

**TRILATERAL
RESEARCH**
Ethical AI



The socio-economic impact of child exploitation in the UK

**White Paper
Trilateral Research Ltd**

Authors:

**Pinelopi Troullinou, Agnel Nidhi Shiji, Christopher Nathan and Anastasia Kordoni
ResearchServices@trilateralresearch.com**

March 2024

INTRODUCTION

Criminal and sexual exploitation present a significant national threat to children. The numbers are greatly concerning, with more than 16,000 children being sexually exploited in England every year, and more than 27,000 at high risk of criminal exploitation by organised gangs. Latest government Children in Need (CiN) release reports Child Criminal Exploitation as a factor for 14,420 children during assessment by children's social care in England, in the year to 31 March 2023, up 42% from 10,140 the previous year. The need for the police, local authorities, and wider safeguarding partners to work effectively together, document, analyse and share relevant information is of critical importance. This report offers an insight into the socio-economic impact of child exploitation, concluding with specific recommendations in the use of ethical AI as an enabler for change.

The number of children at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation is alarming, but assessing the scale and prevalence of these crimes is challenging. There are more than 5 million children aged 11-17 in England and Wales, and experts believe significant numbers are now at “greater risk” of exploitation due to cost-of-living and lack of adult supervision.¹ British government data shows that more than **16,000 children are at risk of being sexually exploited in England every year, and at least 27,000 are at risk of being exploited by organised crime.**²

The government has made attempts to promote the early identification of children at risk. This includes the formal requirement of ‘flagging’ child sexual exploitation (CSE) offences by the Home Office in 2016.³ However, this process is manual and tends to be subjective and variable, leading to data that may not be robust enough for accurate comparisons between years.⁴ **Poor risk assessment was flagged in 41% of serious incidents review in 2018/19** along with poor information sharing and insufficient analysis of children’s continuing risks and needs.⁵ Additionally, the lack of disaggregation in data sets hinders understanding. Datasets often fail to differentiate between various forms of child sexual abuse (CSA), making it challenging to capture the true prevalence and nature of the problem. Research by the Office of the Children’s Commissioner in 2020 found that many Local Safeguarding Children’s Boards were not able to provide information about the number of children at risk of criminal exploitation in their area. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 introduced a new Serious Violence Duty that creates new statutory obligations for core services (including chief officers of police, local authorities, integrated care boards and youth offending teams etc.) to work together and share information.⁶ The new edition of the statutory guidance ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children’ (December 2023), published by the Department for Education (DfE) highlighted the importance of robust multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASAs) at a local level.⁷ These arrangements aim at more accurate and effective risk assessment and require information sharing and analysis aiming at accurate and timely decision-making for children and families.

16,000
children face sexual
exploitation in England

Between 2022-23, there were 456 assessments of serious incident notifications, 14 cases more than the previous year.⁸ Reviews of child safeguarding practices continue to identify that assessments and interventions are not effectively focused on the potential harms that children face, and greater considerations need to be placed on the impact of intersectional factors (age, gender, deprivation, cultural identity) to better understand a child’s life.⁹ His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) underlines

41% of serious incidents flagged for poor risk assessment and information sharing

in their report of December 2023 the lack of a common understanding of the threat, and this might result in vulnerable children in being left at risk of exploitation.¹⁰ The overall difficulty in obtaining a clear picture of child criminal exploitation (CCE) and child sexual

abuse and exploitation (CSA/E) stems from fragmented, insufficient, and unreliable data,¹¹ insufficient understanding of the issues, victim-blaming attitudes, and the associated social stigmas around CCE and CSA. Collectively, these factors may lead to an underestimation of the problem in data sets, with the true extent of child exploitation remaining unknown.¹² Many children enter the criminal justice system because interventions have come too late or have failed. **These missed opportunities to offer the right support and intervention are frequent.**¹³

Failures in the child safeguarding system have enormous psychological, ethical, societal, and economic costs. The cost for the victims of criminal and sexual exploitation is incalculable. Children may pay with their own lives for their exploitation in criminal activities. It has enormous effects on their mental health and wellbeing. Exposure to any form of CCE can have long-lasting adverse effects for victims in all aspects of life including education, relationships, employment, physical and mental health. Children exposed to long-term violence can experience psychological problems such as depression, behavioural disorders, and post-traumatic stress, which can lead to altered perceptions of safety and leave them at risk of re-victimisation.¹⁴

This report offers an insight into the socio-economic impact of child exploitation, shedding light on the challenges in safeguarding this vulnerable group. In particular, the report focuses on the impact of CCE and CSA/E. The report concludes with specific recommendations, highlighting CESIUM as a case study demonstrating responses to identified challenges. CESIUM is a platform that Trilateral Research co-designed with Lincolnshire Police using AI-powered technology to support the early identification of children vulnerable to exploitation.

15% increase in child sexual abuse exploitation offenses

Child criminal exploitation

Barnardo's has described CCE as a 'hidden crisis'.¹⁵ **The latest government Children in Need (CiN) release reports CCE as a factor for 14,420 children during assessment by children's social care in England, in the year to 31 March 2023, up 42% from 10,140 the previous year.**¹⁶ Multiple factors can be identified in this assessment for each child. Gangs were identified as a factor for 11,110 children and CSE was identified as factor for 15,020 in the same year.

Although the government's CiN statistics have included a category for CCE since 2022, this data is not sufficient for an analysis of which crimes children are coerced into when they are criminally exploited, or how extensive these crimes are. The most common form of CCE is involvement in county lines drugs distribution schemes.¹⁷ Other forms of CCE include theft, burglary, and financial exploitation as part of money laundering schemes. Children as young as 10 are exploited and coerced to transport, deliver or store drugs locally or from

42%

increase in CCE reported as factor during social care assessment

one county to another for gangs and organised criminal networks.¹⁸ County lines accounted for 10% of referrals to the National Referral Mechanism from April to June 2023, with 387 referrals.¹⁹ 76% of these referrals (296) were for boys. In 2023, there was an average of 456 referrals every quarter for children within the criminal exploitation category due to

county lines cases.²⁰ The Independent Reporting Commission noted in December 2023 that Northern Irish paramilitaries have significant involvement in trading illicit drugs, intimidation of families, and coercing children into criminal activities to repay debts, including sexual exploitation.²¹

The 2019 Children's Commissioner's report found there were 34,000 children in England who are either in a gang or on the periphery of a gang and experienced violence in the previous 12 months, with only 6,560 of these known to children's services or youth offending teams, meaning that there were at least approximately 27,000 children at high risk of criminal exploitation.²² The typical age of children being criminally exploited is between 14-17 years old.²³ Barnardo's reports that 'the scale of [Child Criminal Exploitation] is unknown, with figures likely to be an underestimate. There is no statutory definition of CCE, and no crime code associated with it, making it difficult to assess.'²⁴ The Children's Society calls for a statutory definition of CCE, noting that few prosecutions for criminal exploitation are made under the Modern Slavery Act.²⁵

34,000

children involved in gang activity and experiencing violence

County lines safeguarding failures can have significant negative societal risks as the children involved are exposed to violence, drugs, physical abuse, sexual abuse, or sexual violence, resulting in severe physical and psychological trauma. An estimated £1.4 billion is spent annually enforcing drug laws in England, with £680 million spent on drug-related police enforcement costs, and an additional £733 million being split across various institutions (e.g., courts, prisons, etc) within the criminal justice system.²⁶ The vast majority (72%) of young people referred to London's Rescue and Response (R&R) project, a programme that works with young Londoners affected by county lines between June 2018 and 2019, had already been reported to authorities as missing at least once prior to referral. Half of them were under social care at the time of referral and 36% had a gang link recorded by the referrer.²⁷ Crossovers between CCE and CSE are high with almost two thirds of women referred to the R&R project having experienced varying degrees of CSE, with the exploitation have taken place or begun long before the age of 18.²⁸

Child Sexual Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation

CSA and CSE are **defined as a national threat in England and Wales by the Strategic Policing Requirement 2023**. CSA occurs when a child or a young person is tricked, forced, or manipulated into sexual activities. CSE is a type of sexual abuse. It happens when a child or young person is coerced, manipulated, or deceived into sexual activity in exchange for things that they may need or want, e.g., gifts, drugs, money, status, and affection. Both CSA/E may involve physical or non-physical contact and can happen in person or using technology.²⁹ Although there are distinctions between the two terms, depending on the source of data collection, data for CSA and for CSE are often aggregated. This is a commonly-noted limitation of this data.

In April 2023, the UK government introduced a mandatory duty for certain parties to report cases of CSA following the recommendations of an Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) initiated in 2015. The Inquiry examined four million pieces of evidence and gathered 6,000 stories over seven years revealing inadequate protection from CSA/E. With the IICSA estimating that 1 in 6 girls and 1 in 20 boys experience CSA before the age of 16 in England and Wales, and given that many cases go unreported, emphasis needs to be placed on the early identification of children at risk.³⁰ The majority of reported CSA/E offences are against girls (79%) with over 50% of cases in 2022 classified as child-on-child abuse.³¹

During 2021/22 in England and Wales, there were 17,486 crimes logged by police where

£10billion lifetime cost of child sexual abuse

children had been sexually exploited – an average of 48 offences a day.³² The Centre of expertise on Child Sexual Abuse noted a 15% increase in the number of CSA/E offences that police forces in England and Wales recorded during 2021/22 reaching 103,055 cases.³³ **Experimental statistics from the UK National Statistics Authority show that this number has increased to 108,370 in 2022/2023 in England and Wales** (see Annex A for more detailed breakdown).³⁴

The Home Office published a report on the economic and social costs of contact CSA it analyses the financial and non-financial cost relating to all victims who continued to experience contact sexual abuse, or who began to experience contact sexual abuse, in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2019. The overall cost was estimated to be at least £10 billion and includes the costs of this cohort being victimised in previous and future years, in addition to lifetime consequences as a result of experiencing child sexual abuse.³⁵ Projected police costs for investigating CSA/E offenses are estimated to range from £15.8 million to £84.9 million (2024/25 projection), with a central estimate of £48.7 million over ten years, and the unit cost for rape estimated at £29,800 (2024/25 cost). The unit cost for other sexual offenses is estimated at £14,300 (2024/25).³⁶ There are, therefore, significant potential gains from proactive approaches to combat CSA and CSE. Cases where a CSA incident has been reported to support services or the police typically follow the process depicted in Figure 1. The process may vary slightly depending on the specifics of each case and the legal jurisdiction involved. Measures are in place to protect the identity and well-being of the victims throughout this process.

£84.9million estimated policing cost for CSA/E offenses in 2024/25



Figure 1 A high-level overview of a CSA report and prosecution process

The costs in this process include **CSA reports**. The process begins with the reporting of CSA. CSA cases can be reported to safeguarding authorities (e.g police, local children’s social services) or through dedicated helplines (e.g NSPCC helpline, Stop It Now! helpline) by children, parents and other concerned individuals. It is estimated that the total average unit cost for **processing a case** through social services management is £1,800 (2024/25 prices).³⁷ The total average unit cost for processing a referral that results in no further action is £340 (2024/25 prices). The total average cost where a child is assessed not to be in need

is £755 (2024/25 prices). If the report suggests criminal activity, the police may investigate, leading to potential arrests based on the available evidence, thus increasing the **operational costs**.

A Dedicated Officer will be assigned, and Child Protection Specialists will be involved to initially assess whether the child needs immediate protection due to a risk to their life or a likelihood of serious harm under the Children Act 1989. The Officer in the Case (OIC) is responsible for investigating the case and securing all relevant evidence to build a strong legal case. The unit cost for police investigating child rape offence is estimated to be £29,800³⁸ (2024/25 prices) and the unit cost for other sexual offences is estimated to be £14,300 (2024/25).³⁹ If the case proceeds, expected costs are associated with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), RASSO Unit Review, Decision on Prosecution and Magistrates' Court Hearing. According to data from the Ministry of Justice, between 4 and 20 offences are expected to be tried in magistrates' courts and between 4 and 20 will be tried in the Crown Court Unit leading to estimated costs between £0.2 million and £1.2 million with a central estimate of £0.7 million (2024/2025 prices)⁴⁰ over a 10-year appraisal period.

There are broader costs emerging from an increase in reporting CSA offences along with increasing prosecutions, such as prison costs. Prison set up costs are estimated to be in total between £1.0 million and £6.9 million with a central estimate of £3.7 million (2024/25 prices).⁴¹ Regarding prison services, the monthly cost per prison place is estimated to be £3,400 (2024/2025 prices).⁴² There are other non-monetised costs. Costs associated with the imposition of professional sanctions for individuals who fail to report direct disclosures of abuse (breaches of duty).⁴³ The costs could take the form of regulators developing new guidance and processes for reporting failures to disclose under the duty or costs associated with tribunals.

CSA is itself a criminogenic factor as victims and survivors of CSA are '1.4 times more likely to have contact with the police, and almost five times more likely to be charged with a criminal offence, than those who have not experienced CSA'.⁴⁴ This means that early detection and intervention can cut related costs.

Recommendations

The data presented here reiterates the need to effectively tackle child criminal and sexual exploitation. Increased budget for responsible authorities, targeted programmes to educate specialists, and better reporting systems to reveal and tackle hidden vulnerabilities are crucial. Most of the sources reviewed for this paper recommend a multi-agency partnership to ensure the effective tackling of issues such as child exploitation. According to a UK Home Office report,⁴⁵ models of multi-agency work, often called MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) enable the early and effective identification of risk, improved information sharing, joint decision making, coordinated actions, and high quality and timely safeguarding responses. Responding to the need for more effective information sharing in safeguarding cases, the UK Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) issued guidance in 2023 to address front-line practitioners' concerns regarding breaches of data protection rules, empowering them to share information when a child is at risk of harm.⁴⁶

The need for data reporting and sharing to better address the CCE and CSA/E crisis is evident. By implementing the mandatory duty to report alone, following the IICSA's recommendations, an increase between 100 and 540 new reports per year is estimated. Yet, it has been shown that both documentation and analysis of reports are costly and technically challenging.

With the increasing number of cases of CCE, authorities need to adopt new methods to better systemise, organise and analyse their data. This sentiment is also echoed by reviews of children's social care⁴⁷ and the CSA Centre⁴⁸ which calls for the better use of data and technological solutions in child protection. Automated tools and more specifically, automated analyses of reports that detail the multi-dimensional and interrelated experiences of a child can support safeguarding practitioners in the early detection of patterns of possible abuse and or neglect.

Our research has identified the need to:

Prioritise a proactive response to CCE and CSA/E

Adopting automated analytical tools that facilitate a proactive response to CCE and CSA/E can prioritise early detection to protect children from experiencing the traumatic and distressing impacts of crime and abuse.

Facilitate multi-dimensional understanding and local preparedness

CCE and CSA/E are complex social problems that demand a multi-dimensional understanding of the indicators that can reveal the vulnerability of a child. System infrastructure can support the localised resource management of law enforcement agencies. This would create a better understanding of the risks and support services needed for vulnerable children in specific localities.

Adopt automated tools to support informed decision-making

Properly designed systems, using AI can support safeguarding practitioners in their management of case reports by efficiently processing and systemising extensive data. In particular, user friendly automated tools for early detection of CCE and CSE/A through report analysis can support law enforcement agencies in their management of case reports by quantifying vast amounts of data in a relatively short period of time.

Optimise work and capacity of law enforcement agencies

Manual analysis for preventing and prosecuting CCE and CSA/E is currently extremely labour-intensive and therefore costly. This offers opportunities for direct costs savings through better optimisation of work via a multi-agency deployment of a tested automated solution.

The solution is clear: Safeguarding partnerships need the right tools to enhance multi-agency information sharing and decision-making in protecting vulnerable children. The case study of CESIUM below provides an example of how ethical AI can support the adoption of these recommendations and assist in the early identification of CCE and CSA/E cases.



Case study: CESIUM

The CESIUM application co-designed by Trilateral Research with Lincolnshire Police helps identify children vulnerable to exploitation. CESIUM promotes intelligence collaboration to safeguard children by using ethical artificial intelligence (Ethical AI) to gain new insights. CESIUM augments professional judgement through automated data collation and processing for Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) decision-making supporting the workload of police officers and assisting proactive actions to identify children at risk.

CESIUM's ethical AI creates a semi-supervised machine learning model to predict the typical child referred for pre-screening (*using the past to predict the future*). The AI generates a similarity score to this typical referral for all records in a partnership's databases. These similarity scores are then placed in a distribution to create a percentile score for each child.

The results of CESIUM validation exercises carried out with Lincolnshire Police in October 2022, flagged its **capability of identifying children at risk up to 6 months earlier than usual standard processes**. CESIUM identified

47 out of 57 children referred to MACE for pre-screening. Sixteen of those 47 children were given high-priority months before being referred by a safeguarding partner. A review of these 16 children identified improvements to current referral arrangements. These 16 children show sufficient alignment with the professional judgement of MACE partners and the potential to identify hidden vulnerabilities.

CESIUM's forward-looking operational validation workshop held in December 2022, demonstrated the system's operational utility in a single agency deployment and found that **CESIUM improves the prioritisation of safeguarding resources at the local level**.

In multi-agency deployment, CESIUM can provide instant access to data required for a pre-screening report. It is estimated that a multi-agency deployment of CESIUM can **reduce the time to pre- screen 12 cases from five days to one day**. This time reduction occurs through removing dead time and reducing administrative time. CESIUM **returns four days per week to each contributor of a pre-screening report**, meaning the partnership gains 1040 days per year. The **400% capacity uplift** is about collapsing a five-day task to one day, and 1040-days gain is the equivalent of 4 new people in a partnership. CESIUM represents a significant uplift in capacity.

400%
capacity uplift

Annex A

Terminology and supporting data

Other Sexual Offences include: paying for sexual services of a child; causing or inciting sexual exploitation of a child; controlling a child in relation to sexual exploitation; and arranging or facilitating sexual exploitation of a child (Sexual Offences Act 2003, Section 47), as well as sexual grooming, buggery or attempted buggery, child prostitution, child pornography, causing a child to watch a sexual act, engaging in sexual activity in the presence of a child, engage in sexual communication with a child (Serious Crime Act 2015) (Home Office, 2020).

Table 1: Number of crimes flagged as child sexual abuse and (as a subset) crimes flagged as child sexual exploitation recorded by police force area (Experimental Statistics) Notes. Source:

Police force area	Apr 2022 to Mar 2023 Total number of crimes flagged as child sexual abuse	Apr 2022 to Mar 2023 Total number of crimes flagged as child sexual exploitation
ENGLAND AND WALES	90,495	17,875
England	86,794	17,350
North East	6,321	1,182
Cleveland	2,118	164
Durham	1,528	773
Northumbria	2,675	245
North West	11,758	2,709
Cheshire	2,130	70
Cumbria	679	196
Greater Manchester	5,746	1,582
Lancashire	834	514
Merseyside	2,369	347

Police force area	Apr 2022 to Mar 2023 Total number of crimes flagged as child sexual abuse	Apr 2022 to Mar 2023 Total number of crimes flagged as child sexual exploitation
Yorkshire and The Humber	13,138	1,304
Humberside	1,432	483
North Yorkshire	1,157	41
South Yorkshire	3,105	396
West Yorkshire	7,444	384
East Midlands	8,112	1,700
Derbyshire	1,387	612
Leicestershire	1,568	434
Lincolnshire	1,096	204
Northamptonshire	1,760	246
Nottinghamshire	2,301	204
West Midlands	11,298	1,740
Staffordshire	2,574	640
Warwickshire	1,135	240
West Mercia	3,120	555
West Midlands	4,469	305
East	7,976	2,333
Bedfordshire	713	43
Cambridgeshire	1,475	630
Essex	1,617	599
Hertfordshire	1,428	111
Norfolk	1,483	546
Suffolk	1,260	404
London	12,594	738
City of London	8	2
Metropolitan Police	12,586	736

Police force area	Apr 2022 to Mar 2023 Total number of crimes flagged as child sexual abuse	Apr 2022 to Mar 2023 Total number of crimes flagged as child sexual exploitation
South East	9,508	2,448
Hampshire	1,147	183
Kent	2,754	1,322
Surrey	679	61
Sussex	1,279	624
Thames Valley	3,649	258
Wales	3,701	525
Dyfed-Powys	614	301
Gwent	353	121
North Wales	2,082	4
South Wales	652	99
British Transport Police	448	45

Police recorded crime data from the Home Office as presented by the Office for National Statistics (February 2024). When interpreting data for police force areas, users should be aware of recent changes to recording practices. Based on 2020 household projections for England and 2020 household estimates for Wales. Some totals may not add due to rounding by the Office for National Statistics.

ENDNOTES

- 1 <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jun/04/record-number-of-young-in-the-uk-at-risk-of-exploitation-this-summer#:~:text=There%20are%20more%20than%205,or%20in%20the%20outside%20world.>
- 2 Mcrae, I. (2023). I was groomed by drug gangs and forced into slavery, aged 9. I'm lucky to have made it out alive. Big Issue. <https://www.bigissue.com/news/social-justice/modern-slavery-christmas-so-sa-henkoma-causeway/#:~:text=Government%20data%20shows%20that%20at,face%20sexual%20exploitation%20every%20year.>
- 3 The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. (IICSA) (n.d). B.4: Prevalence. <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/reports-recommendations/publications/investigation/cs-organised-networks/part-b-nature-and-scale-child-sexual-exploitation-networks/b4-prevalence.html>
- 4 IICSA. (2020). Witness Statement of Ian Dean.p.32 <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/uk-gwa/20221214225813/https://www.iicsa.org.uk/key-documents/22400/view/INQ005170.pdf>
- 5 MacAlister, Independent Review of Children's Social Care 2022 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/640a17f28fa8f5560820da4b/Independent_review_of_children_s_social_care_-_Final_report.pdf
- 6 Home Office. (2022). Serious Violence Duty: Preventing and reducing serious violence: Statutory Guidance for responsible authorities England and Wales. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/639b2ec3e90e072186e1803c/Final_Serious_Violence_Duty_Statutory_Guidance_-_December_2022.pdf
- 7 Department for Education (DfE) (2023) [Working together to safeguard children: a guide to multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115447/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_a_guide_to_multi-agency_working_to_help_protect_and_promote_the_welfare_of_children.pdf)
- 8 Official statistics. (2023). Serious incident notifications. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/serious-incident-notifications>
- 9 The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. (2024). Annual Report 2022/23 Patterns in practice, key messages and 2023/24 work programme. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65bce1df7042820013752116/Child_Safeguarding_Review_Panel_annual_report_2022_to_2023.pdf
- 10 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) An inspection of the effectiveness of the police and law enforcement bodies' response to group-based child sexual exploitation in England and Wales <https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publications/effectiveness-of-police-and-law-enforcement-response-to-group-based-child-sexual-exploitation/>
- 11 *ibid.*
- 12 https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-05/child-exploitation-hidden-crisis-briefing-paper-June2023_0.pdf

- 13 Final report by the Commission on Young Lives, November 2022. <https://thecommissiononyounglives.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/COYL-FINAL-REPORT-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>
- 14 Hughes, K., Hardcastle, K. & Perkins, C. (2015). The mental health needs of gang-affiliated young people: A briefing produced as part of the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme. Public Health England
- 15 Barnardo's, *Child Exploitation: A Hidden Crisis | Briefing Paper | Barnardo's* (barnardos.org.uk), 2023
- 16 Children in need, *Reporting year 2023 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK* (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)
- 17 *Child exploitation disruption toolkit (accessible) – GOV.UK* (www.gov.uk)
- 18 Home Office. (2023). Criminal exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults: County lines. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65322ad1e839fd001486720d/2023_FOR_PUBLICATION_-_Criminal_exploitation_of_children_young_people_and_vulnerable_adults_county_lines1.pdf
- 19 Home Office. (2023). Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify statistics UK, Quarter 2 2023 – April to June. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-april-to-june-2023/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-quarter-2-2023-april-to-june#:~:text=See%20further%20information%20on%20types,referrals%20were%20for%20male%20children.>
- 20 *ibid.*
- 21 <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-68404608>
- 22 Children's Commissioner, 'Improving safeguarding responses to gang violence and criminal exploitation', 2019. <https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2019/02/CCO-Gangs.pdf>
- 23 *Child_criminal_exploitation_definition_Report.pdf* (childrenssociety.org.uk)
- 24 *summer23-report-invisible-children-cost-living-criminal-sexual-exploitation.pdf* (barnardos.org.uk)
- 25 *Child_criminal_exploitation_definition_Report.pdf* (childrenssociety.org.uk)
- 26 Home Office. (2020). Review of Drugs - evidence relating to drug use, supply and effects, including current and future risks. p.16.
- 27 Handan Wiesmann, Matthew Davies, Ollie Sugg, Sophie Davis and Simon Ruda, 'Violence in London: what we know and how to respond' <https://images.london.gov.uk/m/2f62d5c4172448aa/original/Violence-in-London-what-we-know-and-how-to-respond.pdf>
- 28 Wilson, W., Dadabhoy, F., Krickovic, Z., Kalsi, R. (2021) Rescue and Response County lines Project: Supporting Young Londoners affected by county lines exploitation. Year 3 – Strategic Assessment 2021. https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/rescue_and_response_strategic_assessment_2021.pdf

- 29 <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/child-sexual-exploitation/> & <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/child-sexual-abuse/>
- 30 The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA). (2022). The Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/document/report-independent-inquiry-child-sexual-abuse-october-2022-0.html>
- 31 <https://www.vkpp.org.uk/assets/Files/Publications/National-Analysis-of-police-record-ed-CSAE-Crimes-Report-2022-external.pdf>
- 32 <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2022/child-sexual-exploitation-crimes-up-10-in-the-last-year/>
- 33 Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (CSA Centre). (2023). Child sexual abuse in 2021/22: Trends in official data. <https://www.csacentre.org.uk/app/uploads/2023/09/Child-sexual-abuse-in-2021-22-Trends-in-official-data.pdf>
- 34 The number presented are experimental meaning that although they are official statistics from police recorded crime from the Home Office, these statistics are still in the testing phase. The data is likely to have a wider degree of uncertainty and their limitations will be fully explained with the release.
- 35 The economic and social cost of contact child sexual abuse - GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/theeconomic-and-social-cost-of-contact-child-sexual-abuse>
- 36 These offenses are included in Annex A.
- 37 The estimate is based on research undertaken by the Centre for Child and Family Research at Loughborough University which collected detailed social care activity data from Local Authorities using a sample of 60 Children between 1st October 2008 and 31st March 2009. The original estimate of (£1,416) has been uplifted for inflation. The estimate can be found here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a817d9940f0b62305b8f3ba/Impact_Assessment_-_Consultation_Stage__web_.pdf It is important to note that in some cases, even with early identification and intervention appropriate safeguarding will include some children becoming looked after and taken into care.
- 38 Home Office (2021), The economic and social cost of contact child abuse. Available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-economic-and-social-cost-of-contact-child-sexual-abuse/the-economic-and-social-cost-of-contact-child-sexual-abuse>
- 39 The offences accounted here are presented in Annex A.
- 40 The original costs were calculated based on internal estimates from the Ministry of Justice (2022) and inflated to 2024/2025 price year. The underlying report, 'Costs per place and costs per prisoner by individual prison' (Jan 2022) is available here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1050046/costs-per-place-costs-per-prisoner-2020_-2021.pdf
- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1050046/costs-per-place-costs-per-prisoner-2020_-2021.pdf

- 41 To account for this cost, a one-off set up cost of £250,000 per new prison place required is included as an indicative estimate. Given that the reporting of CSA/E is expected to increase, the additional defendants sentenced to a custodial sentence are estimated to be between 0 and 1 defendants in Magistrates Court and between 2 and 8 defendants in Crown Court. The average length of sentence is estimated to be just under three months on average for Magistrates courts and just over 35 months on average for Crown Court. A time lag of three years between an offence committed and sentencing was also considered to calculate the costs (Home Office, 2023).
- 42 Using MoJ data on offences, it was estimated that the average custodial sentence served in Magistrates Courts is three months and for Crown Court the average sentence is served is 32 months (Fisher et al., 2017). The monthly unit cost of service per prison place was calculated by using data on annual costs per prison place for 2020/2021, which was estimated to be £31,000, inflated to 2024/2025 prices, divided by 12 months and applied a 20% optimism bias in line with the MoJ guidance.
- 43 NHS Digital (2021). Personal Social Services: Staff of Social Services Departments, England 2020. Available at: <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/personal-social-services-staff-of-social-services-departments/england-2020>. Department for Education (2023). Children's social work workforce. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/children-s-social-work-workforce>
- 44 Ogloff, J. R. P., Cutajar, M. C., Mann, E., and Mullen, P. (2012) Child sexual abuse and subsequent offending and victimisation: A 45 year follow-up study. Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice No. 440. Australian Institute of Criminology, cited in Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, [The impacts of child sexual abuse: A rapid evidence assessment](#), July 2017
- 45 [Multi Agency Working and Information Sharing Project: Final report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- 46 <https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2023/09/14/practitioners-will-not-get-into-trouble-by-sharing-information-to-protect-children-says-data-protection-watchdog/>
- 47 Secretary of State for Education by Command of His Majesty. (2023). Children's Social Care: Stable Homes, Built on Love Government Consultation Response. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/650966a322a783001343e844/Children_s_Social_Care_Stable_Homes__Built_on_Love_consultation_response.pdf and Macalister, J. (2022). The independent review of children's social care: Final report.
- 48 Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse (CSA Centre). (2023). Child sexual abuse in 2021/22: Trends in official data. <https://www.csacentre.org.uk/app/uploads/2023/09/Child-sexual-abuse-in-2021-22-Trends-in-official-data.pdf>

**TRILATERAL
RESEARCH**
Ethical AI



Trilateral Research Ltd
ResearchServices@trilateralresearch.com