

Jay review of Child Criminal Exploitation:

Children and Young People's Centre for Justice written evidence submission.

The Children's and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ) works towards ensuring that Scotland's approach to children and young people in conflict with the law is rights-respecting, contributing to better outcomes for our children, young people and communities. We produce robust internationally ground-breaking work, bringing together children and young people's contributions, research evidence, practice wisdom and system know-how to operate as a leader for child and youth justice thinking in Scotland and beyond. Our focus is on three key activities:

- Participation and engagement: amplifying the voices of children and young people.
- Practice and policy development: developing, supporting and improving justice for children and young people.
- Research: Improving our understanding of justice for children and young people.

These activities are underpinned and connected by communication and knowledge exchange work, which is focused on improving awareness of evidence in different forms, and supporting dialogue between different perspectives, types of knowledge and viewpoints.

CYCJ is primarily funded by the Scottish Government and based at the University of Strathclyde.

At CYCJ, the issue of child criminal exploitation (CCE) has been a key area of concern and focus of our work for a number of years. Child Criminal Exploitation should be framed as abuse. We've actively worked to increase awareness of CCE, encouraging a shift away from the criminalisation of exploited children towards child protection responses. We do this through advocating for policy and practice developments to support this shift in how the system responds to criminally exploited children. We have supported this area of work through our involvement with the Serious Organised Crime (SOC) Taskforce and latterly, over the past 3 years, as a member of the Divert 3 sub-group, which focusses on diverting people on the cusp of serious and organised crime.

The SOC Taskforce has always identified and sought to highlight concerns regarding the criminal exploitation of children in an effort to change how these children are responded to. However, the threat continues to evolve. Evidence shows that exploiters adapt to changes in both social and online landscapes in their efforts to groom and recruit children; most recently this was seen in the way that vulnerable children were targeted and exposed to increased levels of harm during the covid-19 lockdown period. By contrast, the inconsistent and disjointed ways in which we understand and approach CCE - combined with its largely hidden and unreported nature - have led to significant knowledge gaps in this area. This has raised further concern in Scotland in relation to there being no National Policy/accurate picture of the extent of CCE in our country.

CYCJ has continued to highlight the absence of Scottish research and data. Subsequently, CYCJ, alongside Action for Children and the Scottish Government, funded initial research published in May 2023 by Nisha Dixon, to establish a baseline of what we know and what the gaps are in relation to CCE. The aim of the research was to gather baseline findings to identify initial actions and create the starting point for a more in-depth national research study. This would then make clear what needs to change in order to better protect our children from such abuse and hold those who exploit them to account more effectively.

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Topics that are addressed by the scoping review included:

- current approaches and legal provision;
- the different types of crime children are coerced into committing;
- the profile of children who are most likely to be targeted as well as key issues, challenges and nuances surrounding CCE, such as:
 - underreporting;
 - the lack of a single authoritative data source; and
 - the adultification and criminalisation of victims.

The research highlights that CCE carries with it the risk of serious and significant harm. Sixty percent of participants reported an increase in weapons being used/carried by children, with protection given as the main reason. Professionals identified the risk of violence and sexual harm as being pervasive, with exploiters looking to assert control, punish those they exploit, or induct them via initiations. The risk of harm extends beyond children to family members and staff. Multiple participants reported safety measures being employed, e.g., families having to be moved. This risk is accentuated when organised crime groups (OCG) and serious organised crime groups (SOCG) are involved.

The following evidence submission relates to the context in Scotland though there are many issues that resonate across the UK; there are also specific complexities regarding crossing of jurisdictional boundaries.

Question 1

What is the scale and nature of child criminal exploitation in the UK?

We do not understand or know the nature, scale and prevalence of CCE across Scotland, with the majority of our information coming from unofficial/ anecdotal sources. It is clear that the criminal exploitation of children is not a new phenomenon in Scotland; social work and other partners have shared anecdotal examples from across the country for several years. There has been a shift in the fact that we are now referring to child criminal exploitation as opposed to children involved in offending behaviour, but more needs done.

Though there are many inconsistencies, what *is* consistent across Scotland is that the data systems currently in place are not able to record CCE when it is identified, or the specifics of what this exploitation looks like, across all agencies. Thus, the limited data available simultaneously highlights and exacerbates the difficulty in trying to understand the prevalence, scale and extent of CCE across Scotland. The small-scale research undertaken by CYCJ, AFC and Scottish Government ([2023](#)) evidenced the difficulty of multi-agency partners from across the justice and children's services landscape in providing data. One of the most significant reasons for this is related to an absence of systemic recording of CCE. This meant manually searching through records and files across agencies would be the only means to identify when CCE was evident. Even if existing systems could have provided data, they are not interconnected, and would still only show snapshots of parts of the system criminally exploited children come into contact with; significant subsequent work would still be required to understand the wider picture.

Police Scotland have begun to address this gap through the introduction of a specific CCE marker on their child concern forms. Within this process they can flag to partners any welfare concerns in relation to a child they have come into contact with either directly through the child's behaviour or through that of others e.g. parents/ carers. They recorded 236 police concerns from March 2022 to February 2023 across 30 Local Authority areas; a significant number were flagged as both "Youth Offender" and "CCE" when the child was charged with an offence, and some with only a "CCE" marker where there was no charge. Primarily these concern forms will be shared with social work services; however, understanding how these concerns were responded to was not part of the research. This highlights a further gap: we do not know how they were dealt with.

In addition, whilst the police flagged concerns regarding CCE to social work, social work systems are not able to record these concerns as CCE due to ineffective system coding. The nine responses from Local Authorities received as part of the research project illustrated this inability to record and subsequently analyse data in terms of CCE reflected across wider social work services. It is not just in terms of social work systems where CCE recording is ineffective.

Of the 350 charges relating to the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015 reported in total to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) as of 28th February 2023, 195 were prosecuted. However, as 'criminal exploitation' is not recognised as a criminal offence in itself under current legislation, COPFS could not advise how many cases involved CCE. The lack of definition of CCE in legislation prohibits us from knowing how many prosecutions related to CCE; nor can we say how many of the 12 TEPOs (Trafficking and Exploitation Prevention Orders) issued were due to the criminal exploitation of children. This inconsistent, fractured data affects our ability to understand the prevalence, nature and extent of CCE; it simultaneously hampers our ability to assess how we are responding to it, and which changes in practice, policy and legislation would have an effective impact when it comes to protecting our children.

The support and recognition by the SOC taskforce (SOCT) in relation to CCE has been invaluable. However, this illustrates that offending behaviour continues to be the primary lens through which we identify CCE; in order to ensure all criminal exploitation is responded to as abuse this area of concern must be firmly centred as a child protection issue. We continue to respond to the indicators of CCE in terms of behaviour, often only recognising potential CCE when behaviour from a child is harmful to others or brings them into conflict with the law. This behaviour is responded to through a criminal lens (where it should be seen as an indicator of abuse). This lens makes it increasingly difficult to respond in a systemic, developmentally- and trauma-responsive manner in a justice system that is anything but. We should in all circumstances be responding through the lens of child protection first and re-framing how we see criminally exploited children.

The prioritisation of viewing criminally exploited children through a criminal lens seems to be most evident where there is a risk of serious harm to others from aspects of the child's behaviour. This tips the response away from child protection, or even of recognising them as children first; there is a sense that they must take responsibility - and be held responsible - within the justice system as opposed to the Scottish Children's Hearing System (CHS), which is welfare orientated. The likelihood of a justice-led response seems to increase in proportion to the seriousness of the harm caused to others and may result in children being subject to both our CHS and the court process, which further complicates matters. This is in contradiction to the approach Scotland has advocated and tried to

progress in terms of children's rights and related protocols, the ethos of Kilbrandon at the heart of our CHS where a child's needs were prioritised over deeds, and Scotland's core policy in relation to children, getting it right for every child (GIRFEC). Whilst the Child Protection Guidance for Scotland (updated 2023) is clear that concerns regarding CCE should trigger the initial referral discussion for child protection process, this continues to be inconsistently applied.

For example, there are clear disparities between how Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is seen and responded to as compared to CCE; there is widespread acceptance that CSE occurs, and an agreed set of responses as part of child protection procedures. This inequity needs addressed in Scotland. Whilst many organisations, agencies and local authorities recognise the need to deal with CCE, having many different policies and strategies with no synergy with child protection and risk management processes further complicates the landscape. It leads to inconsistencies in responses and provision both across the country, and indeed with neighbouring countries.

The level of harm that children and their families are exposed to through criminal exploitation and links to serious violence has been evidenced repeatedly across the UK. Children are being murdered, are being forced to act violently towards others; they are being sexually abused in terms of how they are used to transport drugs but also in terms of punishment. Within Scotland, the impact of covid seems to have coincided with a sense that the level of harm children are being exposed to through criminal exploitation had increased. It is unclear why this has occurred, or whether it had become more visible and coincided with a shift in attitudes towards CCE, with the criminal exploitation of children being seen as abuse rather than children choosing to be involved. The issue of serious and potentially catastrophic harm for children that are criminally exploited is one we cannot ignore.

It is obvious that firmly placing CCE needing a child protection response is critical; however, this must be in tandem with also including prevention and early intervention as a core component of the wider work. This also requires a competent and confident workforce that understands the potential indicators and contexts where a child is being criminally exploited or in the early stages of such abuse which can meaningfully intervene. As part of the Whole System Approach (WSA) policy, which seeks to respond to children coming into contact or conflict with the law as children first and divert them from formal systems, early and effective intervention (EEI) processes provide an opportunity to recognise and respond to early indications of CCE. EEI processes can support early recognition and responses to divert not just individual children from potential exploitation but also groups, as well as addressing the issues identified in places and spaces that may facilitate exploitation. However, delivery and set-up of EEI across Scotland is inconsistent and in terms of recognising CCE; whilst they will receive the police concern forms referred to above (which may indicate such concerns) we do not know what impact the police CCE markers have, or what early intervention in this context looks like. It is unclear whether EEI practitioners in the absence of police markers actively question the presence or potential that a child is being criminally exploited and even when CCE markers are noted interventions if offered are meaningful.

['Practitioner Guidance on Criminal Exploitation'](#) was published for the first time in June 2023 (jointly from SOCT & Scottish Government); this will help to develop the scaffolding for this diverse workforce, spread across many different organisations with different priorities and agendas, to be able to identify and respond to CCE. However, support to understand what responses should look like, and the practice and policy actions required, remains an outstanding need. Ensuring that people

know the guidance is available, how meaningful it is and how it supports practice change as well as identifying what is needed next is important going forward.

Alongside the guidance referenced above we should use this opportunity to share experiences and learning in how different areas are responding to CCE. There are currently no spaces in which practitioners, both within, and across organisations, can come together to share experiences, learn from each other and develop more effective ways of addressing CCE. In addition, further research that seeks to understand the true nature, scale and extent of CCE across Scotland and its connections to other jurisdictions is still required. This would be helped by more effective and meaningful data collection and scrutiny, as we need to understand what data is needed to drive effective change (rather than data for data's sake). Of critical importance is the firm locating of CCE as a child protection issue and the effective use of those processes to protect children.

Question 2

How, and how well, are safeguarding partners and other organisations responding to the problem of child criminal exploitation through service provision?

There are few specific CCE projects across Scotland; Action for Children have been working in this area for some time but their specialist knowledge and skills are limited to a small number of areas where such projects have been commissioned. This is not to say specialist projects are needed across every area in Scotland, rather that we need a National Strategy that all professions follow, and training to ensure a skilled and competent workforce are able to act accordingly in response to CCE.

A lack of shared understanding across multi-agency partners of what constitutes child criminal exploitation impacts upon the ability to recognise and intervene when a child is being criminally exploited, or at risk of becoming so. If professionals are unable to question whether CCE is taking place, then they are unlikely to be able to take appropriate action. There is also a danger that professionals only identify CCE in terms of County Lines or Serious and Organised Crime Groups (SOCGs) as these are often the most obvious and go hand in hand with some of the most serious harms against children.

However, it would be a failing to focus on these aspects solely and it is important that professionals be given the tools and knowledge to be able to recognise the various forms of criminal exploitation which could involve one or a combination of types of exploitation facilitated through:

- peer to peer relationships
- familial relationships
- extra-familial organised networks though not SOC or County lines (definition of organised networks that consist of 3 or more individuals).

Also understanding the wider context of the exploitation, how it is viewed and experienced by the child themselves, the wider community in which they live and those exploiting the child. Research evidences that often children do not see themselves as being exploited; they may experience real

tangible benefits in terms of material assets and self-identity. These are often interwoven with aspects of fear in a complex way that must be understood in order for all parts of the system to be able to intervene effectively. It may be beneficial to actively consider the learning from research into child sexual exploitation and domestic abuse (particularly coercive control) to inform and shape responses to criminally exploited children across multi-agency partners. This may support an ongoing shift in how criminally exploited children are seen and responded to. The absence of a clear definition has a knock-on impact on both the ability to recognise CCE and the ability to take appropriate action.

This understanding of overlap in terms of how we need to understand CCE is illustrated by the potential indicators that a child may be more at risk of CCE being not dissimilar to potential indicators of CSE, or of involvement in offending behaviour or other concerning and adverse outcomes we would not wish children to experience. Tick box exercises in terms of indicators are not helpful in and of themselves; however they can be effective as a tool to aid skilled practitioners gather a nuanced understanding of each child's specific context, allowing them to develop effective and meaningful multi-agency safety and intervention plans.

Additional complexities that are arguably more specific to CCE include –

- Safety of the child, their family, workers and those supporting them
- Financial hardship. Exploiters often offer significant financial and material rewards which outweigh the attempts by agencies to intervene, and glamourise offending behaviour.
- A focus being placed on the child to address the issues surrounding their exploitation, with little to no action against those who exploit them.
- Challenges in responding to CCE within and across different contexts i.e. rural vs cities and where there are significant geographical distances involved
- The inappropriate use of secure care to keep vulnerable children safe from harm, due to an inability to keep children safe within their communities. This stems from a lack of resources.
- Placement of children from other jurisdictions (England mainly) within Scotland in private residential care provision or secure care provision, due to concerns in home areas regarding CCE.
- Lack of early intervention and prevention resources available to universal services and non-statutory services to strengthen their ability to build resilience in preventing from CCE occurring.
- The need to develop resilience across and within communities.

There seem to be persistent attitudes and beliefs which underpin responding to children being criminally exploited as “offending”, and only seeing them through a criminal lens. Often these children are seen as “choosing to be involved” and subsequently held responsible for their own exploitation, having “put themselves at risk”. This creates barriers and disjointed system responses to criminally exploited children.

Promoting and developing a strong network which facilitates a culture of shared learning across the UK would be beneficial. We should strengthen existing relationships to create opportunities to share

knowledge, skills, and resources; this would enable proactive approaches to addressing how CCE functions, reducing its occurrence and protecting children.

Information sharing has been and continues to be an issue in terms of police investigations and intelligence not being shared with child welfare organisations where the perception is that an investigation could be jeopardised as a result. Thus, there may be situations where children are known to be involved in, or on the periphery of, organised crime and this information is not shared as a child protection concern.

Within welfare organisations when a child is being prosecuted there appears to be a lack of understanding as to what information is helpful to share, and with whom, when there are concerns a child is being criminally exploited, or at risk of becoming so. This is particularly evidenced when a child has been prosecuted with little or no awareness of the Lord Advocates instructions on the non-prosecution of victims of human trafficking ([Aug 2021](#)). Practitioners from social work or third sector organisations do not seem aware of what to share with police or the Crown Office in terms of concerns regarding CCE, or the difference it could make.

Another area of tension, which seems to provide barriers to child protection processes being triggered and relates to lack of information sharing or collaborative working, is when children are actually mapped against SOC groups. There are practice concerns that referral to child protection processes are not made for these children and thus their need for protection is not prioritised. Thus, there are perceptions from social work and third sector services that police SOC operations take precedence over information sharing that is vital to protecting children. In addition, situations have been highlighted where children are being issued with Osman warnings and there is a lack of joined up working to ensure the agencies supporting these children are aware of the potential risk or the intelligence, which has triggered this risk, and again lack of child protection actions being triggered in such circumstances.

Whilst the lack of information sharing is a critical issue the ability to act and protect children when the risk of harm is identified and particularly where it is serious is extremely difficult for local authorities. There are occasions where the decision is to deprive children of their liberty because they cannot be kept safe in the community from risk of harm to them from others. This highlights a number of issues in terms of the pressure placed on children and their families to disclose information about those exploiting them which increases the risk of harm to them at times when they feel very unsafe, frightened and the message is that services cannot keep them safe. Thus, we expect the child to take action to protect themselves from people that services cannot keep them safe from. There is a sense of disconnect between the work to protect children and their family's and the police action to disrupt and detect those exploiting children particularly where risk of serious harm to the child is identified.

Other actions taken to try and protect children are often moving or removing children from situations for a period through either respite breaks, or placements out with their areas or in secure care as referenced above. However, in taking such steps which are not done so lightly by decision makers this fails to address the issue of the exploiters who often either find the child or the child seeks them out in some situations, or are simply waiting for the child to return. These very complex situations require a multi-agency joined up approach, which does not seem to be evident or where it occurs is patchy and inconsistent.

Question 3

Do we have the right legal and policy framework to prevent child criminal exploitation? ?

There is no definition of CCE in Scotland, the [child protection guidance](#) states, “CCE is a cause of significant harm and should trigger child protection processes and consideration of relevant preventative action. CCE is not defined in law but practitioners should be alert to the possibility that some children who are victims of trafficking may be exploited by gangs and organised criminal networks. CCE can be associated with ‘county lines’, which refers to criminal exploitation by gangs which export illegal drugs into one or more areas (within the UK). Gangs may use dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of ‘deal line’. Such gangs are known to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move (and store) drugs and money and often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons. However CCE can also occur in the absence of these features.”

The legal and policy framework, which criminally exploited children, are responded to in Scotland outlined as follows and is multifaceted as it involves legislation, and policy related to both justice and children. It must also be acknowledged that in Scotland there are complexities across who is legally defined a child however there are a number of pieces of legislation, policy frameworks across justice and children’s landscape that clearly stipulate approaches taken in response to children should be for all children under the age of 18years.

Scotland prides itself on the view of children being that all under 18s should be treated as such. Often pointing to a number of existing legislation, policy, and practice frameworks which include: Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), Child Protection Guidance and the Whole System Approach as well as pending legislation which would seek to address the exiting complexities in terms of who is legally defined a child and embedding children’s rights and number of wider significant changes through the Incorporation of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill. However, there is a lack of an integrated approach resulting in a significant implementation gap in the application of the legislation and policy to protect and respond to criminally exploited children consistently and in their best interests that understands them as individuals in need of care and protection rather than criminalisation.

In Scotland, we have a unique Children’s Hearings System (CHS), to which all children under age 16 and some 16- and 17-year-olds (who are open to the Scottish Children’s Reporters Administration or subject to a Compulsory Supervision Order prior to their 16th birthday) can be referred. There are a number of different grounds of referral as outlined in the Children’s Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011; none of these specifically use the language of exploitation, though there are various grounds which could be referred to in terms of exploitation, and the harm it may cause. The CHS is made up of 3 lay panel members and a reporter who is responsible for ensuring fair process during hearings, as well as a number of other duties and responsibilities. Not all children who attend a children’s hearing have legal representation, although they are entitled to it. In practice, children where a secure care order may be made will have legal representation but for those where this is not a consideration, many will not utilize their right to legal representation. Legal Representation is available in the Sheriff’s Court for children who have alleged to have offended; this is covered by legal aid.

There are complexities that affect what access, if any, a child from outwith Scotland may have to the Children's Hearings System. This is specifically relevant for children who may be trafficked through county lines and do not reside in Scotland but may come into conflict with the law. If a child does not reside in Scotland, they cannot be referred to the CHS and subsequently the only option is to prosecute them in the criminal court if they come into conflict with the law. In addition, there are significant issues and complexities when children are placed in Scottish residential or secure care homes as part of a cross-border placement. Often, there is little or no communication between the placing authority and the local Scottish authority, and limited/ no support provided by Scottish social work services. Distance often inhibits meaningful interaction with, and support from, the local authority that has responsibility for the child. If a child on a cross-border placement has been placed in residential or secure care provision, that child may be able to access the children's hearings system in some circumstances; however, this again is complicated to navigate, due to legislation and jurisdictional boundaries. Therefore, the system creates barriers to ensuring equity of all children in accessing their rights. There is no agreement between Countries as part of county lines in relation to who or how we support these children to ensure their rights are upheld.

The Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020 makes significant changes with regards to childhood offences, making the disclosure period for childhood convictions zero. This Act is not yet in force and is not likely to be fully implemented until 1st April 2025. The new legislation means childhood offences will become immediately spent, apart from excepted sentences (childhood convictions that resulted in a custodial sentence of more than 48 months, and convictions for a sexual offence that resulted in a custodial sentence of more than 12 months). Young people over 18 will be able to provide context to any childhood convictions eligible for review before any disclosure is made to a third party. The current laws of disclosure are governed by: the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974; The Police Act 1997; and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007. Where a child has been in contact with the police there is a risk that regardless of conviction status the information could be disclosed in enhanced disclosures and PVG (protecting vulnerable groups) scheme applications. This is known as 'Other Relevant Information'.

In Scotland the Age of criminal responsibility is 12. It was raised from 8 years old in December 2021. While these changes mean that it is not possible for children under 12 to be charged or arrested with an offence, the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 (ACR (Scotland) Act) provides the police with specific powers to investigate incidents of serious harmful behaviour by those who are under 12.

The ACR (Scotland) Act gives the police the powers to bring the child to an investigative interview, search the child or premises linked to them, and take samples – including intimate samples. A child under 12 years old, and their parent can choose to decline/agree to an investigative interview if asked to participate in one by the Police. If a child does not consent to an investigative interview, the police can then make an application to the sheriff for authorization. If a child attends an investigative interview they will be provided with a Child Interview Rights Practitioner (CHIRP). CHIRPs are qualified solicitors, but they are not there to provide legal advice. Rather their role is to 'advocate' for the child, to help them communicate their own needs, wishes and concerns in relation to the conduct of the interview, and at times to communicate what the child has told them has occurred. They also have a role in preparing for the interview. As children under 12 are below the age of

criminal responsibility they are not to be treated as a suspect; the approach taken by the professionals involved in the process must reflect the non-criminal nature of the interview.

The ACR (Scotland) Act was enacted on 17th December 2021, and to date, there have been a total of 5 incidents involving 6 children requiring interviews. This number will increase if the ACR in Scotland increases past the age of 12. There was a 3-year review period included in the Act, when ends on 16th December 2024.

In Scotland, a child over the age of criminal responsibility has the right to have a solicitor present while being interviewed about an offence which the constable has reasonable grounds to suspect the person of committing. (Section 32 Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016). A person under 16 years of age may not consent to being interviewed without a solicitor present. A 16- or 17-year-old who is subject to a compulsory supervision order or an interim compulsory supervision order cannot consent to being interviewed by the police without a solicitor present as outlined by section 33 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2016. There are questions as to the effectiveness of legal representation where a child is being criminally exploited whether they would recognise this and where they would flag such concerns or understanding or awareness of the Lord Advocates Instruction as referenced. This is a further unknown and reflects the wider context in terms of criminally exploited children, that the workforce in its most general terms seems ill equipped or knowledgeable to be able to take appropriate action to protect these children and act in their best interests. This would appear another area, which requires further exploration to understand how best to respond to CCE and interconnection with other services and agencies.

The understanding of the Human Trafficking & Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015 or lack thereof is a barrier to its effective use by practitioners and those working directly with children who are being criminally exploited/at risk of becoming so. The language is not helpful; the absence of an explicit reference to criminal exploitation often leaves those directly engaging and working with children to wrestle and make the connections for themselves. Thus, the current legislation makes it difficult to grasp its direct application and relevance to CCE. There is a need for clarity and simplicity in the language; this would encourage people to understand criminal exploitation and how it applies to children within Scotland as well as children trafficked into Scotland and between UK jurisdictions.

In addition, we should consider the National Referral Mechanism and how well it is being utilised by agencies in terms of children that are being criminally exploited. We know numbers in terms of referrals for criminal exploitation are increasing but the question remains: 'what difference is this making?' In addition there is a question over the impact for Scottish children as opposed to children trafficked into Scotland from outwith the UK. In terms of children in migration this is an area that is likely to emerge in Scotland as currently not being flagged as an issue; as more Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) are placed across Scotland this may emerge as an area of concern - we need to be alert to that we have not yet considered. This is likely to raise further complications in terms of integrated knowledge across an already complex landscape.

At CYCJ we believe that there are tensions between approaches. These tensions stem from the different roles, responsibilities and functions of organisations that may all be involved in responding to criminally exploited children.



We are in full agreement with Dixon (2023) who highlighted the need for a statutory definition of CCE. Knowledge (and effective application) of policy and legislation is intertwined with the need for stronger implementation within a child protection approach.

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