

# An action research project:

## Preventing harmful sexual behaviour and child sexual exploitation

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# Background - Sexual abuse in residential care

- In Australia during the 2015–2016 period there were 55,614 children & young people living in out-of-home care
- Approximately 5% of those children & young people were living in residential care settings
- A disproportionate 33% of child sexual abuse reports to statutory child protection related to that cohort of children & young people
- In Victoria, 1 in 3 children & young people living in residential care are thought to be experiencing sexual exploitation



# “...as a good parent would...”

**Inquiry into the adequacy of the provision of residential care services to Victorian children and young people who have been subject to sexual abuse or sexual exploitation whilst residing in residential care**

- A report by the Victorian Commission for Children & Young People (2015) entitled “... as a good parent would” included an analysis of Incident Reports relating to the sexual abuse of 281 children during the one-year inquiry period
- It found that 63% of children subject to a sexual abuse Incident Report were abused by an external adult perpetrator, while 30% of children were abused by another child or young person
- This indicates that about two thirds of sexual abuse in residential care settings is carried out by adult perpetrators and one third is carried out by other children & young people
- It looks like CSE is a slightly larger problem than HSB for children & young people living in residential care

# Definitions

## **Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)**

Harmful Sexual Behaviour is behaviour expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old that is developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult (Hackett, Holmes, & Branigan, 2016).

## **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

Child Sexual Exploitation is adult-perpetrated sexual abuse that involves a child or young person receiving goods, money, power or attention in exchange for sexual activity. Often the exploitation involves a period of grooming and the victim can think that he or she is in a boyfriend or girlfriend relationship with the perpetrator (Hackett, Holmes, & Branigan, 2016).

# Harmful sexual behaviour framework

An evidence-informed operational framework for children and young people displaying harmful sexual behaviours

**NSPCC**

In partnership with

**research  
in practice**



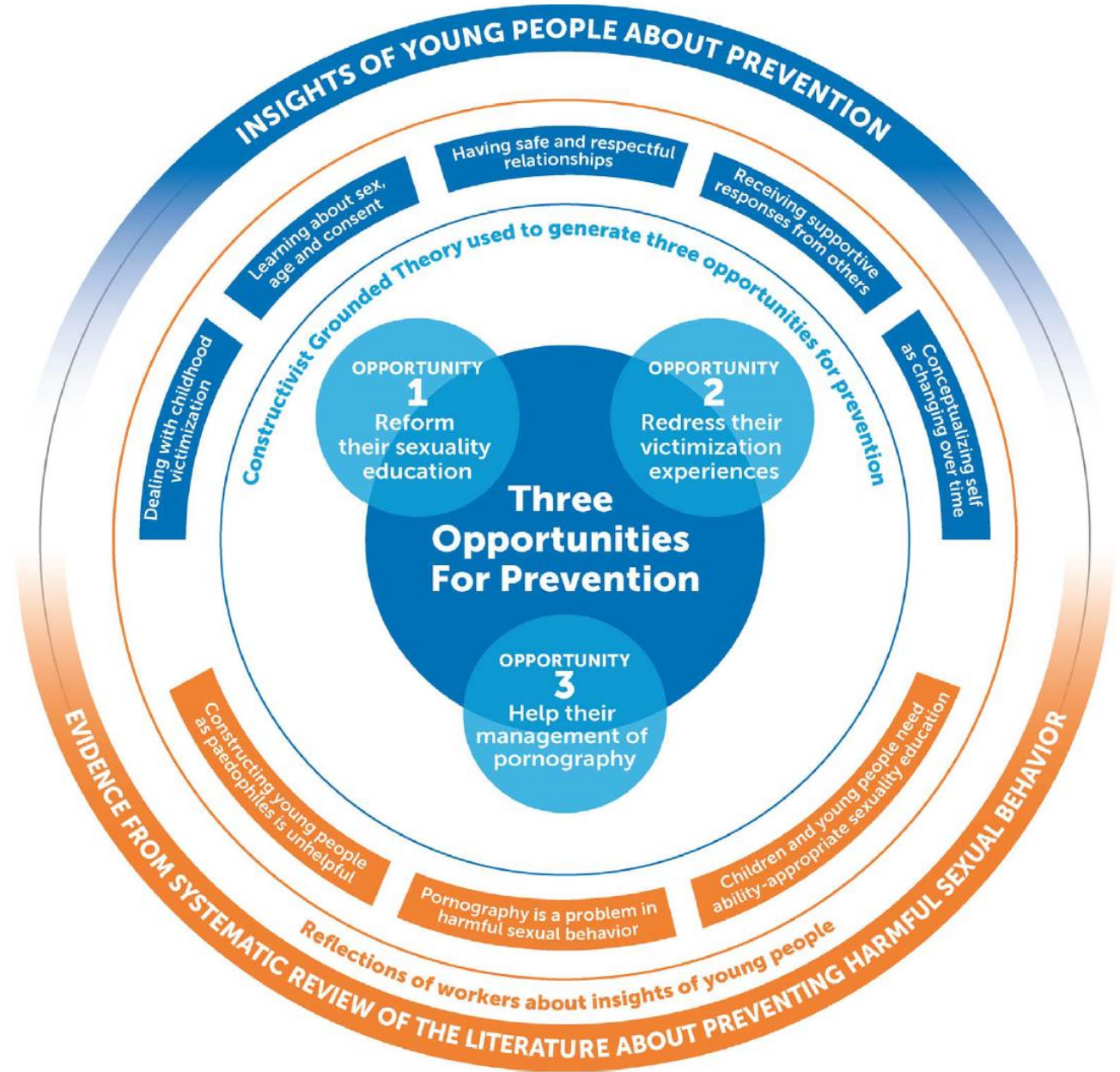
# Emerging trends in large sample (n= 4,564)

- Predominantly it is boys viewing online pornography regularly
- Association between regular viewing of online pornography and carrying out HSB
- Association between viewing pornography and sending and receiving sexual images (sexting)
- Association between sexting and carrying out sexual coercion and violence
- Negative gender attitudes overlap with regular use of online pornography

Source: Stanley et al., 2016 – mixed methods study including survey of 4,564 young people aged 14-17 across five European countries



What the young people said



# Reform their sexuality education

- Too late in trajectory
- Wrong content
- Messenger matters



David said:

*I think if I had sex education before everything had occurred, like obviously before I hit full on puberty, I think everything would have changed. I think, I'm not even sure if what had happened would have happened, because I would have known it was wrong, more so than what I did at the time. I would have known why it was wrong and why not to do it. (David)*





# Redress their victimisation experiences

- Living with family violence
- Being victim of child sexual abuse
- Being emotionally abused
- Bullying and being bullied



# Help their management of pornography

- Peer culture of viewing porn
- Family culture of viewing porn
- Porn as trigger



# Evidence about prevention

Prevention efforts to address HSB and CSE in residential care need to:

1. Construct educative interventions for children & young people and workers about sexual health and safety
2. Target grooming behaviours of perpetrators and problematic sexual behaviour of children & young people, including peer-to-peer grooming
3. Provide children & young people with a holistic treatment response for HSB and long-term exits out of exploitation



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

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journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/chilyouth](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/chilyouth)



Preventing Harmful Sexual Behaviour and Child Sexual Exploitation for children & young people living in residential care: A scoping review in the Australian context

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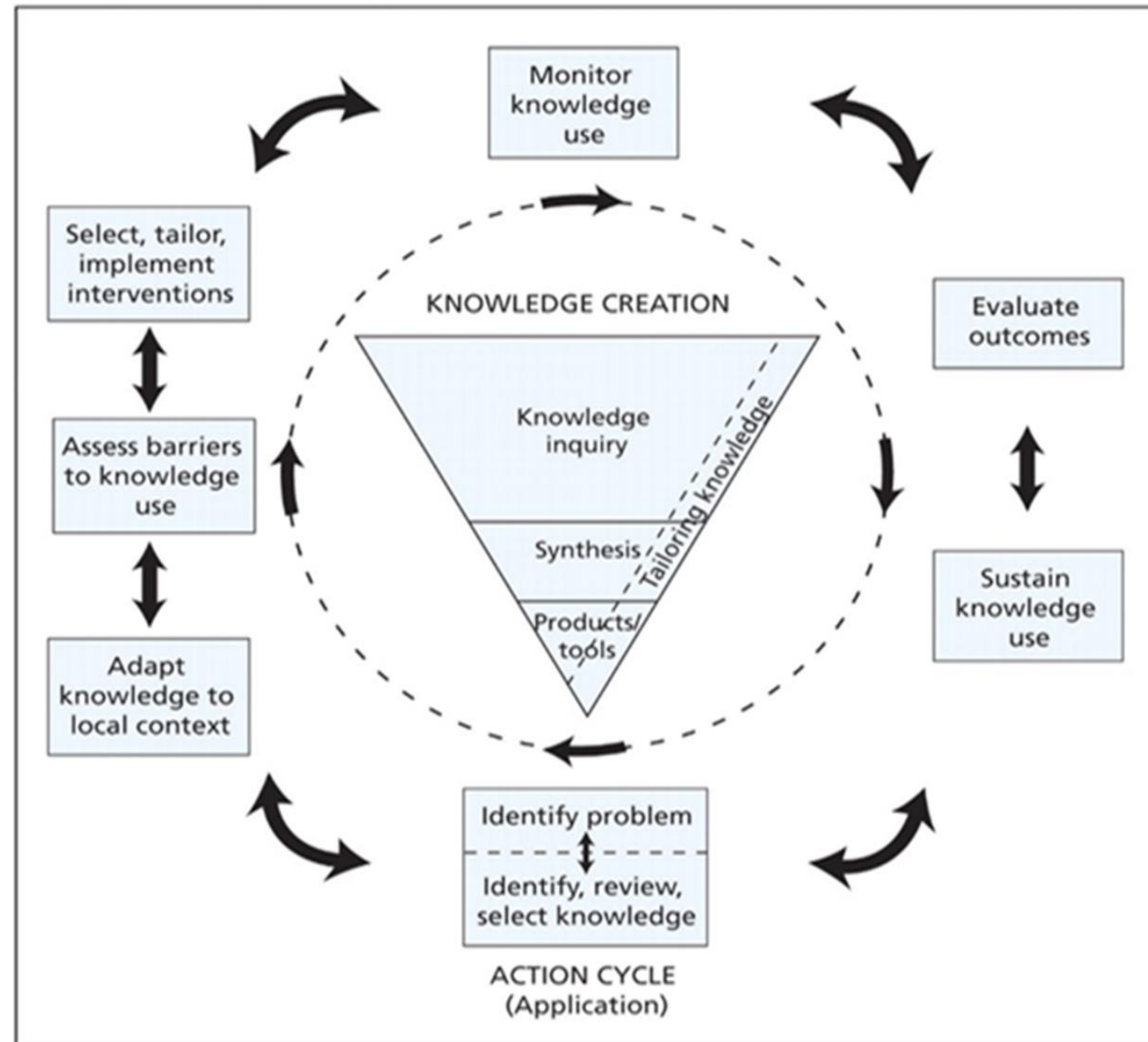


## Correlative factors for sexual exploitation

- Intellectual disability and mental health issues
- Domestic & family violence
- Social isolation and bullying
- Drug & alcohol use
- Going missing from home
- Sexualisation & pornification of culture
- Seeing self as having value only as sexual object

# Research design

- Action research
- Four pilot residential houses
- Co-design of prevention strategies through Expert Advisory Group, focus groups with workers, evidence base



Knowledge to Action Framework (Graham & Tetroe, 2009)



Some  
emerging  
themes

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Going missing & not  
identifying as victim

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Feeling powerless reporting  
to frontline police

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“Peer-to-peer” grooming

### **Core components of three prevention strategies**

#### **Prevention strategy 1 – Whole-of-house respectful relationships and sexuality education**

- (i) Train workers in whole-of-house approach, including recognising and responding to HSB and CSE, as well as common context of Domestic & Family Violence (DFV)*
- (ii) Educate children & young people about respectful relationships and sexual health & safety*
- (iii) Proactively engage in developmentally appropriate sex education*
- (iv) Facilitate Life Story work for children & young people*

#### **Prevention strategy 2 – Missing from home strategy**

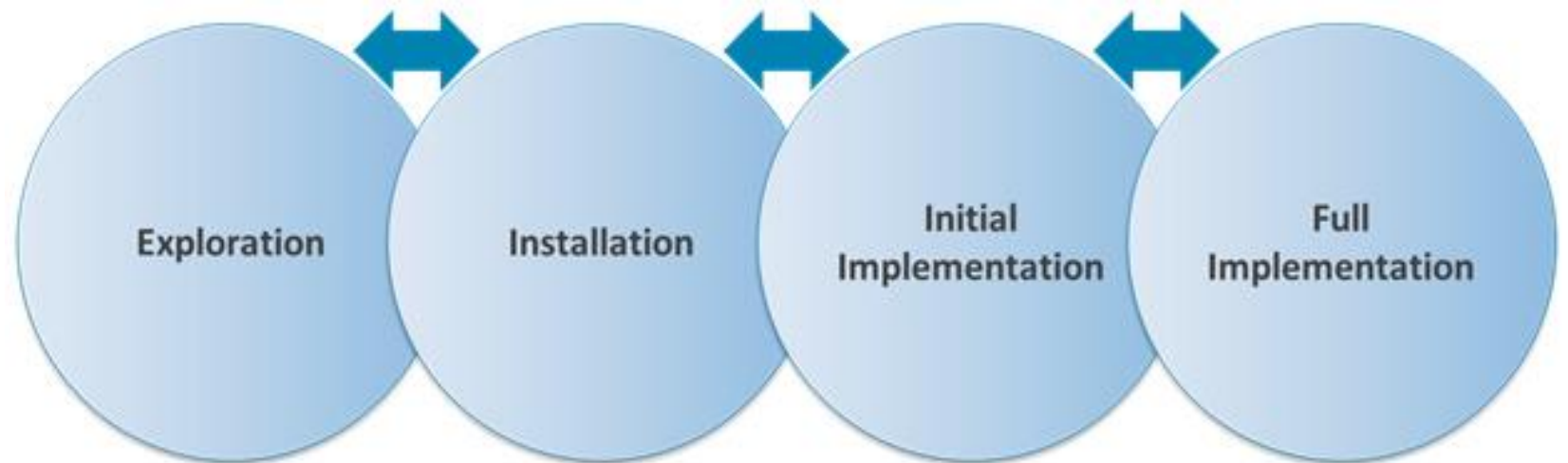
- (i) Establish practice partnerships between child or young person and keyworker (involving social media) to counter grooming*
- (ii) Assertively engage children & young people who are missing from placement using social media*
- (iii) Work consistently with Enhanced Response Model & Sexual Exploitation Protocol*

#### **Prevention strategy 3 – Sexual safety response**

- (i) Implement early identification, safety planning, advocacy & therapeutic treatment for HSB*
- (ii) Proactively support exit strategies for CSE, including strengthening relationships with families of origin*
- (iii) Join-up MacKillop workers with local HSB & CSE professionals, and frontline police*

# Implementation

- Training workers
- Developing action plans with each house
- Linking houses with Sexual Exploitation Practice Leaders and Sexually Abusive Behaviour Treatment Services
- Hiring sexual health nurse educator
- Mobilising MacKillop practitioners to undertake exit work
- Evaluating as we go



# Ethics

- HREC Unimelb
- DHHS
- MacKillop



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS  
PROJECT APPLICATION FORM

### How To Use This Form

- 1. Consider and refer to relevant guidelines and regulations.**

References to specific guidelines are provided, with hyperlinks, throughout this form. The primary guide for human research ethics in Australia is the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research \(2007\) - Updated May 2015](#). Human research ethics applications at the University of Melbourne are reviewed and approved under the warrant of the *National Statement*. References to the *National Statement* are abbreviated (e.g. [NS §2.1](#).)
- 2. Use plain English.**

Use clear, non-technical language in your application. Be concise. Spell out the first instances of acronyms and abbreviations. Avoid jargon. Do not repeat information. Following these directions ensures effective review of your application. It will avoid unnecessary delays which result if applications are not clear and concise.
- 3. Consider ethical principles.**

Your application will be reviewed according to the principles of ethical research outlined in the *National Statement*, namely:

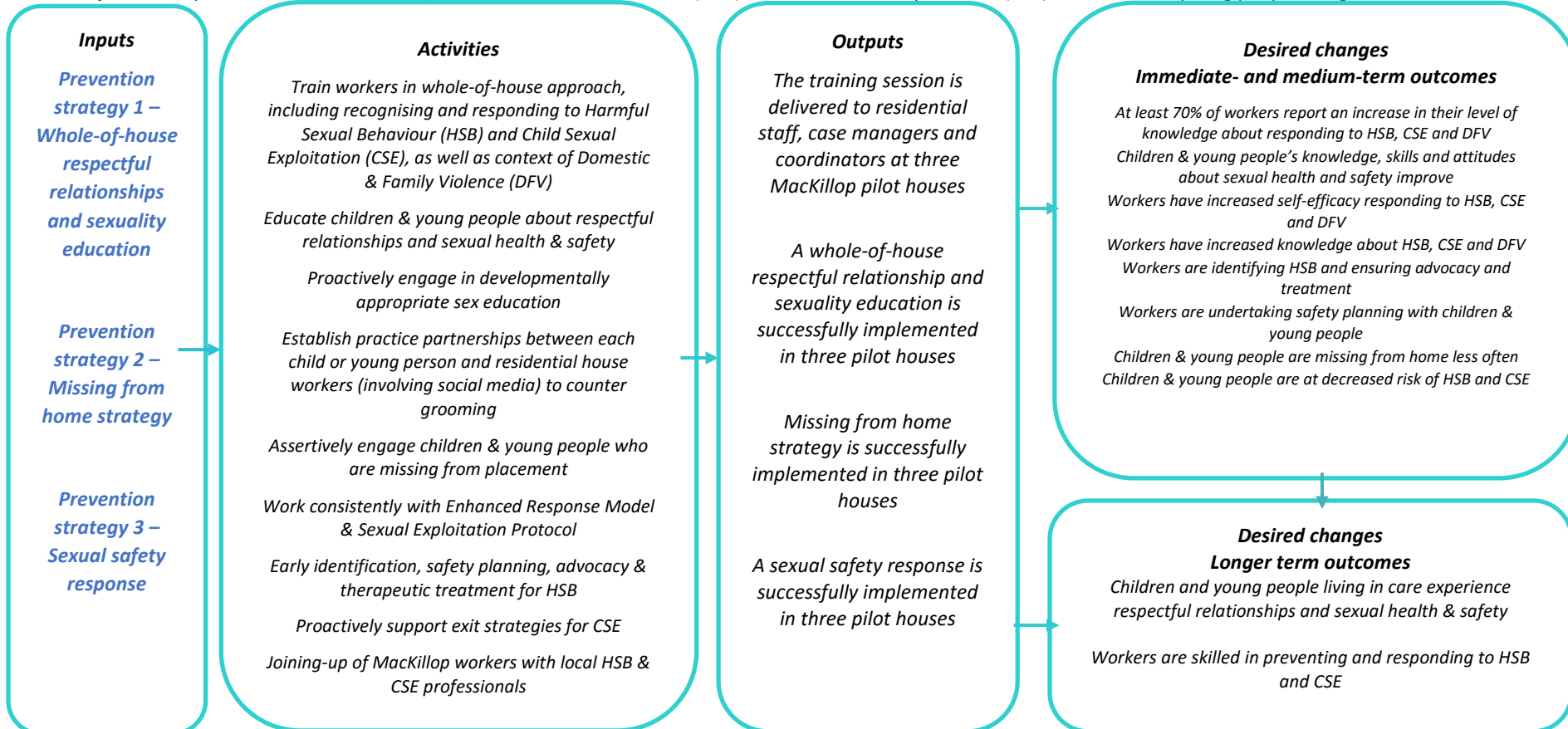
  - **Research Merit and Integrity** ([NS §1.1 - §1.3](#))
  - **Justice** ([NS §1.4 - §1.5](#))
  - **Beneficence** ([NS §1.6 - §1.9](#))
  - **Respect** ([NS §1.10 - §1.13](#))
- 4. Use the current version of the application form.**

# Program Logic and Evaluation Plan

## Respecting Sexual Safety:

### Preventing Harmful Sexual Behaviour and Child Sexual Exploitation for children & young people living in out-of-home care

Objective: To prevent and intervene early in Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) for children & young people living in residential care



In terms of the socio-political landscape it is an ideal time to undertake this prevention project. It is absolutely in-keeping with the implementation of the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Family Violence, the Roadmap for Reform and the report by the Commission for Children & Young People entitled: “. . . as a good parent would.” Further, the prevention strategies are informed by evidence from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and are likely to align well with the recommendations handed down in

Empowerment theory

Network theory

Six changes approach



# References

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**Questions?**