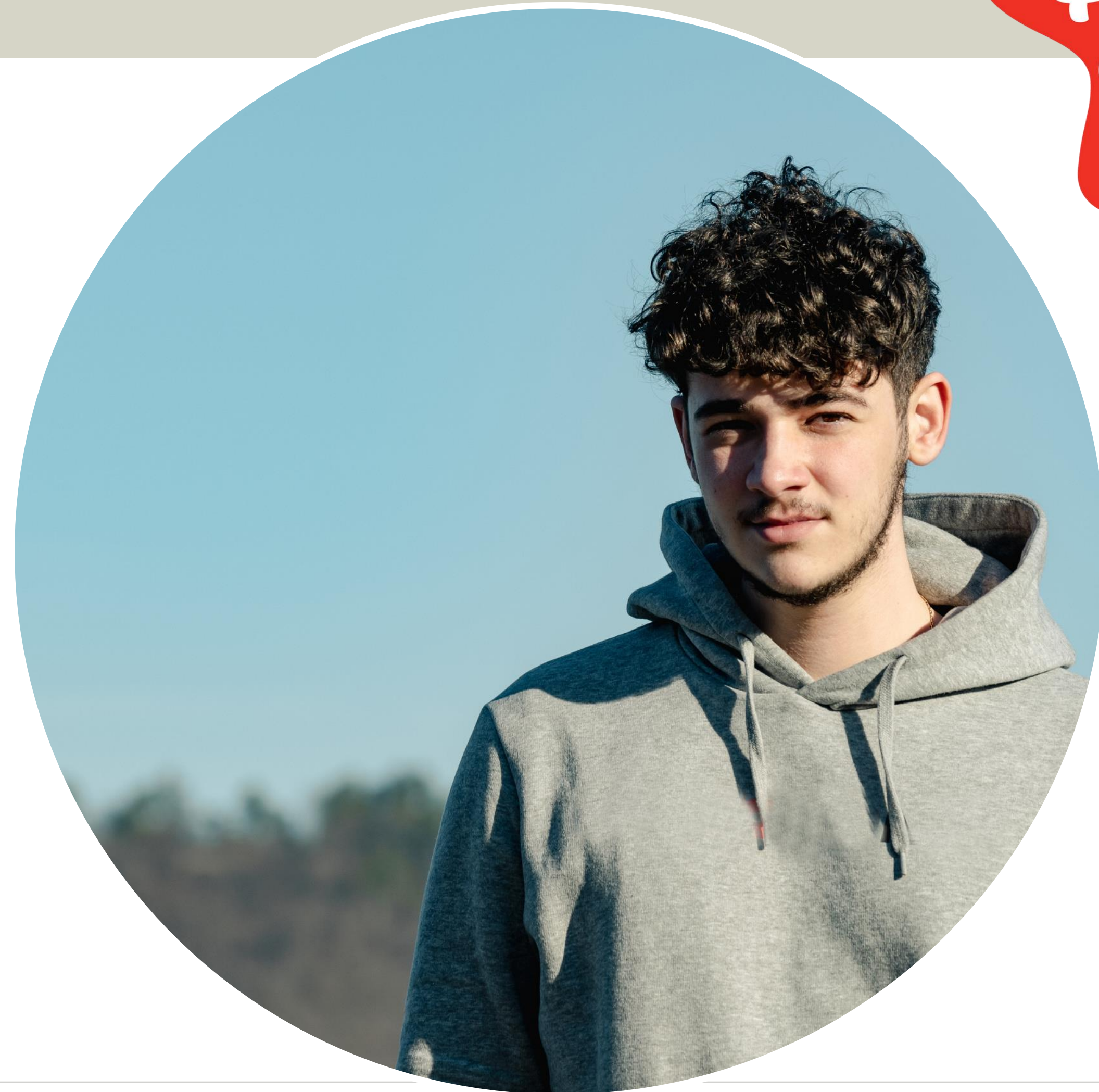


Children and Young People's
Centre for Justice

Criminal Exploitation of Children

Scotland's Framework for Practice



Introduction

- Welcome
- History and Development of Framework
- Importance of collectively responding to the criminal exploitation of children
- Evaluation of pilot
- E-Learning Module
- Question



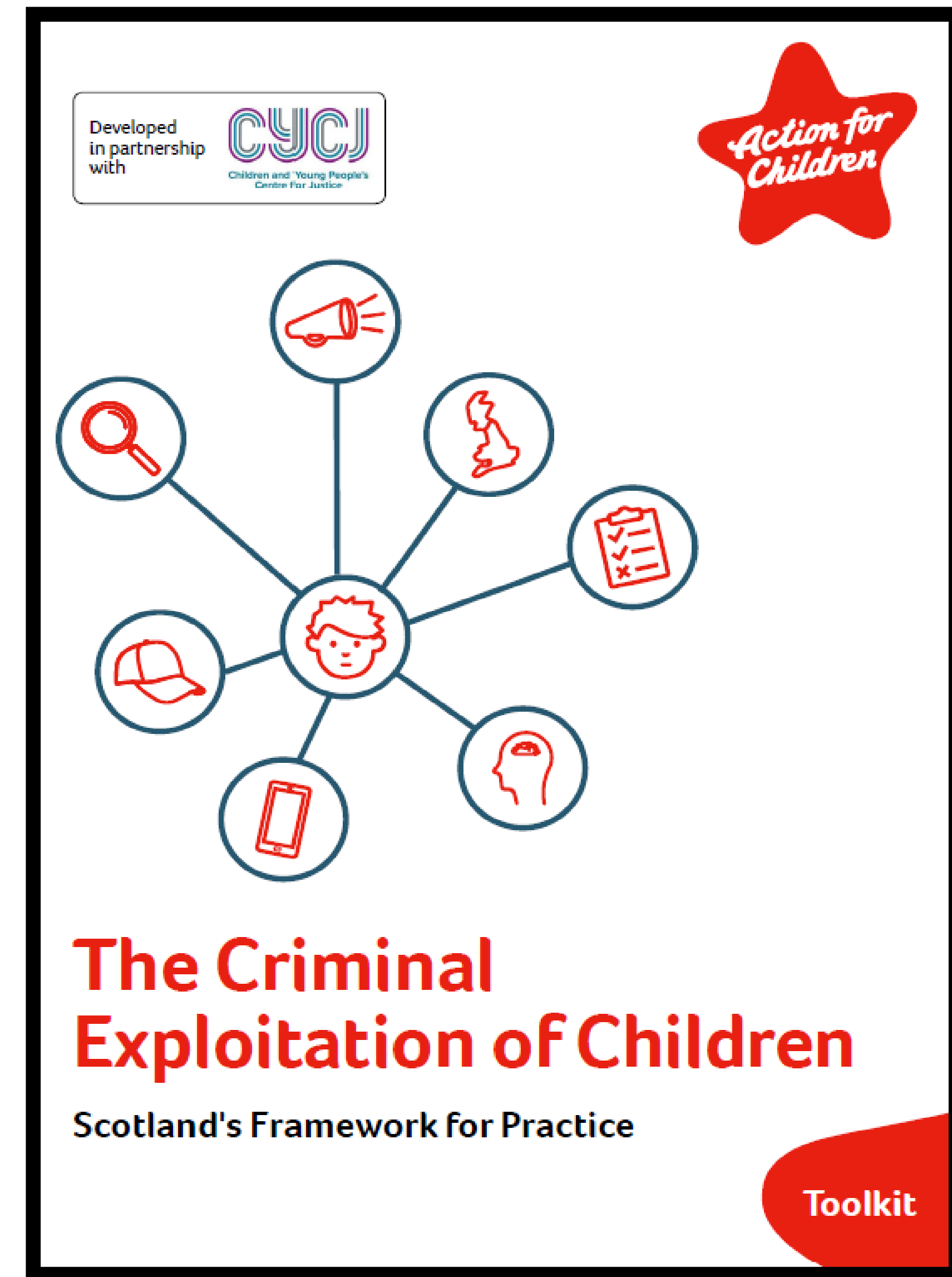
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Why a National Framework for Practice?

- Criminal Exploitation is a significant harm caused to children, impacting on all areas of their lives.
- The approach to tackling criminal exploitation requires strong collaboration, dedicated resources, understanding and robust processes – but its complex!
- Currently limited national resources available to guide practitioners about how to respond to children who are exploited.
- Engagement across the last few years through the Serious Organised Crime Taskforce highlighted a need for dedicated support for partners across the multi agency partnership

Aims and Objectives

- Provide a framework that offers clear guidance and clarity around roles, responsibilities and expectations of services
- Acknowledges the challenges faced by agencies
- Offers suggestions around working practices within, and between agencies
- Ensure the voices of children, young people, and families are heard and influence practice
- Gives tools and measurement outcomes to support the development of local strategy
- Evaluate whether current policy, legislation and guidance is sufficient to address the needs of exploited children



Implementation priorities – awareness and identification

Awareness priorities	Considerations for implementation	Complete: Y/N/In progress
1. Awareness raising/training for practitioners.	Recognising indicators and vulnerabilities.	
2. Awareness of how to progress concerns if a child is identified as 'at risk' or being criminally exploited.	Early Intervention pathways or child protection processes.	
3. Agency/partnership working towards an agreed definition.	National Child Protection Guidance for Scotland ⁵ Practitioner Guidance for Criminal Exploitation	
4. Agreed language and understanding around children who are criminally exploited.	Individual or agency bias, impact of language on responses, confidence to identify at early stage.	
5. Understanding of the touch points in the system where agencies can intervene/identify children at risk of, or being criminally exploited.	Clarity around services available, roles and responsibilities.	



Implementation Priorities

Awareness raising and Identification

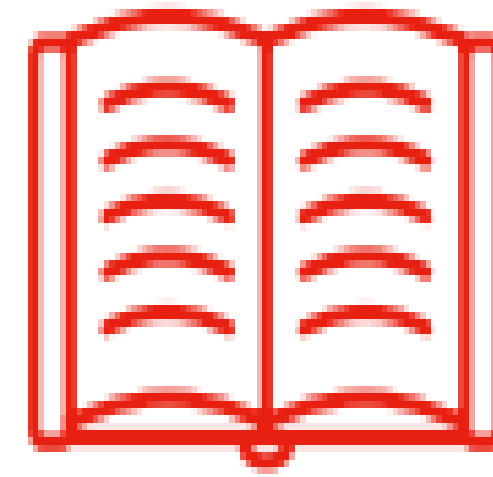


How to improve early identification of criminal exploitation

1

Definition:

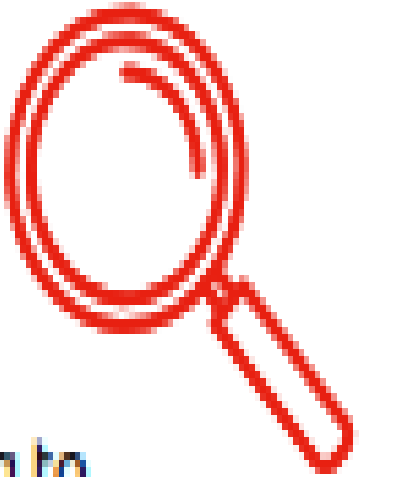
Be clear within your local partnership what the criminal exploitation of children is. In the absence of a statutory definition, local partnerships should agree on a definition that ensures accurate identification of children who possess warning indicators or vulnerabilities to suggest they may be at risk of, or are being criminally exploited.



2

Training and awareness:

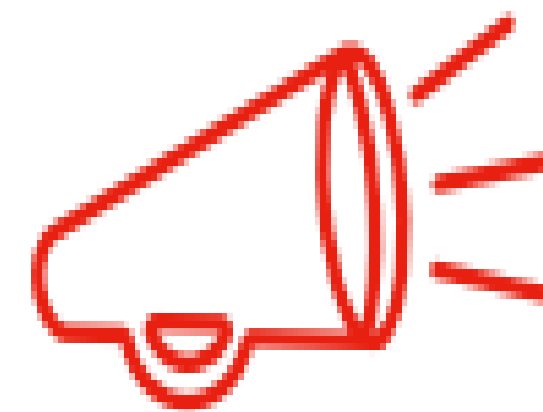
Provide awareness-raising and training to professionals across sectors. This should include spotting the signs of exploitation and how to have conversations with children and families if they notice concerns.



3

Communication:

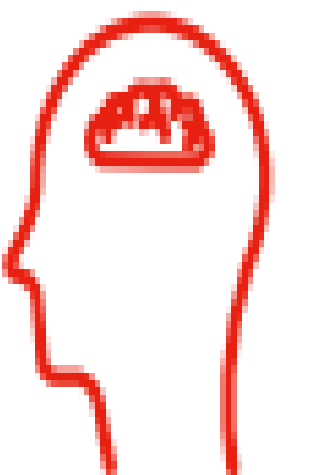
Make sure there is good communication between partners to share information and concerns. Approaches for information sharing should be coordinated to make sure preventative and early intervention have the greatest success in reducing harm.



4

Engagement:

Children who have positive trusting relationships with others find it easier to disclose any harms they are experiencing. This also makes it easier for adults around them to notice any changes in behaviour that may indicate concerns around criminal exploitation.



1.2 Key knowledge points in raising awareness around the criminal exploitation of children

The criminal exploitation of children is a form of child abuse.

The criminal exploitation of children should be seen across a continuum. Some children may be exploited but not come to the attention of police. Others may have significant offending histories and be deeply entrenched in delivering serious organised crime.

Exploitation always involves the role of another to facilitate, also known as 'the exploiter', often in exchange for something the exploiter believes the victim wants or needs. This can be physical needs such as money, drugs, gifts, or psychological such as sense of belonging, status, reputation.

Children who are criminally exploited are victims. However, the traditional 'victim' stereotype is not always helpful in understanding criminal exploitation.

Not all children will see their exploitation as harmful or have the desire to move away from it. This should not lead to a different response. Children should be supported and encouraged to be at in their exploitation.

Children do not, and cannot, choose to be exploited. This includes consenting to being exploited.

We should avoid waiting for indicators and vulnerabilities to stack up before we respond. By the time children are detected by police for crimes associated with organised criminality they have already been harmed through exploitation.

The criminal exploitation of children involves committing illegal activity for the benefit of another. Children will therefore perpetrate harm against others, as well as being harmed. Responding to this through the lens of exploitation is critical in making sure we don't unnecessarily, or further criminalise children.

Children will often not recognise their victimhood – nor do they need to, in order to be supported/have relevant legislation applied (see legislation section for further detail).

Families need support to understand exploitation and ways to promote their family's safety as active partners in partners in their child's plan.

Screening Tool

Indicators/ signs of criminal exploitation (continued)

Indicator	Yes/No	Comments / evidence (include timescales)
Unknown whereabouts or associations – secrecy about who they are with/areas they are going to.		
Multiple police reports for incidents in the same or similar location.		
Stealing to order – some offences may be more indicative of potential criminal exploitation like stealing cars, motorbikes, e-scooters etc; high value or high-volume theft/shoplifting, robbery, and fraud.		
Getting into trouble with the police – suddenly picking up numerous charges or high number of charges in short space of time.		
Expressing that they have a level of protection from their exploiters, due to risky involvement in criminality. They have a sense of status as a result in their associations.		
Use of new language and phrases e.g. sexual, gang, drug-related or violent language you wouldn't expect them to know.		
Unexplained physical injuries. May be reluctant/unwilling to seek/receive medical treatment. Or to disclose any details of how injuries were sustained.		
Difficulty walking or sitting, as a result of 'plugging' or banking drugs internally.		
Signs of restraint, such as rope burns or handcuff marks.		
Physical injuries without reasonable explanation.		
Physical appearance suddenly changed.		
Significant changes in emotional wellbeing.		
Disclosure of sexual or physical assault, followed by withdrawal of the allegation.		
Signs of neglect.		



Where to begin.....

- What are the key messages, aims and objectives
- Who forms the partnership?
- How do the views of children, young people, families, those with lived experience contribute
- What is the current response?
- Where are the gaps in knowledge, practice and resource?
- Are the partners aligned on the definition, approach and language?
- What is the understanding of the needs/challenges in your local area?

2.3 Multi-agency working

Reflecting on how individual agencies identify and respond to the criminal exploitation of children is essential in defining clear roles and responsibilities within the partnership.



The intricate relationship between committing criminal acts and seeing children as victims of exploitation necessitates diverse responses from various agencies. In the absence of a national strategy to direct agencies, it's our responsibility to collaborate effectively to tackle the harms of the criminal exploitation of children.

Supporting children who are victims of criminal exploitation needs a delicate balance between:



Developing positive
and trusting relationships.



Safeguarding
children's rights.



Managing risks
effectively.

Assessment and Analysis

- Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)
- National Guidance for Child Protection Scotland
- Framework for Risk Management and Evaluation (FRAME)
- Contextual Safeguarding
- UNCRC
- National Referral Mechanism

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Legislation

-
- How do we better focus on
disruption of exploiters as well as
protection of victims?**

Multi-Agency Self-Assessment

Service response/collaboration.

Do responses effectively address the needs of children experiencing extra familial harm/criminal exploitation?
Do agencies have the right tools they need?

Information sharing.

Evidence of effective information sharing between partners that supports early identification, assessment and response?

Risk management/safeguarding.

Evidence that partners are working collectively to understand and address risk of harm to, and by children as a result of extra familial harm/exploitation.
Are safeguarding responses robust and responsive to the needs of children experiencing extra familial harm/exploitation?

Recording.

Do agency records include all relevant information and use appropriate language about decision making and tools used in assessment of risk for future reference?

Feedback on the framework / toolkit

- **Main aim of the evaluation project:** to evaluate the framework and toolkit, which was piloted with practitioners in several local authority areas in Scotland
 - Additionally: aimed to understand practitioners' understanding and perceptions of CEC more broadly
- How did we gather data / feedback for the evaluation?
 - One-to-one **online interviews** with practitioners across the pilot areas
 - A **survey** of practitioners who had taken part in training sessions delivered by the CYCJ and AfC teams
 - **Additional feedback** gathered by the training team immediately after training sessions was also included in the analysis

Theme 1: Training, resources, and support in the workplace

- How well-equipped do you feel to deal with CEC in terms of...?
 - Training
 - Resources
 - Workplace support
- Follow-up training sessions for practitioners to reinforce previous learning
- Desire for more training and awareness generally
- Good support from managers and colleagues, but more staff needed
- Lack of community-based intensive support
- Statutory services struggling to cope with numbers

Theme 2: Policies and procedures relating to CEC (1/2)

- Practitioners refer to a **range of different policies and procedures** when working with criminally exploited children or young people
- Practitioners are **more confident in their knowledge of CEC as a general issue** than in their knowledge of **related policies and practice**
- Mixed views on the effectiveness of **existing policies and procedures**
- **Further training needed** to help aid understanding of policies and procedures
- Support for the introduction of a **legal definition of CEC**

Theme 2: Policies and procedures relating to CEC (2/2)

- The issue of **language and stereotyping** as an obstacle to dealing with CEC effectively was raised during interviews
- Several felt that a **'one size fits all' approach** was inappropriate and unhelpful
- Children's own advanced **understanding of culture and technology**

*'For [...] young boys that are kind of involved in [CCE], you know, [people will say] like 'they're troublemakers' [...] there's still **some very unhelpful derogatory language** used [by other agencies] [...] and there's still some work to be done about highlighting that, you know, these are young people and families that are vulnerable because of poverty, mental health, [...] fallen on hard times, whatever it may be.'*

*'It's not a one-size-fits-all approach and it's **not a one-solution answer**. I think [what's needed] is a **tailored approach for every young person** depending on their circumstances and situation. So we just have to be quite **creative and flexible** in terms of our thinking.'*

Theme 3: Trends and narratives relating to CEC

- The 'narrative' surrounding CEC – moving in the right direction?
- Dealing with CEC through a **child welfare** lens rather than a **criminal justice** lens
- Increased **awareness of the issue** among agencies does not always lead to changes 'on the ground' or to action being taken
- **Inconsistencies** between partner agencies when dealing with CEC
- Impact of financial **cuts to children's services** (health, education, recreation, etc.)
- Patterns and trends: anecdotal **increase in numbers, frequency, and severity** of children being exploited (especially very young children)

Theme 4: Toolkit & training feedback (1/2)

- Respondents did not think there was in particular missing from the toolkit in terms of content, but some suggested adding a directory of phone numbers to link parents to support if no local services exist
- The toolkit was seen as **‘accessible’, ‘easy to digest’, and ‘current’**
- Respondents asked for **further training** on using the toolkit

*‘[The toolkit] has been good to refer to when **speaking with lawyers** etc for the [young person] in question’*

*‘Rolling out the toolkit and the framework and the information within it I think helps people understand that there’s a kind of **continuum of stages of exploitation**, and it really helps [people] to understand the kind of indicators, [and] that we need to have a **cohesive approach [to tackling CEC].’***

Theme 4: Toolkit & training feedback (2/2)

- Respondents who had attended a training session felt it had **helped them to understand how to use the toolkit**
- One respondent commented that ‘the walk-through of the material was helpful in supporting knowledge development’; another said that the training sessions ‘gave practical advice and really **pinpointed some areas we could improve on**’
- Those who had participated in a training session also gave positive feedback in relation to the **pace and the format of the training**, commenting that the session was ‘very interactive’ and that ‘there was a good mix of presentation and participation’
- **For more details of the feedback we received on the toolkit, and the insights practitioners shared with us about their own experience dealing with the criminal exploitation of children, you will soon be able to access the full report online**



University of
Strathclyde
Glasgow



Children and Young People's
Centre for Justice

E-Learning Platform

**Marianiki Vlachou &
Joanne Lee, CYCJ**

More
info!





About Course

Criminal Exploitation of Children

- Promotes increased knowledge to recognise, understand and respond to the risks and signs of criminal exploitation affecting children.
- Fully online, flexible self-pace, taking approximately 4 hours.
- Suitable for those who respond to the needs of children currently in, or on the cusp of being involved in conflict with the law.



Criminal Exploitation of Children



SHARON MACIVER
ACTION FOR CHILDREN



Criminal Exploitation of Children

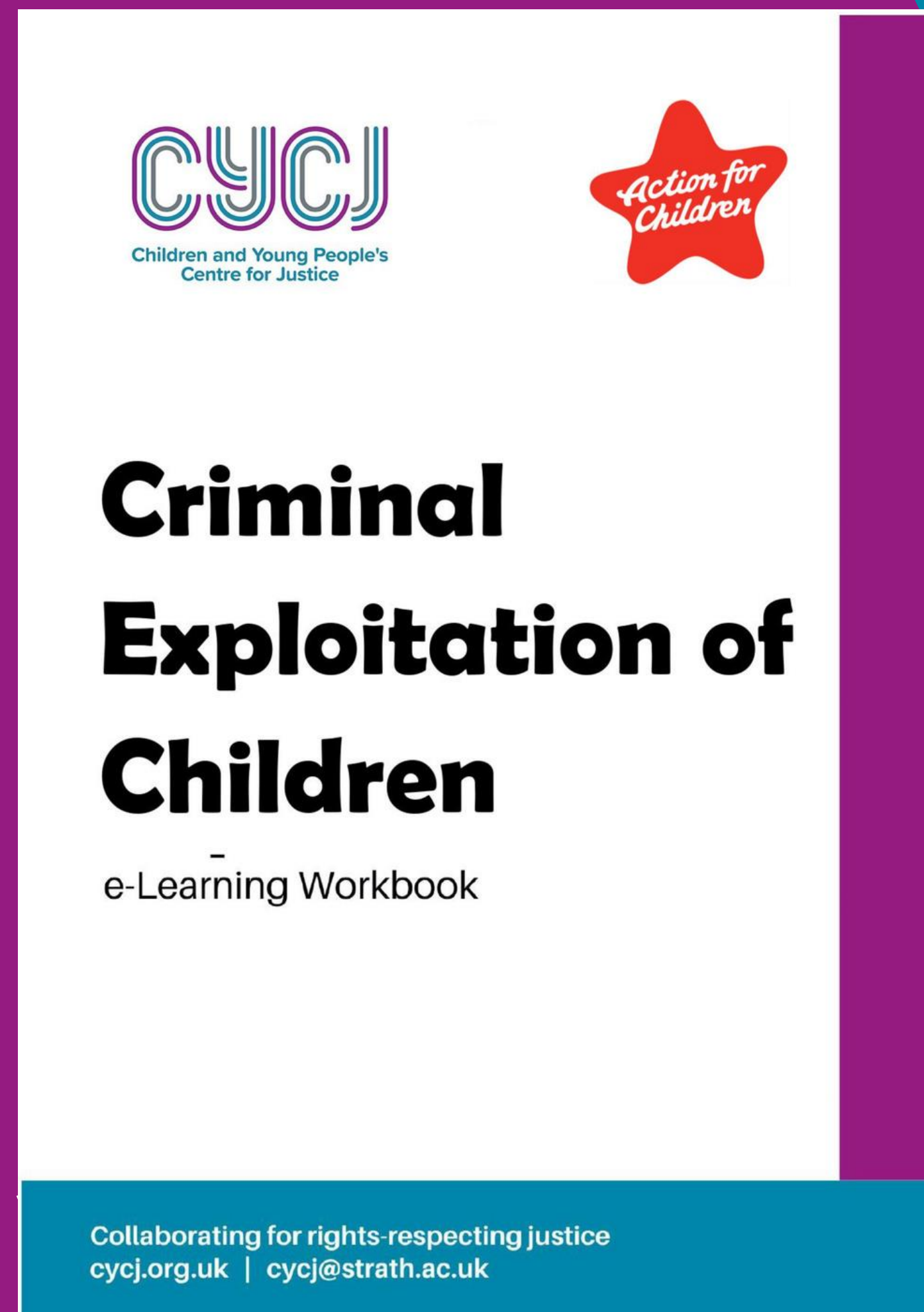


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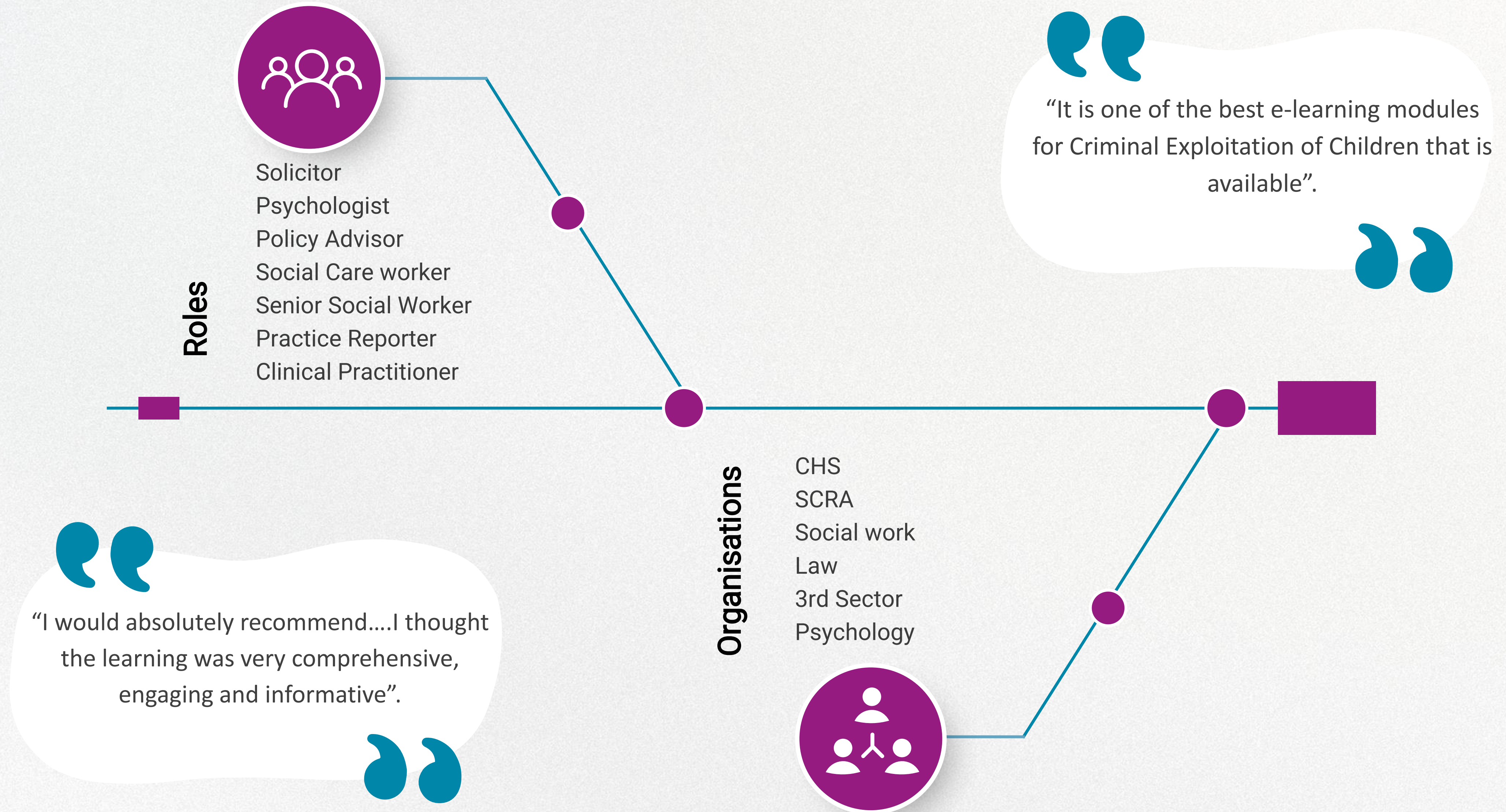


Criminal Exploitation of Children

Our workbook



WHO TOOK PLACE IN THE PILOT



WHAT THEY HAD TO SAY

“Really liked the different ways to communicate the information and testing knowledge.”

“It didn’t seem like a purely academic module – you need to know policy and legislation but also the real-world side of it. Learning through case studies brings the knowledge to life.”

“I liked that there were different levels of intellectual engagement throughout – e.g. emotional sides and effects on family – liked assessment and contextual analysis of why we are trying to do this and why we are trying to support families that are experiencing it.”

“When I completed it, I came away feeling it is everyone’s job, we have a collective responsibility”

“Signs to look out for that all professionals should look out for – e.g. link to offending and criminal justice and not criminalising children”

“This is a child protection issue and not criminal behaviour”

& Key Takeaways