Keynote Speaker - Sophie Hallett

Sophie is a social policy academic whose work is addressed to complex matters of care, agency and the life-course, in particular childhood and youth; her specialist field is child sexual exploitation. Her expertise stems from her doctoral work, which explored child sexual exploitation (CSE) from the perspectives of young people along with a range of professionals working with them, and over the last ten years she has been engaged in co-developed research projects to enhance societal understanding of sexual exploitation and how best to respond. She is significantly involved in the development of CSE policy and guidance in Wales. Prior to beginning her academic career, Sophie worked in the third and public sectors as a consultant on a number of research and policy related projects. Before this, she worked for the Big Lottery Fund and Barnardo’s Cymru. Sophie is committed to research and theory that seeks to inform public service policy and professional practice.

Keynote Presentation: ‘Keeping Safe?’ An analysis of the outcomes of work with sexually exploited young people in Wales

‘Keeping Safe?’ was a three year research study into child sexual exploitation. The aim of the study was to conduct an original investigation into the outcomes for children and young people assessed as being ‘at risk’ of sexual exploitation, as well as exploring how best to support young people when responding to CSE and the challenges involved when doing so. The research presented a unique opportunity to track the outcomes for young people by accessing case files relating to young people across a single local authority, aged between 9 and 18 years who were involved with Children’s Services in 2006, and were each assessed for their risk in relation to sexual exploitation at that time. Through case file analysis, we tracked what happened to these young people over the next ten years, what actions were taken, what interventions were mobilised, if there were missed opportunities for intervention, and what worked (and what didn’t) to reduce risk and create positive outcomes. We also spoke to young people who are currently involved with social services and about whom there are concerns over sexual exploitation, and we also spoke to those involved in supporting them. We spent time in a children’s home too. This presentation discusses the findings from the research, and considers some of the problems with a risk-based approach to supporting young people, and suggests that there is a need to open up the possibility for wellbeing to be the driver for practice.