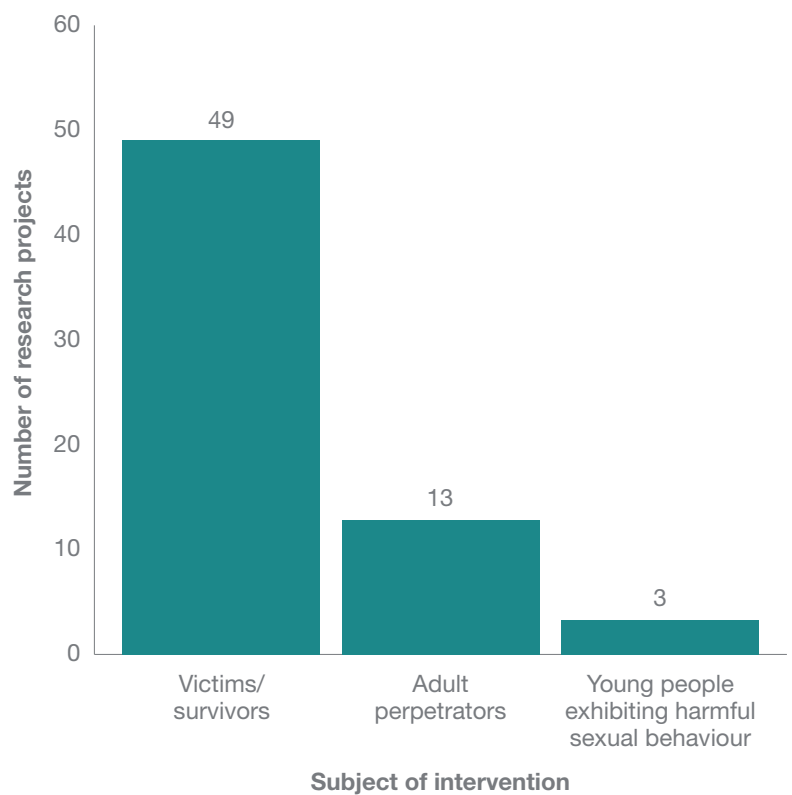
Note: n=65.

> Two-fifths of the projects were described as involving research into interventions for the victims/survivors or the perpetrators of CSA

Insights: Interventions

Most studies related to interventions were focused on service responses for victims/survivors, including therapeutic and protective interventions. A number of projects, however, aimed to inform preventative measures in CSA (including CSE); these most commonly looked at understanding perpetration. A particular focus on contextual safeguarding within the school environment was seen among the research projects. Interest in police/criminal justice responses to CSA and victims of CSA – for example, how these sectors respond to those who have committed CSA or displayed HSB, and victims' experiences of these responses – was another common theme.

Fourteen studies specifically included the perspectives of young people, including research into the response to CSE and missing children (Ofsted) and a project promoting the involvement in research of children and young people affected by sexual violence (University of Bedfordshire). Eight of these studies were looking at work with children and young people in CSE services (e.g. University of Sussex, the Blagrave Trust) while another focused on therapeutic group work with young people who experience CSE (Paradigm Research).

The 13 studies considering interventions for adult perpetrators focused, on the whole, on risk assessment related to either reoffending (e.g. the evaluation of polygraph testing to support the management of offenders (University of Kent)) or treatment (e.g. the evaluation of medication to manage sexual arousal (Nottingham Trent University)).

Of the three studies focused on interventions for children and young people who exhibit HSB, two involved mapping existing provision for such children and young people (NHS England; South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust/Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust), while the other sought to identify a range of multi-agency and school enablers and barriers to preventing and responding to HSB in schools (University of Bedfordshire).

Lesser-heard perspectives

CSA occurs across all communities, but some groups are known to receive less attention in research (in addition to often having their abuse misidentified, or not identified at all, in practice). Our mapping exercise sought to detail research being undertaken with a focus on lesser-heard perspectives – for example, research with or into people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, boys and young men, people with learning or physical disabilities and those in care.

The findings are summarised in Figure 15. No projects were identified as focusing on CSA in relation to migrants/refugees or LGBT+ young people.

Insights: Lesser-heard perspectives

While the consensus in the literature is that certain groups of children and young people are more vulnerable to being abused, less likely to have their abuse identified, and less able to access services, among the research projects submitted there was generally a lack of focus on these groups specifically and their different contexts and vulnerabilities.

For example, five projects were noted as focusing on BAME communities, but only three of these (two of which were from the same researcher at the University of Kent) had a specific focus on a BAME perspective. The third was a research project conducted by Nottingham Counselling Service into cultural attitudes towards CSA within certain BAME communities, while the NSPCC was carrying out research around developing an approach to CSA prevention with a community that did not speak English as a first language.

Some studies aimed to develop knowledge regarding other groups of people, including:

- three studies focusing on the experience of victims and survivors with learning disabilities, including one which was exploring how many clients of St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre have learning disabilities, and an evaluation of a specialist service for young people with learning disabilities who experience, or are at risk of, CSE (Paradigm Research)

- a study examining the experience of disabled young people, and their families, through the criminal justice system (Warwickshire Police).

Figure 15. Research featuring lesser-heard perspectives
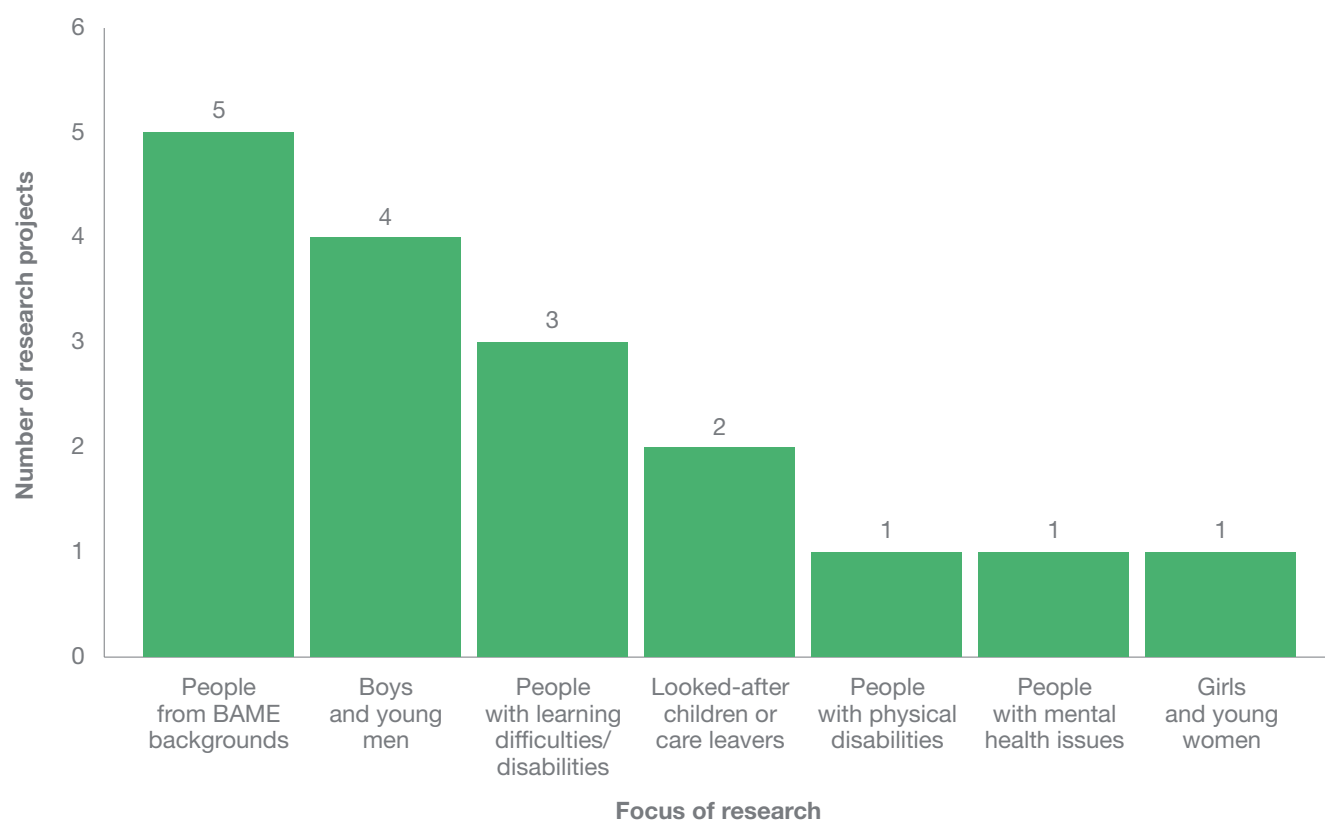
Note: n=17; information on lesser-heard perspectives was not provided for 148 research projects. Respondents were able to select more than one answer per research project.

4. Conclusions

Despite its limitations, this research mapping exercise has provided an insight into the nature of current research related to CSA and has enabled the CSA Centre to develop a more detailed picture of the research landscape.

In particular, it has revealed that much of the current research into CSA is focusing on child sexual exploitation. A number of studies are investigating different aspects of online CSA, particularly in relation to risk and prevention. Only a small number of studies are investigating CSA in institutional settings, harmful sexual behaviour, CSA in groups or gangs, or CSA in the family. Generally the areas of individual risk and wider prevention emerge as attracting a considerable amount of research interest, along with studies into the scale and nature of CSA, the motivations and behaviours of perpetrators, and the impact of CSA.

There was a noticeable lack of focus on lesser-heard voices (e.g. BAME communities, children in care, children with disabilities, LGBT+ children) within the projects submitted, highlighting areas for future knowledge development.

Furthermore, it would appear that much of the research currently under way is of a qualitative nature. While this is immensely valuable in developing an in-depth understanding of specific aspects of CSA, it is also important that this is accompanied by sufficient quantitative research to ensure that we can answer questions about the scale of CSA, overall or in specific contexts.

Next steps

Building on the findings of this research mapping exercise, the CSA Centre will seek to:

- encourage those who commission and fund research to support studies investigating CSA in institutional settings, harmful sexual behaviour, CSA in groups or gangs, and CSA in the family

- advocate for future research to take greater account of lesser-heard perspectives (e.g. of children and young people who are in care, are from BAME backgrounds, have disabilities or are LGBT+)

- highlight the value of quantitative research, such as prevalence surveys, in increasing understanding of the scale of CSA

- encourage and support sharing of existing research.

"
It is important that sufficient quantitative research is being conducted to ensure we can answer questions about the scale of CSA
"

Appendix: Full list of research projects

Details of the projects listed here can be found in our 'research landscape' spreadsheet, available at
www.csacentre.org.uk/resources/mapping-research/

Title of the research project	Organisation
The Alexi Project: evaluation	The Blagrave Trust
The independent evaluation of the funder alliance called CSEFA	The Blagrave Trust
Ten principles of working with children and young people in CSE services	The Blagrave Trust
Young people's participation in CSE services: scoping report	The Blagrave Trust
Evaluation of child sexual exploitation services, Gloucester	Centre for Gender and Violence Research, Bristol University
Justice, inequalities and gender-based violence	Centre for Gender and Violence Research, Bristol University
Evaluation of the North Wales CSE Victim Support Pathway and Multi Agency Hub	Cardiff University
Explaining what child sexual exploitation is and how it occurs	Cardiff University
Exploring pathways into street sex work: understanding childhood experiences in order to identify risk factors	Cardiff University
Exploring pathways into street sex work amongst a cohort of Safer Wales clients known to their 'street life' project	Cardiff University
'Gwella': A national knowledge and practice hub preventing risk of child sexual exploitation and sexually harmful behaviours	Cardiff University: School of Social Sciences
Keeping safe? An analysis of the outcomes of work with sexually exploited young people in Wales	Cardiff University
A perpetrator profile of offenders and offending behaviours of those who create, view and share indecent images of children	Cardiff University: School of Social Sciences
Measuring the scale and changing nature of child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation	Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (CSA Centre)
How to support parents of sexually exploited young people: an evidence review	CSA Centre
The use of tools and checklists to assess risk of child sexual exploitation: an explanatory study	CSA Centre
Responding to child sexual abuse and exploitation in the night-time economy	CSA Centre
A review of international survey methodology on child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation	CSA Centre
Young people who engage in child sexual exploitation behaviours: an exploratory study	CSA Centre
Characteristics and motivations of perpetrators of child sexual exploitation: a rapid evidence assessment of research	CSA Centre
Characteristics and perspectives of adults who have sexually exploited children: scoping research	CSA Centre
Interventions for perpetrators of child sexual exploitation: a scoping study	CSA Centre
Interventions for perpetrators of online child sexual exploitation: a scoping review and gap analysis	CSA Centre
Key messages from research on child sexual exploitation	CSA Centre

Title of the research project	Organisation
Key messages from research on children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour	CSA Centre
The role and scope of medical examinations when there are concerns about child sexual abuse: A scoping review	CSA Centre
Disruption project	CSA Centre
Development of an offending typology of child sexual abuse	CSA Centre
CSA offending typology literature review	CSA Centre
A pilot study of the child sexual abuse data collection template	CSA Centre
Effectiveness of services for sexually abused children and young people: A knowledge review	CSA Centre
Effectiveness of services for sexually abused children and young people: Perspectives of service users with learning difficulties or experience of care	CSA Centre
CSAE online grooming: knowledge report	Chanon Consulting
CSAE Performance-led Outcomes Framework	Chanon Consulting
CSAE Trauma-informed Recovery Service: knowledge report	Chanon Consulting
Characteristics of older sex offenders and strategies to help prevent sex offending	Coventry University
CSE by groups: how does this happen? [PhD student project]	Coventry University
Concept evaluation of Predictive Harm Evaluation Project	Coventry University
Multi-disciplinary Evaluation of Sexual Assault Referral Centres for better Health (MESARCH)	Coventry University
Scoping the evidence on the design, implementation, evaluation and effectiveness of services for children who are vulnerable to, at risk of CSE, or being sexually exploited, or need help recovering from sexual exploitation	Coventry University
NSPCC Young Witness Survey	Crown Prosecution Service
Tracking the content of mainstream pornography	Durham Law School
Understanding female-perpetrated child sexual abuse in organisational contexts	Durham University
Media constructions of child sex offenders in sport: a gendered analysis of British newspaper coverage of Claire Lyte and Barry Bennell	Edge Hill University
Reports of child protection and safeguarding concerns in sport and leisure settings: an analysis of English local authority data between 2010 and 2015	Edge Hill University
Sexual abuse in youth sport: a sociocultural analysis	Edge Hill University
Survivor advocacy in sport: investigating the process, impact and outcomes of survivor-led education for safeguarding in sport	Edge Hill University
VOICE: Voices for truth and dignity – combatting sexual violence in European sport through the voices of those affected	Edge Hill University
Adverse childhood experiences, Shame, seldom passion and harm	Garbutt Psychological Services Ltd
A critical exploration of responses to CSE in Scotland	Glasgow Caledonian University
Experiences and perceptions of safeguarding in the youth secure estate in relation to child sexual abuse	Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
REAs exploring different aspects of CSA and different organisations, such as churches, custodial institutions, social discourses relating to CSA, impacts of CSA	Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
Truth project analysis	Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
Understanding perpetrators of child sexual exploitation who operate in organised networks	Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
Distribution of sexually explicit webcam captures depicting children	Internet Watch Foundation

Title of the research project	Organisation
Search engines and the consumption of child sexual abuse material online	Internet Watch Foundation
A thematic exploration of vulnerability to child sexual exploitation across the lifespan of a child: practitioner perspective	Lancashire Constabulary
Addressing sexual bullying across Europe	Leeds Beckett University
The police's role in assessing and managing men on the Sex Offenders' Register [PhD student project]	Leeds Beckett University
The Sexual Thoughts Project	Leeds Beckett University
Therapeutic approaches for sexual thoughts of children and coercion in men convicted of sexual offences	Leeds Beckett University
Young people's understandings of power inequalities within sexual relationships and implications for sexual consent [PhD student project]	Leeds Beckett University
Evaluation of Essex Rape Crisis Partnership's First Contact Navigators service	Child and Woman Abuse Unit, London Metropolitan University
Evaluation of Rape Crisis England and Wales' Weaving the Web project	Child and Woman Abuse Unit, London Metropolitan University
Social and political discourses about child sexual abuse and their influence on institutional responses	Child and Woman Abuse Unit, London Metropolitan University
Global Kids Online	London School of Economics
The experiences of (ex) female street sex workers who were victims of child sexual exploitation: how to break the link between child sex exploitation and adult sex workers [working thesis title]	Loughborough University
London Lighthouse evaluation	Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime
A calculation of costs to society (England and Wales) caused by childhood abuse	National Association for People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC)
Write-up of learning from NAPAC's delivery of structured psycho-educational therapeutic support groups for survivors	NAPAC
Write-up and publication of learning from 12 years of running a support line and support groups for adult survivors of childhood abuse	NAPAC
An evidence-based approach to prioritising indecent images of children offenders: implications for training and practice [University of Liverpool, PhD]	National Crime Agency: Child Exploitation and Online Protection command (NCA-CEOP)
Grooming profile [NCA NIH]	NCA-CEOP
Protecting children and young people in an internet society [Police Foundation research]	NCA-CEOP
Transnational child sex offenders (Problem Profile) [NCA NIH]	NCA-CEOP
Transnational child sexual offending: understanding threat to disrupt and target	NCA-CEOP
Sexism in schools	National Education Union
Mapping of existing provision for children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour in England	NHS England
A psychosocial engagement model aiming to enhance and expand the existing practices in the area of child sexual exploitation	NHS England North
Safeguarding communication model with children and young people	NHS England North
Breaking the silence	Nottingham Counselling Service
Evaluating medication to manage problematic sexual arousal in people who have committed CSA	Nottingham Trent University
Personality disorder and sexual offending	Nottingham Trent University

Title of the research project	Organisation
Prevention of first-time offending of CSA	Nottingham Trent University
Sextortion/blackmail of adolescents on the internet	Nottingham Trent University
Understanding why people commit incest	Nottingham Trent University
Evaluation of the NSPCC's CSE 'Protect & Respect' programme	NSPCC
Hear and Now feasibility study. phase 1	NSPCC
Protecting parents across communities	NSPCC
Evaluation of CSE assessment tool pilot scheme	NWG
Longitudinal evaluation of CSE assessment tool	NWG
Compendium of data sources on child abuse	Office for National Statistics
Crime Survey for England and Wales Abuse During Childhood Module	Office for National Statistics
Expanding the 10- to 15-year-old Crime Survey for England and Wales to include questions on elements of cybercrime	Office for National Statistics
Feasibility study to determine whether a prevalence study of child abuse could be effective	Office for National Statistics
Investigating use of multiple systems estimation to estimate number of victims of child abuse	Office for National Statistics
JTAI Child sexual exploitation 2016: Time to Listen – a joined up response to child sexual exploitation and children missing	Ofsted
JTAI Criminal and sexual exploitation and children missing 2018	Ofsted
JTAI Sexual Abuse in the family	Ofsted
Cyber-physical convergence	Oxford Internet Institute
Online child sexual exploitation: towards a model international response	Oxford Internet Institute
Evaluation of a pilot project addressing the emotional health and wellbeing of young people affected by CSE	Paradigm Research
Evaluation of specialist service to meet the needs of young people with learning disabilities who experience, or are at risk of, CSE	Paradigm Research
Evaluation of therapeutic group work with young people who experience CSE	Paradigm Research
Identifying critical risks to community safety from CSE	Paradigm Research
What Works: learning from practice to address CSE	Paradigm Research
Evidence review on the physical signs of sexual child abuse and best practice	Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH)
Female genital mutilation	RCPCH
Systematic reviews on the physical signs of child abuse	RCPCH
Clients who self-refer to St Mary's SARC: How does this population differ from police-referred clients?	St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC)
Non-fatal strangulation amongst clients attending Saint Mary's SARC	St Marys SARC
Prevalence of anal injuries in clients attending Saint Mary's SARC following an allegation of anal penetration	St Mary's SARC
Prevalence of learning disabilities among clients attending Saint Mary's SARC	St Mary's SARC
Special measures for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses: A real choice?	St Marys SARC
Adverse health outcomes following child maltreatment	Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospital

Title of the research project	Organisation
An exploration of what adult male survivors of childhood sexual abuse, who have experienced mental health problems, found beneficial or what they would have wanted from statutory and non-statutory mental health services to help maintain and improve their mental wellbeing	Savana
TARGET (Targeting and Reducing Grooming, Exploitation and Trading of Children and Young People Online)	Service Six
Group associated child sexual exploitation: exploring the networks	Soul Soup
National mapping of harmful sexual behaviour	South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust/Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust
"I'll be a survivor for the rest of my life"	Survivors in Transition
Fatherhood and PTG male survivors of sexual violence	Survivors West Yorkshire
Post-traumatic growth (PTG) male survivors of sexual violence	Survivors West Yorkshire
A View from inside the Box IV: Coming Home (RNA)	Survivors West Yorkshire
Developing resilience against online grooming	Swansea University
Experiencing sexual victimisation in childhood: Meaning and impact – the perspectives of child sexual abusers [PhD student project]	Swansea University
CASCADE and SWP IIOC research	Tarian Regional Organised Crime Unit
Corpus linguistics approach to understanding language-based markers of online predation	Tarian Regional Organised Crime Unit
The impact of CSE on the educational experiences of girls [working title]	Thyme Research and Consultancy
Automated internet warnings to prevent viewing of minor-adult images	University College London
Trafficking for sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and domestic servitude	University College London
What works, what doesn't, what is promising for preventing sexual violence and abuse: The effectiveness of situational prevention	University College London
Being heard: promoting children and young people's participatory involvement in research on sexual violence	The International Centre, University of Bedfordshire
Beyond referrals: levers for addressing harmful sexual behaviours in schools	The International Centre, University of Bedfordshire
Embedding contextual safeguarding in practice in Hackney	The International Centre, University of Bedfordshire
Evaluation of a Police Transformation Fund regional CSE initiative	The International Centre, University of Bedfordshire
Evidence-based models of policing to protect children from sexual exploitation	The International Centre, University of Bedfordshire
Learning from the experts: young people's perspectives on how we can support healthy child development after sexual abuse in adolescence	The International Centre, University of Bedfordshire
Our voices too: promoting the involvement of children and young people affected by sexual violence in research, policy and practice	The International Centre, University of Bedfordshire
The challenges of identifying and classifying child sexual abuse material	University of Birmingham
An investigation into online sexual grooming and abuse of children via internet technologies	University of Birmingham
Exploring vulnerability among children and young people who experience online sexual victimisation [PhD student project]	University of Central Lancashire
Profiling CSE perpetration to aid preventative intervention	University of Central Lancashire

Title of the research project	Organisation
Social work policy and practice around serious case reviews of sexual abuse and exploitation cases [PhD student project]	University of Gloucestershire
What can be learnt from reviewing a year's worth of CSE police case files?	University of Gloucestershire
Network forming and offending trajectories – perpetrators of online-facilitated child sexual abuse	University of Huddersfield
Predictive policing and risk assessment – localised (on-street) CSE	University of Huddersfield
A critical analysis of ethnicity, culture, religion and occupation of the offenders convicted of group-associated child sexual exploitation	University of Hull
The coping strategies of non-offending paedophiles	University of Kent
Evaluating polygraph use for managing sexual offenders and suspects	University of Kent
An examination of the relationship between shame, honour and intra-familial child sexual abuse of females in Britain's South Asian families	University of Kent
Examining the relationship between shame, honour and child sexual abuse in South Asian communities (implications for disclosure and reporting) [PhD student project]	University of Kent
Theory of Mind, Implicit Theories, and other social cognition constructs that may lead to CSA	University of Kent
The validity and reliability of indirect measures of sexual interest	University of Kent
A controlled comparison and further exploration of sexual thoughts and experiences in men with and without sexual interests in children	University of Leeds
The Sexual Thoughts Project	University of Leeds
The barriers to and facilitators of intervention work with potential perpetrators of child sexual abuse	University of Nottingham
From victim to survivor: What actions do survivors take to redefine their identity when recovering from child sexual abuse?	University of Sheffield
Department for Education Innovation Fund Evaluation: Hackney Contextual Safeguarding Project	University of Sussex
Evaluating the implementation of contextual safeguarding theory in Hackney	University of Sussex
Evaluation of Safer London's Empower Families programme	University of Sussex
Piloting and evaluating the 'See Me, Hear Me' framework for working with child sexual exploitation	University of Sussex
Spaces and Places Project: An evaluation of secure and residential accommodation among young people with experiences of CSE	University of Sussex
Women and girls who become pregnant from CSA, CSE and sexual violence	VictimFocus
Achieving Best Evidence in CSE investigations	Warwickshire Police
CSA/E and young people with disabilities	Warwickshire Police