

Safeguarding Futures

Newsletter

Dec 2024



Welcome

Welcome to the second issue of "Safeguarding Futures," your key resource for updates on our project on child criminal exploitation (CCE).

In this edition, we delve into the latest evidence and research on CCE, offering insights to inform our collective response. This was an area which practitioners have been telling us they wanted to know more about.

We're also excited to report on our workshop series designed to enhance cross-sector collaboration and knowledge sharing. These sessions brought together experts from various fields to explore best practices to implement the Action Plan.

Inside this edition, you'll find:

- Information on the latest research and evidence on CCE.
- A spotlight on modern



- slavery.
- Details on our workshop series.

Thank you for your continued dedication to protecting our community's most vulnerable members. Together, we're making strides in breaking the cycle of exploitation.

Bernie McNally
Independent Chair,
Safeguarding Board for
Northern Ireland

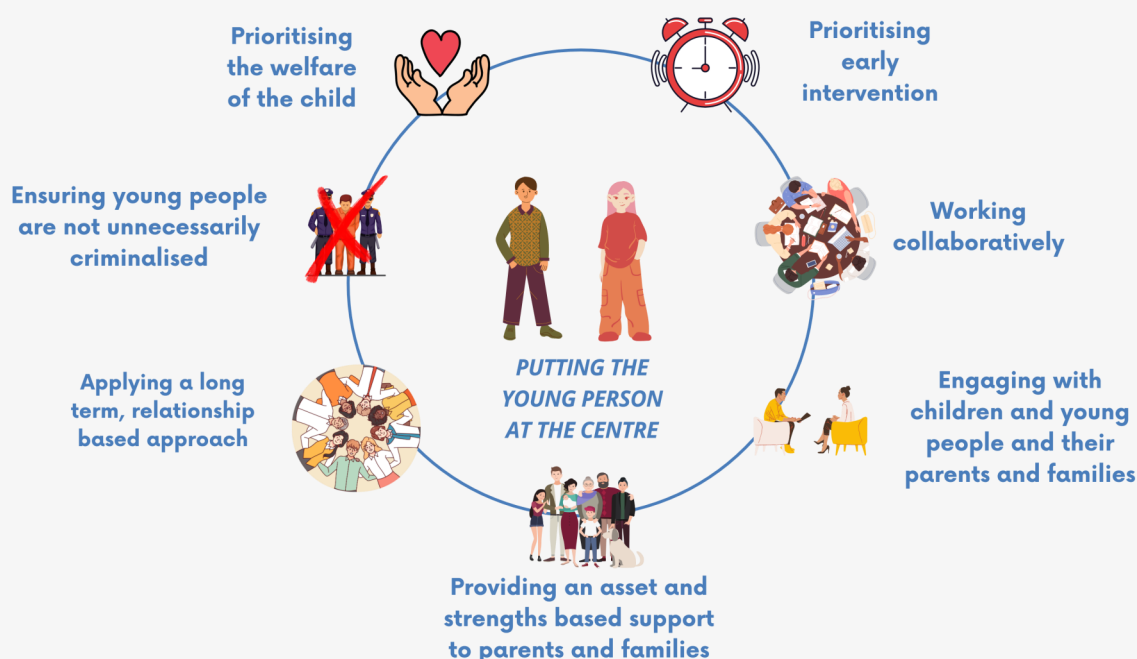
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What does the Action Plan mean for you?

What are we trying to achieve?

OUR AIM IS TO PROTECT CHILDREN AT RISK OF EXPLOITATION OR WHO ARE BEING HARMED.



Our vision to combat child criminal exploitation is more than words—it's a promise to protect our most vulnerable. We envision a future where no child falls prey to criminal networks, where early intervention disrupts exploitation cycles, and where multi-agency collaboration becomes the norm.

This vision matters because it directly impacts the lives we're dedicated to safeguarding. It means developing cutting-edge risk assessment tools, establishing seamless information-sharing protocols, and creating trauma-informed support systems. For you, as child protection specialists, it translates to enhanced

resources, clearer guidelines, and stronger community partnerships.

By embracing this vision, we're not just changing policies—we're changing lives. Your expertise and commitment are crucial in turning this vision into reality, ensuring every child has the chance to thrive free from exploitation.

Research and Evidence

EPPOC Research

The evidence base on issues related to Child Criminal Exploitation is an emerging area of interest.

A lot of what we know about Northern Ireland has been generated from projects and research funded under the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime.

You can find information on all of the Programme's research [here](#).



Some research highlights include:

The role of social supports in disrupting the cycle of violence by buffering the effects of trauma. [Click here](#).

The long term effects of exposure to paramilitary violence in terms of criminal activity. [Click here](#).

The effectiveness of multi-agency structures to reduce harms caused by paramilitary and organised crime activity. Click [here](#) and [here](#).

Evaluations of specific service delivery models, such as [Aspire](#), [Sport](#), and [Navigators in Emergency Departments](#).

Models for enhancing complex service design and multi-agency work. [Click here](#).



EPPOC are also due to announce the launch of the findings from the first comprehensive study exploring the prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), childhood trauma, and exposure to violence within Northern Ireland's adult population. This landmark research is funded by EPPOC and provides invaluable insights into how these experiences shape health, wellbeing, and wider societal outcomes. [Click here](#) to register to attend the launch.



Young People's Experiences of Criminal Exploitation

'Shove That. There's always hope': young people's lived experience of child criminal exploitation

Research from Wales shows a resignation to exploitative relationships between of powerlessness and lack of opportunities.

It's a group on one': social disconnection as a tool and defence against CCE in Republic of Ireland

This research captures the perspectives of Irish youth and shows that organised crime groups capitalize on the lack of social capital to exploit.



Northern Ireland's CCE Action Plan was informed by ground breaking research on young people's experience of criminal exploitation, which was developed with the support of EPPOC. You can find the research report [here](#):

Some of the most recent international research has also been on the lived experience of young people.

You can find links and short synopses on the left.

CCE and Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

Why is Modern Slavery part of the work on CCE?

Child Criminal Exploitation is a form of modern slavery. They are often perceived as distant issues, but they're closer to home than many realize – even in Northern Ireland. These crimes don't discriminate based on nationality or background, affecting children from all walks of life.

Contrary to common belief, victims aren't always brought from abroad. Local children can be trafficked within their own communities, exploited for labor, criminal activities, or sexual purposes. Traffickers often target vulnerable youth, including those in care, facing family difficulties, or struggling with mental health issues.

Warning signs may include:

- Unexplained absences from school
- Sudden changes in behavior or

appearance

- Possession of expensive gifts without explanation
- Association with older individuals or gangs

It's crucial to challenge the misconception that "it doesn't happen here." Northern Irish children are not immune. Traffickers adapt their tactics, using social media and online platforms to groom and exploit young people.

As child protection professionals, we must remain vigilant and educate ourselves on evolving trends. By recognizing the signs and understanding that any child could be at risk, we can better protect the young people in our care and communities.

Where can I find more information?

- You can find a copy of the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Strategy for 2024-2027 by [clicking here](#).
- There is a free online information course, which you can access by [clicking here](#). This will take around 30 minutes to complete



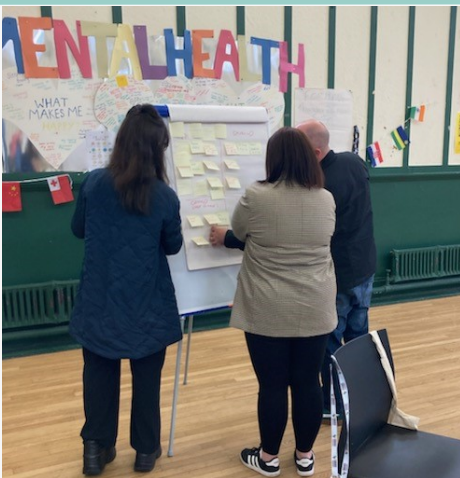


CCE Workshop Series

In November and December, we ran a series of workshops to codesign the response to CCE. Over 100 professionals from social work, police, youth justice, education, and other partner agencies came together to discuss guidance, assessment tools, service pathways and roles and responsibilities.

Design Thinking in Practice

The workshops used design thinking methodologies to collectively think about service user journeys, service mapping, and developing 'use cases' for the guidance and assessment tools. The workshops also used prototypes of a new assessment tool to think about the best methods for professionals to assess the risks, vulnerabilities, and protection of young people.



Public Health Approach

Overall, the workshops developed a codesigned public health approach to child criminal exploitation. We discussed the use of interventions at primary, secondary and tertiary levels; understanding the risk and protective factors to look out for; and designing a collaborative system to support our young people.



PROJECT TIMELINE

This is an indication of the key steps in the project over the next two years

