

## **Working with children and young people affected by sexual violence in the UK**

### **WEBINAR SUMMARY**

**June 6, 2016**

#### **I. Expert:**

**Dr. Kate D’Arcy**, Senior Research Fellow, University of Bedfordshire

#### **II. Project Background:**

The expert started by mentioning that LEAP is an acronym for the project’s long name. Its aim is to support children and young people affected by sexual violence by facilitating participatory practice. The project started in April 2016 and will end in November 2017.

The LEAP Project, implemented by The International Center, is funded by the EU Commission and aims to:

- a. improve knowledge and develop skills of a child knowledge focus to safe and ethical participatory practice;
- b. develop confidence among practitioners and strengthen their commitment to participatory practice when dealing with children in sexual violence cases.

Mrs. D’Arcy emphasized that her presentation’s focus would be to provide details about the four-day course that LEAP is developing for specialized practitioners working with children and young people affected by sexual violence in the United Kingdom (UK). At the same time, she would invite people to be part of a knowledge network to share future findings from their EU work.

Apart from the UK partner, Barnardo’s, responsible for organizing the four-day training in the UK, the LEAP Project also has partners in the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary.

Together, the partners will be:

- a. implementing four-day courses, similar to the one piloted in the UK, which will become an e-learning platform available to anyone online;
- b. developing communities of practice in each countries, comprising the participants of each course, in order to ensure the continuity of their involvement;
- c. creating three-day trainings for Youth Facilitators, who are young people, which will deliver skills-based programs for other youths in their country; they will be selected by each of the country partners;
- d. Supporting creative projects to combat sexual violence against youths and minors and raise awareness.

#### **III. The First Training in the UK:**

The first activity in April 2016, the evidence-based training in UK for sexual violence specialists, brought together 20 practitioners from across the country with the goal for them to become champions of advocating participation.

The training involved creating a plan of action for the people's own work on sexual violence. It used experimental methods and focused on building skills, through discussions, group exercises and practice exchanges. In this manner, the participants were given practical resources and ideas that they could reference long after the training was done.

Multiple young people led a session on children's rights and the importance of involving them in activities and procedures that concern them. It also assessed how much children's rights are embedded in British and European legislation and what can be done for it to be improved. The young people also explored how they work with services and how they could improve their engagement with other young people.

#### **IV. Experimental Methods Used in the Training:**

One of the innovative methods applied for the young people's session was the use of masks, representing assumptions about youth often held by adults. A puzzle mask suggested the fact that young people can be puzzling to adults, while a green ones symbolized how young people are often seen as just fooling around.

Another creative activity was 'The Low Hanging Fruit,' which essentially aimed to guide the attendees through how they would improve their participatory approach. In groups, they were responsible for designing trees and building their action plan around it. They had to attach to it paper fruit and leaves, detailing the action steps that needed to be taken, in order to achieve them. The lower the fruit and leaves, the more easily attainable the goals.

The trainers offered multiple themes to consider for the action action, including, but not limited to:

- a. Emotional support for young people;
- b. How to manage risk without preventing participation;
- c. On-going and informed consent;
- d. Non-discrimination and accessibility for all young people, regardless of their background;
- e. Deal with disclosure.

At the end of the training, a community of practice was set up, as an ongoing opportunity for the participants to continue sharing their experiences in implementing their action plan, good practices and stories of change, with the communication being facilitated through the Children Protection Hub for SouthEast Europe's website.

Taking inspiration from the pilot project in the UK, the country partners in the Netherlands, Bulgaria and Romania will deliver similar trainings. At the end, a web-based program would be set up, accessible across the EU.

The project's ultimate aim is to develop an international network for sharing knowledge. If interested in joining the trainings or being linked with relevant country partners, Mrs. D'Arcy invited the webinar participants to email her: [kate.d'arcy@beds.ac.uk](mailto:kate.d'arcy@beds.ac.uk)

In response to a question regarding the communities of practices, the expert emphasizes that, for each country, they will be meeting six times across the project's duration. The organizing team is currently developing a guide regarding the key goals of the communities of practices.