

Outcomes for children and young people affected by modern slavery

An analysis of Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship service support in England and Wales

Full research report

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Authors

This is the final Research Report on *Outcomes for children and young people affected by modern slavery: An analysis of ICTG service support in England and Wales*, based on research conducted by Dr Anna Skeels and Dr Katy Huxley, Research Fellows from SPARK, Cardiff University, with Hannah Stott from Safe to Grow. This research project was funded through the first-ever Fellowship from the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC), which in turn is funded and supported by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

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Contributors

Children and young people supported by the Barnardo's ICTG service have been fundamental contributors to this research, both as research participants and through a Young People's Advisory Group helping to steer the research. We cannot thank them enough.

Many thanks are due to Rebecca Griffiths, Emma Hawley, and Allyson Davies from the Barnardo's ICTG service for their practice-focused steer for the project as well as their support for the participation of both ICTG service practitioners and children and young people in the research. This research has involved a co-designed approach, enabling deep understanding of the ICTG service. Such collaboration is essential for achieving a balance where the research is safe, relevant, and appropriate for children as well as of quality, independent and robust.

Thank you also to the ICTG service practitioners who supported young people to take part as members of the Young People's Advisory Group and in the research itself.

Dr Julia Thomas has also expertly contributed as an external technical adviser on Q-methodology, alongside the child modern slavery expertise of Hannah Stott. We thank them both.

Language and Terminology

The language used in relation to children and modern slavery is important. Terms used can be unfamiliar for some or differently defined and understood. Key definitions used for the purpose of this research include:

- **Children and young people:** I use the UNCRC definition of the child as ‘a person under 18 years of age’ which recognises the specific set of universal rights that this invokes. However, the term ‘young people’ is also used in this report, recognising that those children directly engaged in the research would almost certainly all consider themselves to be ‘young people’ and not ‘children’. In places, ‘young adult’, often relating to those who are 18-25, is also used, recognising that the ICTG service in some cases is providing support to young people after they have reached the age of 18.
- **Child trafficking and modern slavery:** Child trafficking is defined as recruiting, moving, receiving, and harbouring children for the purpose of exploitation. It includes the coercion and manipulation of children into sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, domestic servitude, criminal activities, organ harvesting and forced marriage, all forms of child modern slavery.
- **Survivor/with lived experience/affected by/at risk:** I use the more empowering term ‘survivor’ instead of ‘victim’ for children and young people who have lived experience of modern slavery and trafficking and ‘at risk’ for those who have the potential to be exploited in this way.
- **Outcome:** The term outcome can be used broadly as the consequence of a service or way of working, in this case the ICTG service. Within this report the term outcome includes Home Office reported outcomes, for example going ‘missing’, and service outcomes, for example accessing education, health services or appropriate accommodation. Most importantly, this research focuses on and employs outcomes as defined by children and young people themselves.
- **Participation:** I understand participation to be a universal right for children (for example as captured in Article 12 of the UNCRC) and adults and a meaningful, inclusive, and empowering process rather than single act of engagement or ‘turning up’.

In relation to the **ICTG service**, I use the term ‘**ICTG**’ for a specific direct worker role (Independent Child Trafficking Guardian) within the wider Barnardo’s ‘ICTG service’ (a service which includes several other roles, for example Regional Practice Coordinators, or RPCs, and Regional Practitioners, or RPs). Where not referring to one of these roles, I refer generically to ‘ICTG service practitioners’ or to direct workers (ICTGs, RPs) and indirect workers (RPCs).

1. Headline Findings and Recommendations

This report summarises research commissioned through a UKRI funded Fellowship from the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC) on ‘Support for children¹ with lived experience of modern slavery’. It explores the benefits and limitations of the Barnardo’s delivered Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship (ICTG) service on children and young people’s outcomes, situates this amidst the nature of modern slavery affecting children in England and Wales and sets out what this might mean for policy and practice. The research draws on the Stable Futures project’s Positive Outcomes Framework (Hynes et al, 2022) to develop a set of outcomes relevant to young people supported by the ICTG service, including those related to their safeguarding, protection, well-being, and recovery. It uses a suite of qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the cases, experiences and perspectives of children and young people supported by the ICTG service. The key findings from this research are set out below.

Key findings

- All young people engaged in the research agreed that the ICTG service has supported them to achieve positive outcomes across a range of outcome areas that are important and matter to them.
- The ICTG service delivers a flexible, multi-layered ‘pyramid of service support’ enabling positive outcomes for the safeguarding, protection, well-being, and recovery of children and young people with lived experience of modern slavery.
- The research provides important new evidence on how the ICTG service performs in a flexible, adaptive, inclusive way. Using Q-methodology, we identified five distinct ‘outcome profiles’, associated with groups of young people demonstrating differences in their needs and priorities and illustrating how the ICTG service was able to, effectively and appropriately, address these different priorities and needs.
- The research highlights the importance of ICTG service direct workers as ‘trusted adults’ for children and young people, who consider them instrumental to their participation, protection, and achievement of positive outcomes. Both direct and indirect worker roles within the ICTG service are identified as critical coordination points, supporting the navigation of complex systems, mobilising services and connecting professionals to drive positive outcomes for children and young people.
- ICTG service practitioners can provide nuanced data based on their professional experience working at ‘ground level’ providing valuable insights into the nature of modern slavery affecting children and young people in England and Wales.

Key recommendations

Drawing on the evidence set out in this report, and the key findings above, the following recommendations are made:

¹ The word ‘children’ is used here and elsewhere in the report as it is in the title of the commissioned research and the substantive remit of the ICTG service being evaluated, i.e., to support children with lived experience of human trafficking under the age of 18. This also aligns with the UNCRC definition of the ‘child’ as anyone under the age of 18 and recognises the specific set of universal rights that this invokes. However, the term ‘young people’ is also used in the report, recognising that those children directly engaged in the research would almost certainly all consider themselves to be ‘young people’. In places, ‘young adult’ is used, recognising that the ICTG service in some cases is providing support to young people after they have reached the age of 18.

For the UK Government

- Recommendation 1 - Extend the ICTG service to the whole of England and Wales, commence Section 48 and produce its regulations: The UK Government should extend the ICTG service to the whole of England and Wales, based on the evidence on how it supports the attainment of positive outcomes for children and young people affected by modern slavery, formally commence Section 48 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and draft and adopt the regulations that sit beneath this.
- Recommendation 2 - Include children's participation in any commissioned evaluation or research on the ICTG service: The UK Government should fund the meaningful participation of children and young people affected by modern slavery and supported by the ICTG service, where safe and appropriate to do so, as part of any UK Government commissioned evaluation of, or research on, the ICTG service, including in defining the outcomes that matter to them.
- Recommendation 3 - Maintain a dynamic, responsive and needs-led ICTG service: The UK Government should further encourage and support the flexibility and needs-led nature of the ICTG service and its constituent roles. This will allow the service to continue to respond to the dynamic landscape and policy context of child modern slavery in England and Wales and to the different needs of children and young people affected by modern slavery, maximising positive outcomes for them.
- Recommendation 4 - Further coordinate access to ongoing ICTG service intelligence: The UK Government should draw routinely on the intelligence of ICTG service practitioners working with and for children and young people with lived experience of modern slavery, coordinated through established intelligence mechanisms and routes, for example the regional anti-slavery partnerships.
- Recommendation 5 - Investigate secure data sharing and data linkage to measure post-service outcomes: The UK Government should explore the measurement of long-term outcomes for children and young people post-exit from the ICTG service through data sharing for secure data linkage within a Trusted Research Environment and its legal feasibility in relation to data protection regulations, privacy notices and any other governance around data sharing.

For Barnardo's ICTG Service

- Recommendation 1 - Develop a participatory, holistic outcomes measurement tool: The ICTG service should develop a suitable participatory, holistic assessment and outcomes measurement tool for the service, based on the meaningful participation of children and young people, to effectively and fully measure and report on outcomes for children and young people supported by the ICTG service.
- Recommendation 2 - Routinely record outstanding concerns at point of transition: The ICTG service should systematically record issues of concern and barriers faced by children and young people at the point of transition from the service to better understand the challenges faced in enabling positive outcomes for children and young people prior to service exit, including for those who are 'aging out' of the support provided and to inform future service development.
- Recommendation 3 - Establish and/or continue to support a 'young researchers' group for the service: The ICTG service should seek resources to establish or provide ongoing support and funding to a 'young researchers' group, or equivalent participatory mechanism, that will enable the meaningful participation of children

and young people affected by modern slavery supported by the service in any future service evaluations or related research.

Areas for further research

To fully understand the benefits, and limitations, of the ICTG service in relation to outcomes for children and young people, further research is required to:

- (1) establish the longer-term impact for children and young people affected by modern slavery *once they have left* the ICTG service, potentially possible through a multiple source, linked administrative data approach (see UK Government Recommendation 5 above). The opportunity to conduct interdisciplinary research using linked data should be assessed in terms of its feasibility legally, technically, practically and ethically.
- (2) ensure all voices are heard by (a) finding effective and meaningful ways of exploring the views and experiences of children and young people with a parental figure of responsibility in place for them in the UK who are *indirectly* supported by the ICTG service and for whom outcomes have been reported to date mostly 'by proxy' and (b) conducting participatory research, potentially also through using Q-methodology, on the experiences of younger children and children and young people with more severe special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in relation to outcomes from ICTG service support.
- (3) further investigate the role and impact of ICTG service practitioners as 'trusted adults' for children and young people with lived experience of modern slavery, drawing on the substantive evidence in the wider literature on outcomes for children and young people from 'trusted adult' and adult mentor support and connecting to research on other similar independent advocacy roles, for example Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) and Independent Sexual Violence Advocates (ISVAs).

2. Introduction and Background

*'Barnardo's...has been working with the Home Office to establish the best model of guardianship for children who are trafficked or those that could be trafficked. We are passionate about finding effective long-lasting ways to support all children who are identified as being trafficked in England and Wales.'*²

This report³ explores the benefits and limitations of the Barnardo's Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship (ICTG) service on children and young people's outcomes (long-term safeguarding and protection, well-being, and recovery). It situates this amidst the nature of modern slavery affecting children in England and Wales and sets out what this might mean for policy and practice.

The study seeks to address the following three research objectives:

1. What is the nature of modern slavery affecting children in England and Wales?
2. What are the benefits and limitations of the ICTG service provision on children's outcomes (long-term safeguarding and protection, well-being, and recovery)?
3. How can services, and policies, support the recovery of children with lived experience of modern slavery?

Our analysis is based on a suite of research methods that fore-front children and young people's experiences of ICTG service support and the outcomes that matter *to them*. In combination, these contribute to a deeper understanding of positive child-focused outcomes enabled by the ICTG service not captured in prior evaluations.

The following section provides relevant context by outlining the purpose and evolution of the ICTG service and evidence on its service outcomes for children and young people. We then set out the suite of methods employed to address our research questions, before presenting our analysis (sections 4, 5 and 6), and finally our conclusions and recommendations.

2.1 Evolution of the ICTG service

The **Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship (ICTG) service** is the Home Office commissioned support intervention, contracted to Barnardo's, providing direct and indirect, specialist and trauma-informed support to children affected by trafficking in England and Wales.

The ICTG service, mandated by Section 48 of the 2015 Modern Slavery Act, introduced the role of the **Independent Child Trafficking Advocate (ICTA)**. An ICTA's role was then to directly support children for whom there were 'reasonable grounds' that they could be 'victims of human trafficking'; to 'promote the child's well-being and act in the child's best interests' and be 'independent of any person...responsible for making decisions about the child' (UK Government, Modern Slavery Act, 2015: 38).

In September 2018, a new role of **Regional Practice Coordinator (RPC)** was introduced to the ICTG service. The RPC was to work *indirectly*, alongside other professionals, to support children for whom a figure of parental responsibility was in place in the UK.

² Accessed at: <https://nctc.org.uk/guardianship-service>

³ The research was commissioned through a UKRI funded Fellowship from the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC) on 'Support for children with lived experience of modern slavery'.

Children *without* such a parental figure in place in the UK would be supported directly by an ICTA, now named **Independent Child Trafficking Guardian or 'ICTG'**.

Since May 2021, two further roles have been introduced to the service⁴ and are undergoing targeted piloting: the **Regional Practitioner (RP)**, who works *directly* with children with a figure of parental responsibility in place in the UK *where there is exceptional need*, and the **Independent Child Trafficking Guardian - Post 18 Worker (ICTG – Post 18)**, who *directly* supports young people *over the age of 18 and up to the age of 21 or 25*, subject to their individual circumstances, and who still need support from the service to transition to adulthood⁵.

In October 2023, the ICTG service was subject to an internal inspection and deemed as 'Outstanding' by the Barnardo's Audit and Inspection Unit. The inspection is derived from and based upon the HM Inspectorate of Education's 'Evaluating the quality of a service or organisation'. Of relevance to this study, the inspection noted that:

- The needs and key outcomes for children and young people are routinely set, reviewed and progress is measured. Children and young people's safety and welfare is paramount, and their lived experiences are used to shape the service.
- Key processes and standards are excellent. They are well documented and subject to change and refinement through experience and learning. Recording is of good quality and both personal and clinical supervision are provided to all staff in line with organisational policy.
- The needs of key stakeholders are met to an exceptionally high standard, performance indicators are regularly monitored and reported on, and actions and responses required are completed in a timely manner.
- Leadership is very strong, with significant evidence of shared visioning, consistent behaviours and continual review and adaptation of service needs.

In 2024, the ICTG service is present across two thirds of local authorities in England and Wales⁶ providing both direct and indirect support to children.⁷ A child ('person under the age of 18') is referred to the ICTG service following their referral to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) by a First Responder⁸, where there are 'grounds for concern' that the 'child may be trafficked' and where an ICTG service site is available (Home Office, 2021).⁹ Children do not need to give consent to be referred to the NRM nor for referral into the ICTG service. The ICTG service sets out what it hopes to achieve for these children through its 'ICTG Service Aims'¹⁰. These are:

⁴ These two new roles were introduced via the new Interim Guidance for the ICTG service issued by the Home Office in 2021, further to the formal review of the Modern Slavery Act.

⁵ Also undergoing targeted testing is an extension of ICTG service support for any child beyond the initially stipulated 18-month period in the Modern Slavery Act, in accordance with the child's personal circumstances and needs (Home Office, 2021:24).

⁶ In England, the ICTG service covers: East Midlands, West Midlands Combined Authorities, Bedfordshire, Gloucestershire (including Bristol), Warwickshire, all London Boroughs, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Kent, Surrey, Essex, Greater Manchester, North & West Yorkshire, Lancashire & Merseyside – accessed at: [Guardianship Service - NCTC - Barnardo's](#)

⁷ An update from the UK Government's Modern Slavery Unit dated 12/2/24 notes that as a result of work to review funding commitments for FY 2024/2025, it was decided to support a revised model of the ICTG service: retaining its core objectives in recognition of the importance of the service in assisting vulnerable children, though enabling it to tailor support of the needs of children and making sure there is no duplication of work with other statutory bodies.

⁸ A 'first responder' is someone who works for one of a number of designated organisations (e.g., police, local authorities) who have a duty to help identify and support potential victims of modern slavery.

⁹ Accessed at: Interim Guidance for Independent Child Trafficking Guardians - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

¹⁰ Accessed at: <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/get-support/support-for-parents-and-carers/child-abuse-and-harm/child-trafficking>

Build trusting relationships with trafficked children to help them build a positive future.

1. Help children navigate the criminal justice, immigration, and social care systems.
2. Give practical support, such as help with housing, medical needs, and education.
3. Give emotional and psychological support.
4. Train professionals working with children so they can spot the signs of trafficking and know how to support trafficked children.

Whilst not outcomes for children per se, these reflect different outcome *areas*, for example personal/interpersonal outcomes (such as building positive relationships), service access or rights related outcomes (for example, access to suitable accommodation or health services) and status outcomes within formal systems (such as immigration, criminal justice, or social care).

2.2 Outcomes and evaluations

In the context of this research, 'outcomes' for children and young people affected by human trafficking can initially be defined as the 'consequence of an action, where an action is a particular service or way of working' (Hynes et al, 2022:2), in this case the delivery of the ICTG service in England and Wales.

To properly assess the performance of the ICTG service and other related services, we need to look at what broad outcome areas support for child survivors of human trafficking fundamentally aims to achieve. Child trafficking for the purpose of exploitation is a major child protection and safeguarding concern that has severe detrimental impacts on (or negative outcomes for) children's physical, mental, emotional, and socio-economic well-being. Support services for children affected by human trafficking prioritise their safety and protection, foster their broader well-being, and enable their recovery from the trauma associated with exploitation.

'Protection' of children is conceptualised by Barnardo's as prevention and response to child maltreatment and abuse. 'Safeguarding' is broader than protection from harm, a 'duty and responsibility to ensure the safety of children and young people, in all circumstances,'¹¹ also enabling the broader welfare of children (their health, development, safe and effective care) and taking action to ensure the best possible outcomes for them.

'Well-being' and 'recovery' are more holistic and subjective concepts. They can be experienced and understood differently by children and young people. For example, for adults, recovery can be defined as 'a subjective experience where a survivor can live a 'satisfying', 'hopeful' life, even within any limitations caused by their trafficking or modern slavery experience' (Paphitis et al, 2023:3); for some young people, as 'being able and feeling confident to make and voice choices; regaining a sense of control; the ability to think about the future and make plans' (Hynes et al, 2023:29).

A range of outcome measurement tools have been used by the ICTG service to date. These include tools for tracking children's progress whilst in the service and/or for assessing final outcomes at case closure. They involve a range of approaches including, for example, the use of numerical scores and holistic needs assessments. At different points over time, but not consistently due to different evaluations, a set of seven outcome areas have been used for all children and young people in the service to measure progress against:

¹¹ Accessed at: [Safeguarding Induction Leaflet.pdf \(barnardos.org.uk\)](https://www.barnardos.org.uk/~/media/126466/Safeguarding-Induction-Leaflet.pdf)

Regarding the seven outcomes, they were as follows:

1. Improvement in mental health and wellbeing
2. Able to develop healthy/trusting relationships
3. Able to describe safety strategies
4. Reduction in level of risk/harm
5. Increased awareness of rights
6. Contribute to planning and decision making
7. Development through new experiences/interests

To a certain extent, these reflect the ICTG service aims, for example the importance of building positive, trusted relationships and providing emotional and mental health support. In addition, they show the primacy of safety and protection and children and young people's participation in their own protection (i.e., aware of and able to describe their own safety strategies).

Such variation has, however, made it difficult for the service to consistently track outcomes over time. In addition, since the ICTG service's mandate and funding does not include post-service support, outcomes are difficult to measure post-service over the longer-term.

This development of the ICTG service has involved Home Office commissioned 'built-in evaluations along the way' (Kohli et al, 2019:3) which have included a focus on children's outcomes as categorised and reported in administrative service data, for example children who are 'missing', immigration, criminal justice and NRM decision status and 'reasons for case closure' (Kohli et al, 2019). Such reported outcomes, while very important, are high level, more 'procedural' and provide only a partial picture of experiences, outcomes, and recovery of children themselves. While past evaluations of the ICTG service have, in all cases but one, engaged children themselves, providing in places a broader and more survivor-informed perspective on outcomes (for example on building positive relationships or developing talents and skills), this has not been systematic nor the substantive focus of the research nor has it informed the overall approach and methodology. This may in part be due to the nature of the service, the trauma faced, and ongoing threats posed to children and young people in the service making it challenging to engage them in evaluations at certain stages or times.

Taking a child-centred approach, this research starts with outcomes that children affected by modern slavery consider important and relevant for them. This aligns with recent Home Office' guidance advocating for a 'holistic and victim-centred' approach where 'the child's views, wishes and feelings should always be sought and taken into consideration' (2021:11). To ensure such an approach, we have chosen to use the Stable Futures project's 'Positive Outcomes Framework' provides a strong and suitable foundation (Hynes et al, 2022). The Positive Outcomes Framework is a set of 25 aspirational outcomes for recovery, co-developed with and expressed by young¹² survivors of trafficking who have migrated to the UK. This Framework is a response to the missing voices and absent outcomes for children and young people in the literature as well as in UK legal, service and policy debates (Hynes, 2022:2). The Framework deliberately focuses on - and organises outcomes for children and young people around – the four 'guiding principles' of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

¹² The Stable Futures project's Positive Outcomes Framework relates to non-UK born children and young adults aged 14-25 who have lived experience of human trafficking.

(UNCRC)¹³: ‘best interests’, ‘non-discrimination’, ‘right to life’ and ‘participation’. Based on children’s universal and indivisible rights, it is concerned with a full picture of outcomes relating to children.

2.3 Methods

This research includes four different strands of data collection and analysis, involving a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods and both primary and secondary data (see Table 1).

Table 1: Research strands and methods

Method Strand	Source	Sample	Focus
1. Quantitative methods	National Referral Mechanism (NRM) data for February 2017-September 2022		Nature of modern slavery and administratively recorded decision-making outcomes
	ICTG service data for February 2017-September 2022	4,170	Characteristics of children and young people supported by the service and categorised reasons for case closure
2. Qualitative administrative data	ICTG service case closure summaries February 2017-September 2022	400	Practitioner narrative summaries of individual children and young people’s progress over time and outcomes at case closure
3. Focus group discussions	ICTG service practitioners	56	Practitioner experiences/perspectives on nature of modern slavery and service outcomes for children and young people including case studies
4. Q-methodology	Children and young people supported by a direct worker (ICTG, Post-18 ICTG, RP) in the ICTG service	25	Children and young people’s views on (and ranking of) outcomes enabled (or not) for them by the service based on their experiences.
5. Creative, participatory methods (e.g., drawing, dot voting, poetry)	Young people supported by or who have left the ICTG service who are older and more resilient	10	Young People’s Advisory Group established for the study, helping to shape research design, analysis and dissemination

The participation of young people with lived experience of modern slavery as research participants in - as well as ‘young advisers’ on - the research is at the centre of the research design, in keeping with a child-focused approach. The design was co-produced with Barnardo’s to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of the methods employed.

¹³ These four Guiding Principles are: Non-discrimination, Best Interests; Participation and the Right to be Heard, and Right to Survival, Life and Development.

Barnardo's also supported the identification and engagement of young people supported by the ICTG service as research participants and members of a Young People's Advisory Group, as well as ICTG service practitioners, for method strands 2, 3, and 4. The methodology is expanded upon below in relation to each strand, and further details can be found in Appendices 1 to 8.

Strand 1: Quantitative methods

Quantitative research methods using published National Referral Mechanism (NRM)¹⁴ data and routine ICTG service provision data were used and explored in this study to address our first research objective: to determine the nature of modern slavery in England and Wales. The NRM data allowed an exploration of the characteristics of people referred to the NRM due to potential exploitation as children, the patterns in exploitation 'type', grounds for referral and geographic nature of human trafficking (i.e., trafficking within, into, or outside of the UK) (for more information on the NRM data utilised for the report, please see the Appendix 1). Where possible, we analysed NRM data alongside data from the ICTG service, to understand the extent to which children supported by the ICTG service can be considered representative of broader national UK patterns of referrals to the NRM, although this was not a primary focus for our research.

The ICTG service data was also used to explore quantitative outcomes recorded for children referred to and supported through the service and the feasibility of regression analysis to explore characteristics of individuals and their cases that are statistically associated with recorded outcomes. The various data files that were supplied were linked using anonymous identifiers to create a single dataset that included individual reference data, monthly reports on activity, and information contacts. The data provided for the purposes of this research included data provisioned by Barnardo's to the Home Office for prior ICTG service evaluations and therefore did not include all information collected by the ICTG service for that time period.¹⁵ For example, there is missing data on monthly reports and number/nature of contacts/services related to children and their support. This missing data means that caution must be taken in interpreting the analysis based upon monthly or contact data. There were also changes within the data collected by Barnardo's meaning not all data is available across the period for which data was provisioned. (see Appendix 1 for further details of the ICTG data linkage, regression, and limitations).

The linked ICTG service data contained information on 4,170 children who entered the service between February 2017 and September 2022. In addition to considering the characteristics of those referred, the related types of exploitation, and the nature of support provided, we also considered records on, and reasons for, case closure. ICTG service data contained a binary measure of whether a case was closed, or not, several reasons for closure that could be selected from a list, and a second reason (if the ICTG worker chose to record one). Case closure in many cases does not indicate positive outcomes for children and young people. However, such data is driven by Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the ICTG service rather than the needs of our research. Our use of ICTG service data highlights its limitations and related methodological challenges in relation to this research.

¹⁴ The NRM is the Framework used in England and Wales for referring, identifying and supporting potential child and adult victims of modern slavery. Clearly designated organisations and actors, called 'first responders', refer into the NRM.

¹⁵ It was agreed that the data protection agreement would be between Cardiff University and the Home Office, rather than with the Barnardo's ICTG service, for the purposes of this research. This meant that only this data was shared by the UK Government, as received in reports from the ICTG service, rather than the full ICTG service data.

We explored regression analysis to consider the associations between exploitation characteristics and case closure, but due to the limitations of this data, and issues with the classification of reasons for case closure (see Transitions section below) regression analysis was not deemed feasible to adequately explore outcomes in a reliable way in this study.

Whilst it was possible to explore children's case closure as an 'outcome' to some extent whilst they were *in* the service the data, and some evidence of the areas of support and guidance that ICTG workers offered, data was not available on outcomes *beyond* this because of the service having no post-service funding or mandate, limiting the potential for investigation of 'long term' outcomes. This current limitation might, however, be addressed in the future through a multiple source, linked administrative data approach. (the feasibility of regression analysis to consider outcomes and other methodological possibilities are discussed in Appendix 1).

Strand 2: Qualitative Administrative Data

Qualitative ICTG service administrative data was used in the research to tell us how outcomes for children and young people were supported by the service, addressing our second research objective exploring ICTG service benefits and limitations in relation to outcomes for children and young people. Given the limits of the quantitative data in fully exploring such outcomes (noted below and within Appendix 1), qualitative information written by ICTG service practitioners (case workers) at the point of children and young people's transition out of the service, was also analysed. These 'case closure summaries' were thematically analysed to provide an overview of activity undertaken to support the child, the impact of this work (in most cases from the perspective of solely the case worker) and any areas for post-transition support. The summaries were populated with information from case workers' perspectives, in a few cases along with comments from children and young people, professionals, parents, and carers in places but these were not substantive nor systematically included.

A purposive sample of 10% of ICTG 'cases' for the period from May 2017 to October 2022, 400 children in total, were identified to examine outcomes reported by ICTG workers upon case closure and considered alongside quantitative case information on demographics and the nature of support provided (See Appendix 2).

In designing the sample, consideration was given to changes in ICTG service roles, and the types of support offered to young people over time, as well as the expansion of the service into new sites (Appendix 2 provides an outline of the sample showing the number of closure summaries identified by year, ICTG site and worker role within the sample of 400). In addition, children and young people who had been *directly* supported through the service were included in the sample if they had been open to the service for at least four months and those supported *indirectly* included if open to the service for a minimum of one month. These timeframes reflect the different types of work undertaken, for example direct work tending towards longer-term support and indirect work to shorter-term interventions.

This data revealed further nuance on how outcomes for children and young people were supported, achieved, and understood within the service, although it cannot represent a full picture of outcomes nor can changes be solely attributed to ICTG service interventions given the number of professionals involved in these children and young people's lives.

Strand 3: Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions with ICTG service practitioners were used in the study to address all three research objectives: gathering ICTG service practitioners' experiences and views on the nature of modern slavery identified in England and Wales, on the benefits and limitations of the service and their roles in relation to outcomes for children and young people, and on policy and practice change (see Appendix 3 for further detail on focus group discussions). Focus group discussions are a method which facilitates debate and discussion, creating rich data from multiple participants in a relatively short period of time (Skeels, 2014). Five interactive, online sessions are held with ICTG service regional teams (North, South, London, Midlands, and Wales), with 56 ICTG service staff participating, including 15 managers, 23 ICTGs, 12 RPCs, 2 ICTG Post 18s and 4 RPs. 45 of these 56 ICTG service practitioners engaged in the regional focus group discussions submitted their 'top five' outcome areas that they considered most important for children and young people in the service (see Appendix 5 for practitioners' service outcome ranking results). One additional focus group discussion was delivered to a group of all RPCs across the regional teams, focusing in more detail on the RPC role, its influence on other professionals and outcomes for children and young people. RPCs also provided anonymised case studies to demonstrate their contributions to positive outcomes.

A collaborative online whiteboard (called 'Flinga') was used in each focus group discussion to facilitate discussions and capture practitioners' views. Such views might be considered subject to positive bias, although varied perspectives were shared, and participants open about the challenges faced and where positive outcomes for children could *not* be achieved.

Strand 4: Q-methodology

Q-methodology (or 'Q') was deliberately selected to draw out young people's experiences of ICTG service support and the outcomes enabled (or not enabled) for them, providing young people's perspectives on the benefits and limitations of the ICTG service in this regard. Previous evaluations of the ICTG service, where they have engaged children, have mainly done so through more 'traditional' methods such as interviews. Participatory methods, particularly those that allow participants agency and control, can have multiple benefits for engaging children and young people in research and create additional information compared to other methods (for example, O'Kane, 2008 and Davis, 1998, Rayner and Warner, 2003; Ellingsen et al., 2010).

This evaluation has uniquely utilised a participatory method called Q-methodology, or 'Q' (Ellingsen et al, 2010; Thorsen and Størksen, 2010). Q is a qualitative methodology with a statistical component which is systematic and reliable. It is used to draw out patterns, areas of difference and consensus on a particular area of focus or theme where a range of different perspectives are possible (Watts and Stenner, 2012). The use of Q is innovative in the context of research with children with lived experience of modern slavery.

For Q, a 'concourse' of possible evidence-informed statements is set out in response to a 'provocation', in this case:

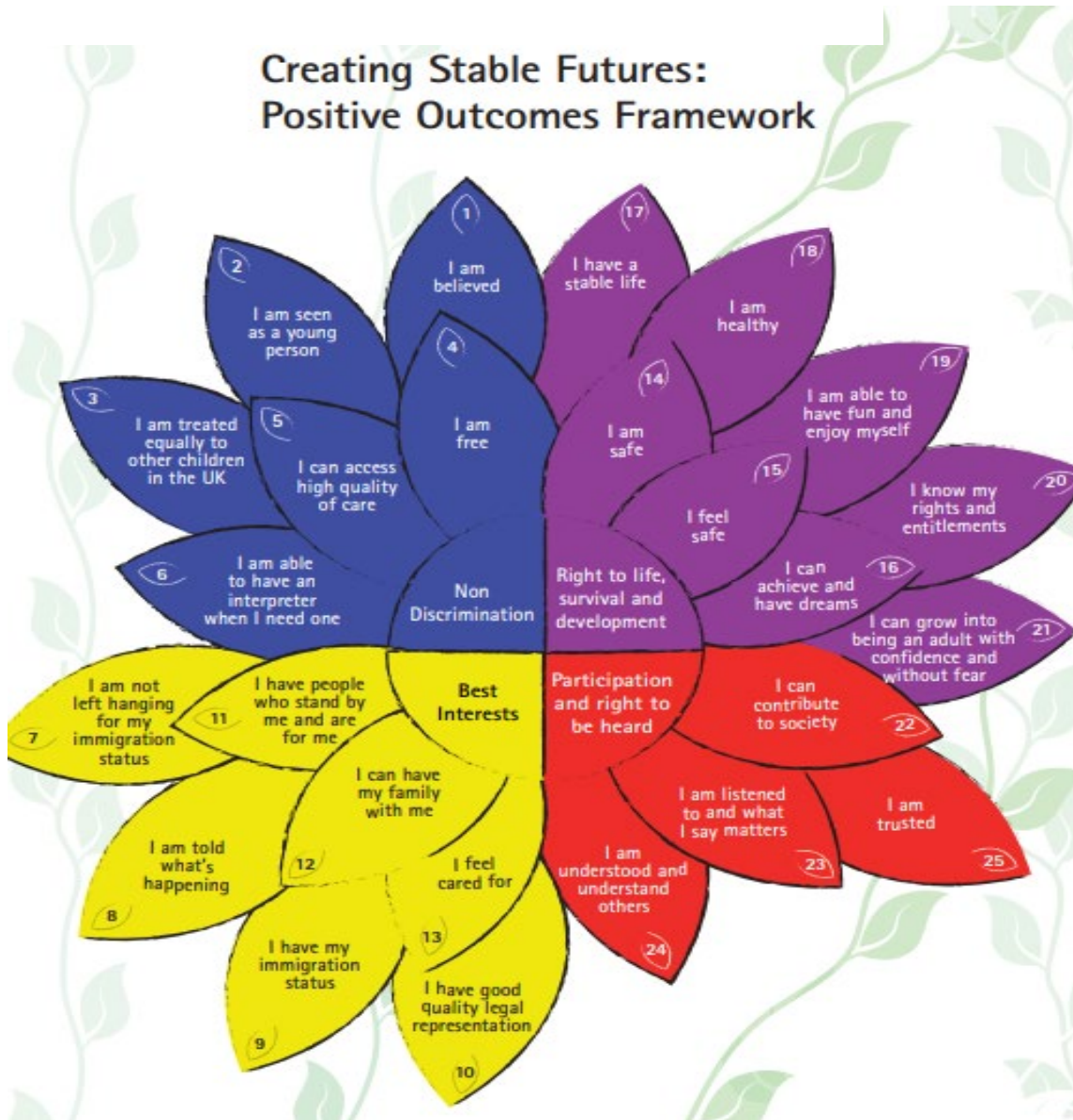
'Because of support from my Barnardo's worker...'

This provocation was selected because it situates children and young people's responses within the context of outcomes that have emerged for them from ICTG service support.

We developed a set of 28 outcome statements (a 'Q-set') by building on the 25 outcomes in the Positive Outcomes Framework (originally developed with young survivors of human trafficking who had migrated to the UK) (see Figure 1). This involved drawing on other

sources, including, for example, the ICTG service aims and associated outcome areas and evidence relating to UK national children and young people affected by human trafficking. We co-adapted our set of statements with our young people’s advisory group, all with lived experience of human trafficking, and had them reviewed by a small group of practitioners and relevant experts to produce our final ‘Q-set’ for the research (see Table 2).

Figure 1: Positive Outcomes Framework core outcomes ¹⁶



¹⁶ Figure 1 shows the central 25 outcomes ‘petals’ of the Positive Outcomes Framework. For the full Framework, including indicators, see: <https://www.ecpat.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=9b159cee-80fb-4add-8460-2135889ae6a3>

Table 2: Final ‘Q-set’ of project specific, co-produced outcome statements

	‘Because of support from my Barnardo’s worker...’
1	...what I say is believed.
2	...people treat me similarly to other young people my age.
3	...my culture, religion and identity are respected.
4	...my experiences and needs are understood
5	...I can make choices that are important to me
6	...I am involved in decisions made about me
7	...I am well cared for and my needs are met
8	...I can get support to communicate with others
9	...important decisions about my life are made quickly
10	...people do what's best for me
11	...I have people I can trust who support me
12	...I can have safe contact with my family if I want to
13	...I have friends that are good for me
14	...I feel able to care for others
15	...I do not feel alone
16	...I am safe and protected from harm
17	...the risks I face are understood
18	...I can achieve things
19	...I can have the education I need
20	...I have hope and can plan for a better future
21	...I feel calm and in control of my life
22	...my body and mind are healthy
23	...I am able to have fun and enjoy myself
24	...I know my rights and what support I should have
25	...I feel supported and more confident about getting older
26	...I can do something to help my community
27	...I am listened to and what I say matters
28	...I understand what's happening to me and what others are telling me

Twenty-five young people who were being, or who had previously been, supported by direct workers (ICTG, ICTG post-18, RP) in the ICTG service were recruited to undertake a ‘Q-sort’ activity. In a ‘Q-sort’, participants rank a set of statement cards that all relate to a key theme or ‘provocation’ by first sorting them into three piles (for example Agree, Disagree, Unsure) and then placing them onto spaces on a grid according to their experiences or views (for example ranging from ‘Disagree’ to ‘Agree’) (see Figures 2 and 3).

In a similar way, the 25 young people supported by the ICTG service sorted and distributed the 28 outcome statements in response to the provocation ‘Because of support from my Barnardo’s worker...’ and based on their own experience of ICTG service support.

Figure 2: Young person undertaking a Q-sort¹⁷



Figure 3: Example of a Q-sort grid¹⁸

Most unlike									Most like
-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	

It is important to note that, although the grid has a scale from Disagree to Agree, young people can decide to Agree or Disagree with as many or as few statements as matches their experience – so all 28 cards can be agreed with, for example, just to a greater or lesser degree. This important nuance is captured in the transcripts of discussions during

¹⁷ An illustration of a Q sorting situation (illustration by Ingunn T. Ellingsen and Ole A. Hauge) from Ellingsen, I.T., Thorsen A.A., and Størksen, I. (2014) Revealing Children's Experiences and Emotions through Q Methodology p4.

¹⁸ An example of a Q sort grid where the instruction could be to sort the cards in accordance with what is most like or most unlike, *Ibid.*, p3.

Q-sorts so that it is possible to clearly 'read' the grid from each young person and interpret accurately what it means.

Of the 25 young people undertaking Q-sorts (see Appendix 6 for demographic profile), 20 were male and 5 were female, all were aged between 15-18 and all had been supported by the service for between 5 and 29 months. 23 of the young people were non-UK born, had no figure of parental responsibility in the UK and were, or had been, supported *directly* by an ICTG service practitioner (ICTG or ICTG-Post 18). The only two UK-born young people out of the 25 had been supported directly by an RP.

ICTG service data shows that 50% of children supported by the service are UK nationals and repeated efforts were made to engage more UK-born children and young people in the Q-sort activity. However, many of these children and young people are supported *indirectly* by an (often unknown to them) RPC and may not even know that Barnardo's are involved in their support (the RPC role and its impact is considered in Strand 3). The provocation and Q-sort activity would therefore not be as meaningful for these children and young people, unless, as in the case of the two UK national young people engaged, they were to receive short-term direct support from an RP.

22 of the 25 Q-sorts were conducted online with the researcher joining remotely¹⁹ and with the relevant ICTG service practitioner present in person supporting the young person. Three Q-sorts were conducted by the ICTG service practitioner on his/her own with the relevant young person where it was felt that the researcher's presence would not be conducive for them. Written and verbal guidance was provided to all these ICTG service practitioners on how to conduct and record a Q-sort (see Appendix 7 for written guidance).

Languages used for the Q-sorts included Kurdish Sorani, Pashto, Tigre, Arabic, Albanian, French, Vietnamese and six were conducted in English. Interpreters joined either in person or online, depending on the needs of the young person, previous practice and feasibility given the distance and times involved. Quotations in this report are either translations by interpreters or directly in English from young people themselves.

In terms of the young people engaging in the research, both as participants and as young 'advisers', there is potential for positive bias, i.e., that those taking part may be those who are more familiar with or have benefited most from the service, have chosen to remain within or keep in contact with the service and for whom it might be easier to engage. Through purposive sampling, we attempted to mitigate against this where possible and enable a diverse group of children and young people to take part. Also, mitigations *during the Q-sorts* in relation to positive bias included reinforcing that it was ok to disagree or say that an outcome had not been achieved and that there would be no negative repercussions for either young person or practitioner because of this.

On completion of the Q-sorts, since the 28 cards were numbered, the numerical ranking of the 28 outcome statements could be analysed using 'KenQ', a desktop web application designed for Q-methodology. The analysis considered common and distanced associations between ranked outcome statements, revealing groups more or less likely to agree with certain statements in a significantly similar way. The statistical analysis was then examined in relation to the qualitative information gathered during the Q-sort process. This exposed five distinct 'outcome profiles', representing different experiences of, and points of recovery for, groups of young people within the ICTG service and revealing the benefits and limitations of the service in relation to outcomes for these young people.

¹⁹ This was because of the spread of the research participants across England and Wales and the time available for data collection which made the researcher attending all in-person impossible.

3. Nature of modern slavery affecting children in England and Wales

Key Finding 1: The nature of modern slavery is a challenging and complex landscape within which the ICTG service strives to deliver positive outcomes for children.

Key Finding 2: ICTG service practitioners can provide nuanced data based on their professional experience at 'ground level'. This is additional to data captured in the NRM and provides valuable insights into the nature of modern slavery affecting children in England and Wales.

3.1 Increased reports of child exploitation but still an under-representation

Because of its complex and hidden nature, measuring the extent and nature of modern slavery is challenging and imprecise. Trends relating to the formal reporting of modern slavery of children in England and Wales have increased almost fourfold according to figures from the NRM for January 2017 to September 2022 (see Figure 4), with the number of people referred as children made by first responders to the NRM rising from 430 to almost 2,000 per quarter.

A decline in the prevalence of all referrals to the NRM during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns that put restrictions on movement in 2020, appears to have been more significant for adult than child referrals. Figure 4 shows a decline from 1,688 adult referrals (Q4 2019) to 1,485 in (Q1 2020) to 840 in (Q2 2020), whilst children declined from 1,449 to 1,237 and rose again slightly to 1,277. Rates of referrals of people experiencing exploitation as children remained around 1,400 across 2021 before beginning to rise again in 2022.

Whilst the increased referrals are likely, at least in part, to be related to a greater awareness of modern slavery and the NRM, there is wide recognition that we cannot rely on these figures to 'accurately reflect the current nature of the crime' (ONS, 2020:4) and that NRM figures are an *under*representation of the number of children with lived experience of exploitation in England and Wales.²⁰

The number of children referred to the ICTG service has also continued to rise over this same period (February 2017 to September 2022). This will be partly due to an increase in identification of children affected by modern slavery, the expansion of the service geographically, and growing awareness of and engagement with the ICTG service by local authorities in areas where it is operational. Over 200 children were supported by the ICTG service (in 2 English Local Authorities and across Wales) in 2017 (representing around 11% of NRM referrals where age is recorded under 17 at the age of exploitation in England and Wales), and almost 1,500 children were supported between January and September 2022 (representing around 28% of NRM referrals where age is recorded as under 17 at the age of exploitation in England and Wales). Comparisons between NRM referrals and ICTG referrals may appear to show a limited number of NRM 'child' cases being referred

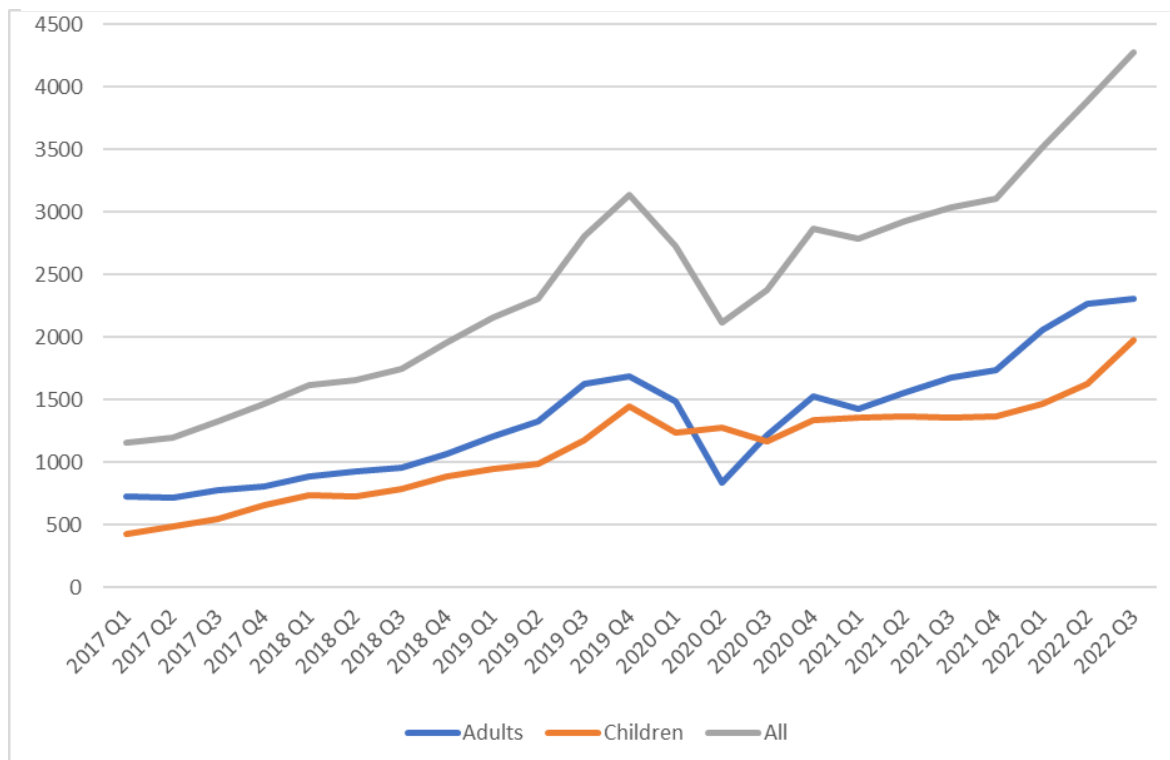
²⁰ [The hidden victims: Report on Hestia's super-complaint on the police response to victims of modern slavery - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#), summary finding 12.14 also sets out evidence of a lack of knowledge amongst professionals, for example police officers (particularly non-specialists), who remain unaware of the duty to notify or refer to the NRM.

to ICTG services, however, as the NRM records age at exploitation (and not the age at NRM referral) an unknown proportion of NRM ‘child’ referrals include referrals for individuals whom on referral to the NRM were over the age of 18 and therefore not able to access ICTG services. Furthermore, it is not possible to consider NRM referral at a more granular level than UK nation hindering direct comparison with the local authorities in which the ICTG service was operational.

The ICTG service data shows that between February 2017 to September 2022 2,251 children were indirectly supported through the RPC role and 1,838 children supported directly within the service (through ICTG, ICTG Post 18 and RP roles) (see Appendix 1 for further details). The average length of time that children were supported by the ICTG service was eight months. Whilst there are discrepancies in how age has been recorded across time in the service data, most children enter the service at age 16 or 17 (around 50%) and 95% of children supported are over the age of 13.

When asked about their perception of trends, ICTG service practitioners reported seeing an increased volume of children ‘at risk’ of or affected by exploitation and, through service referrals and their daily practice, noticing an increase in violence and serious harm amidst such exploitation. They were aware of the limited capacity of the service in the face of this growing need and concerned about how they might best address this. With most children entering the service at age 16 or 17, they were conscious of the limited time available for supporting these children’s recovery before they ‘aged out’ of the service at 18.

Figure 4: UK Child and adult referrals to the NRM between February 2017 and September 2022



3.2 'Multiple forms of exploitation...crudely categorised'

Both NRM and ICTG service data include the type(s) of exploitation experienced by individual children, or that they are 'at risk' of experiencing. Table 3 shows that almost 40% of cases of potential exploitation under the age of 18 referred to the NRM were thought to have experienced, or to have been at risk of, criminal exploitation. Rates were higher within the ICTG service data, with 64% of children referred to the service reportedly criminally exploited / at risk of criminal exploitation. While child criminal exploitation is not new, and can take a variety of different forms, the systemic presence of the 'county lines' model, reported by police forces across England and Wales, helps to explain this. Fewer children within the ICTG dataset were classified as affected by forced labour (23%) than those potentially exploited as children in this way referred to the NRM (38%). The number of 'unknown' forms of exploitation was far higher in the NRM data at 12% than in the ICTG service data at 2%. Both discrepancies might suggest that, with the individually tailored and more intensive support provided by the ICTG service, more detail on the type(s) and nature of exploitation might be revealed. Organ harvesting was the least common type of child exploitation recorded within the two datasets at less than 1% in each case.

Table 3: Exploitation type in NRM and ICTG data February 2017 to September 2022 (% of cases)

	NRM Child UK data (age at potential exploitation 17 or under)²	NRM Child England and Wales data (17 or under)²	ICTG Child data (age at referral, under 18)
<i>Exploitation Type¹</i>			
Criminal	39%	40%	64%
Labour	38%	37%	23%
Sexual	18%	18%	20%
Unknown	12%	12%	2%
Domestic Servitude	7%	7%	6%
Organ harvesting	<1%	<1%	<1%
N	25,335	24,514	4,170

Note: 1. Exploitation as recorded within the NRM and ICTG data has altered over time and could include multiple types of exploitation, for example as a single measure specifying any number of 'types' within the NRM data. Financial exploitation is not recorded under the NRM system and is only a small number of cases in the ICTG data, and therefore not reported. These were disaggregated to create a variable for each single type of exploitation recorded. Each child can therefore have multiple types recorded, and figures do not sum to 100%, and the 'primacy' of exploitation type is not considered. 2. It should also be noted that the definition of child is under 17 within the NRM data, but also that adults who experienced or were at risk as children would be counted as a child within this data source. ICTG service data also includes 17- and 18-year-olds.

The NRM data also shows that the number of types of exploitation recorded against each referral of potential exploitation as a child, was most commonly one type (around 77%), with around 13% of children referred having two or more types recorded. Within the ICTG service data, over 50% of cases have two recorded types of exploitation. It is expected that a few factors influence these differences. For example, a change from one to multiple

types of exploitation being recorded in the NRM; again, the close nature of support and more detailed knowledge of children's history of exploitation developed within the ICTG service as trust builds over time with direct worker support and because ICTG support usually occurs after a 'reasonable' or 'conclusive' grounds decision has been made (see below). For these reasons, the ICTG service data is more likely to be an accurate reflection of the type(s) of exploitation experienced by children within the service, and this is indicated by the lower rates of 'unknown' exploitation types within the ICTG data compared to NRM data (see Table 3).

Based on their current practice, ICTG service professionals perceived a 'high proportion of child criminal exploitation' and 'very low' referrals related to child sexual exploitation and domestic servitude, reflecting the NRM and ICTG referral data. For these practitioners, however, 'multiple forms of exploitation' were 'in play for vulnerable young people' but were being 'crudely categorised' through the systems, procedures, and paperwork in place to make referrals to the NRM. They also commented on 'missed opportunities' by First Responders in terms of the identification and referral of children to the NRM. For example, cases of child criminal exploitation where indicators of such exploitation are mistakenly identified as youth 'disengagement' and so 'under reported and not recognised' even when 'in plain sight'. There were examples of children listed on the Child in Need²¹ register not also being referred to the NRM. Such observations reinforce the notion that recorded referrals of children to the NRM are an *under*-representation of the extent of child modern slavery.

Concerns were also raised by ICTG service practitioners about a 'spotlight' or 'over-focus on one type of exploitation', with other types being overlooked or not recognised by 'First Responders'. For example, 'domestic servitude referrals' were thought 'often not responded to appropriately' and others mentioned missed identification of parental or family exploitation of children, including cases of 'inherited debt'. Child criminal exploitation was considered as being more easily identified than other forms of child modern slavery, and almost a 'trend': ***'Child criminal exploitation is being recognised more frequently than child sexual exploitation, which is a shift from before. From experience, I imagine both types of exploitation are ongoing at a high number'*** (ICTG practitioner).

Despite such drawbacks associated with classification for the purposes of an NRM referral, Table 4 extends the analysis of exploitation type by considering variation by gender within both NRM and ICTG service data. It shows, in both cases, that referred children were more likely to be male (76% in the NRM data, and 77% in the ICTG service data). The NRM data shows us that criminal exploitation was less common among referred female children (19%) than male children (46%) and forced labour was less common among referred female children (17%) than male children (44%). Sexual exploitation was much more common amongst females (60%) than males (5%). The ICTG service data, in comparison, whilst broadly in line with the NRM patterns, shows much higher rates of criminal exploitation and higher rates of sexual exploitation for children.

Practitioners from the ICTG service commented on current missed formal identification of girls who had been criminally exploited ('this may be more hidden') and lack of detection of sexual exploitation of criminally exploited boys. This is borne out in the figures above. They also spoke about young people not being recognised as 'missing' (but still being exploited post 18 and therefore considered ineligible for continuing service support).

²¹ Children's Services in England and Wales under section 17 Children Act 1989 have a duty to provide services to children in need in their area. A 'child in need' assessment under section 17 will identify the needs of the child and ensure that the family are given the appropriate support in enabling them to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

Table 4: Exploitation types recorded, by gender February 2017 to September 2022 (% of referrals)

	NRM Child UK data (age at potential exploitation 17 and under) ²		NRM Child England and Wales data (age at potential exploitation 17 and under) ²		ICTG Child data (age at referral, under 18)	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
<i>Exploitation Type</i>						
Criminal	19%	46%	19%	47%	39%	73%
Organ harvesting	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%	<1%
Labour	17%	44%	16%	44%	14%	30%
Domestic servitude	9%	4%	9%	3%	13%	5%
Sexual	60%	5%	61%	4%	70%	9%
Unknown	14%	12%	13%	11%	1%	1%
Total	24%	76%	24%	76%	23%	77%
N	6,011	19,258	5,772	24,450	954	3,195

3.3 Status, nationality, and a hostile environment

NRM data includes the number of referrals of potential exploitation as a child that had successfully or unsuccessfully achieved positive reasonable grounds (RG) or positive conclusive grounds (CG) decisions as 'victims' of modern slavery. Table 5 shows the NRM decision status of such child referrals, by gender, and reveals little difference across possible decision outcomes (positive or negative reasonable grounds, positive or negative conclusive grounds or suspension or withdrawal). We can see in Table 5 below that children have higher rates of suspended or withdrawn referrals (around 22% for both males and females compared to all referrals).

Within the ICTG service data²², 50% of children referred to the ICTG service had received either a positive reasonable grounds (RG) or positive conclusive grounds (CG) NRM decision before entering the service, a further 31% had records suggesting that decision outcomes were confirmed during the period of ICTG service support. In 3% of cases, ICTG service practitioners were seeking further information for or progressing the NRM decision making process and, in a further 15% of cases, no decision appeared to have been made.

Positive conclusive grounds decisions provide official recognition that a child is or was a victim of human trafficking at the time of referral and are essential for children feeling believed as well as their ongoing support and protection. ICTG service support will end if a negative conclusive grounds decision has been made. Some of the practitioners in the focus group discussions commented on how there could be delays and procedural challenges associated with the NRM decision-making process negatively affecting children in the service.

²² Data on whether an NRM decision had been made was not available for all years of data, only for 2017 to early 2021. Percentages reported are based upon 920 cases. These results should therefore be interpreted with caution.

In relation to the NRM, practitioners in focus groups also commented on a lack of clarity in the guidance around NRM referrals for First Responders, resulting in negative reasonable grounds decisions; confusion of the NRM process with the ICTG service by some stakeholders (i.e., thinking they are the same thing) and screening tools that were not inclusive enough. The NRM system, said one practitioner, was 'not set up to deal with other forms of exploitation beyond child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation': ***'I think there's a system that we have, that we operate within and the NRM and the advice that we give and stuff, it isn't set up to deal with the other things that happen beyond that...'*** (ICTG practitioner)

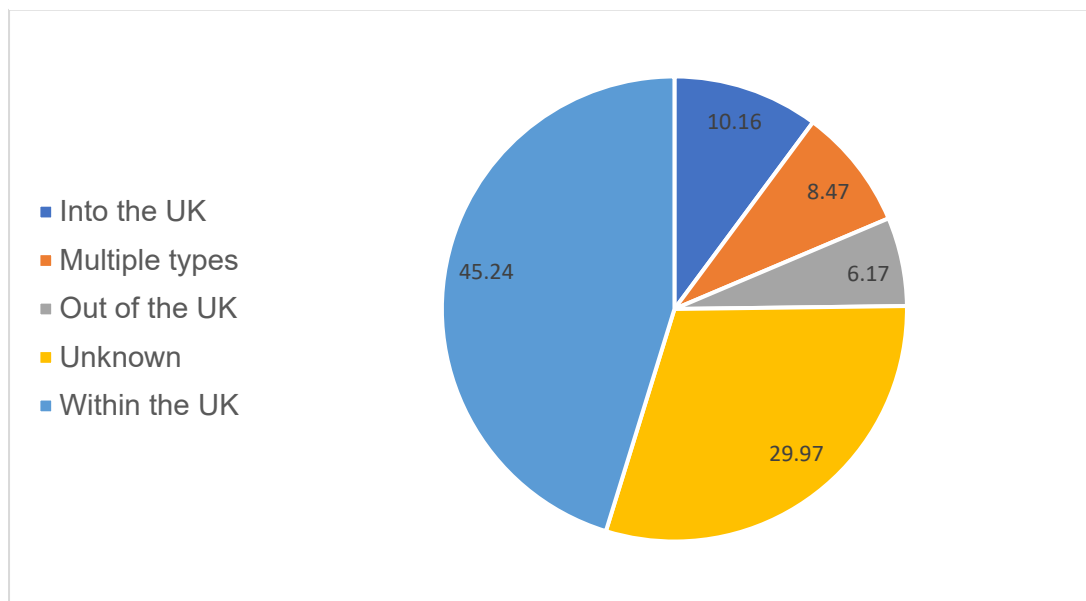
Table 5: NRM recorded decision status for children under 17 years of age in England and Wales by gender between February 2017 to September 2022 (% of child cases)

	UK		England and Wales	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Current decision status				
Negative reasonable grounds	9.5%	10.8%	9.5%	10.8%
Positive reasonable grounds	33.0%	30.2%	33.0%	30.2%
Negative conclusive grounds	4.2%	3.6%	4.2%	3.6%
Positive conclusive grounds	31.3%	33.7%	31.3%	33.7%
Suspended or withdrawn	22.0%	21.6%	21.9%	21.6%
N	6,011	19,258	5,772	24,450

Note: A small proportion (less than 1%) were recorded as 'disqualified' or 'RG pending'.

In terms of the geographic nature of child trafficking, Figure 5 shows that approximately 45% of children referred to the ICTG service were thought to have been trafficked or exploited within the UK. NRM data on child exploitation for the same period, were collected in different ways to the ICTG service data, and reveal that 31% were exploited overseas, 58% were exploited in the UK and 11% were exploited both in the UK and overseas. In a significant proportion (almost 30%) of cases, the geographic nature of exploitation was 'unknown'. What is not captured in the NRM data are figures is the distinction of being trafficked *into* the UK versus being trafficked *within* the UK.

Figure 5: Geographic nature of trafficking (% ICTG cases), February 2017 to September 2022



The nationality of children with lived experience of modern slavery recorded was similar across both data sources. In the NRM and ICTG service data, 50% of children were recorded as being UK nationals. Table 6 shows the other nationalities that were most prevalent and recorded across each dataset, and indicates that Vietnamese, Albanian and Sudanese make up a significant proportion of child NRM referrals and children supported by the ICTG service for the period under review. The immigration status of these non-UK national children was recorded as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in 68% of cases. For 13% no information was given, 12% were recorded as EU/EEA nationals, 3% were recorded as refugees, and 3% were categorised as not UK/EU/EEA or UASC. The ICTG service therefore provides support for a significant number of UASC.

Table 6: NRM and ICTG recorded nationalities (% cases) between February 2017 to September 2022

Nationality	UK NRM child referral data	England and Wales NRM child referral data	ICTG service data
UK	50.4%	50.3%	50.9%
Vietnamese	7.1%	6.1%	7.4%
Albanian	5.8%	6.6%	4.8%
Sudanese	5.4%	5.4%	6.4%
Eritrean	4.7%	4.7%	2.9%
Afghan	2.3%	2.3%	3.5%
Romanian	2.0%	2.1%	2.7%
Iranian	1.5%	1.5%	2.2%
Iraqi	1.4%	1.4%	1.7%
Other	19.4%	19.6%	17.5%

In relation to supporting UASC, all regional teams from the ICTG service spoke about the challenges of new UK Government legislation and policy, in particular the Nationality and

Borders Act (2022) and the Illegal Migration Act (2023).²³ Comments included describing this shift as ‘a dire situation, affecting young people and practitioners’ and creating ‘an increasingly hostile environment’ within which to deliver the ICTG service. Practitioners were particularly concerned about barriers created through the changes in legislation and policy in relation to the identification and ability to access appropriate support for children who had been trafficked. They mentioned specific amendments to guidance on modern slavery and the NRM following the implementation of the Nationality and Borders Act, for example the change in the reasonable grounds (RG) decision-making process and requirement for more evidence to prove a ‘victim’ of child trafficking implementing the Nationality and Borders Act (now amended following a legal challenge). Practitioners also expressed frustration at their own lack of control over such legislation and policy and its implications for the lives of the children and young people they were there to support. In general, they felt that they were operating in – and children and young people they supported were being exposed to – an increasingly challenging environment with a significantly negative discourse fuelled by government, media, the public and society.

In summary, based on the data from both the NRM and the ICTG service for the period from February 2017 to September 2022, the challenge of modern slavery affecting children in England and Wales is growing in both scale and complexity. A combination of this administrative data with practitioner perspectives can be revealing. It allows us to reflect both on reported, and perceived, patterns in the nature of modern slavery. Practitioners’ comments can function as a ‘temperature take’ or ‘ground truthing’ of trends in the data as well as provide further nuance based on their experience ‘on the frontline’ of the ICTG service. They can also tell us something about the formal systems and processes related to the identification, assessment, referral and access to support for children with lived experience of modern slavery, how the ICTG service is navigating these and some of the barriers faced. There are limitations to this landscape, associated with outcomes for children, over which the ICTG service has no control.

²³ The modern slavery provisions in the Illegal Migration Act are yet to be implemented at the time of writing this report.

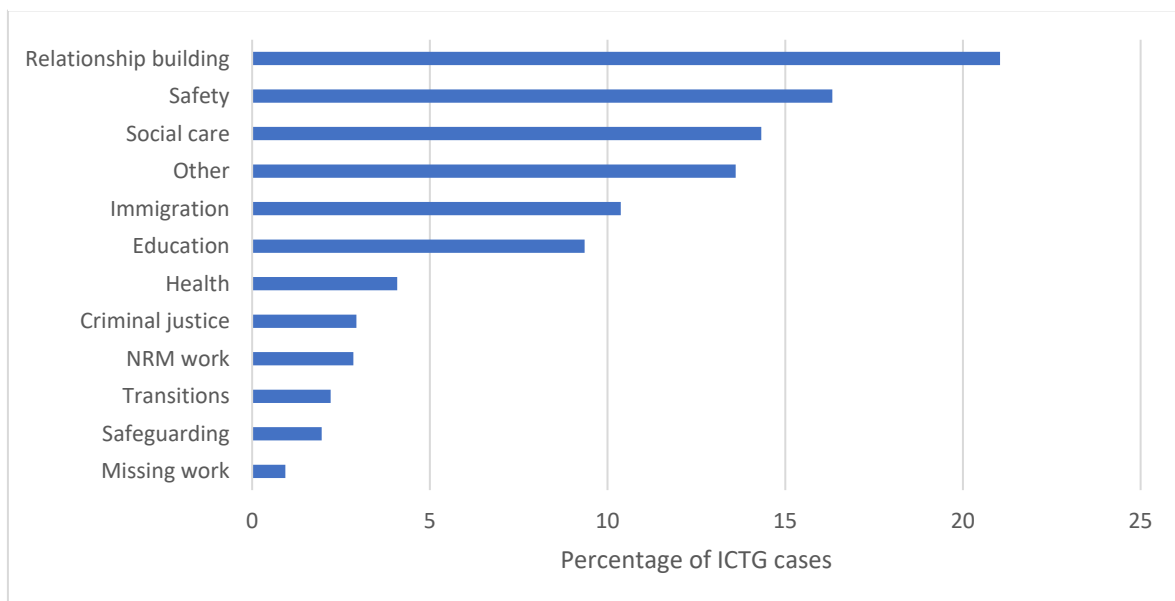
4. A Pyramid of Service Support

Key Finding 3: The ICTG service delivers a multi-layered ‘pyramid of support’ that enables positive outcomes related to safeguarding, protection, well-being, and recovery of children with lived experience of modern slavery.

The vision of the ICTG service is that all children referred to their service have access to the safety and support they need. The service delivers its support intervention to these children within the challenging and complex landscape already set out in Section 3.

Analysis of ICTG service quantitative monthly data for the period February 2017-September 2022 reveals the extent to which different types of support were provided to children and young people through the service, as indicated by % of children and young people per category of support. All ICTG service practitioners supporting a child directly or indirectly input the type of support provided for every intervention with a child or young person, a professional or parent/carer and the time spent, in minutes, on that type of support. Figure 6 shows that safety (at 20%, or more if safeguarding is also included) and relationship building (at 15%) were areas of highest need. Social care (14%), immigration (10%) and education were other common areas where ICTG workers were offering support, along with support on engaging with the criminal justice system, the NRM and transitions. This is in keeping with a protection-focused service and the first three ICTG service aims articulated in Section 2 of building trusting relationships with children who have been trafficked, enabling their navigation of formal systems and providing practical support. ‘Other’ also proved a significant category.

Figure 6: Types of support (% children and young people within ICTG service) between February 2017 to September 2022



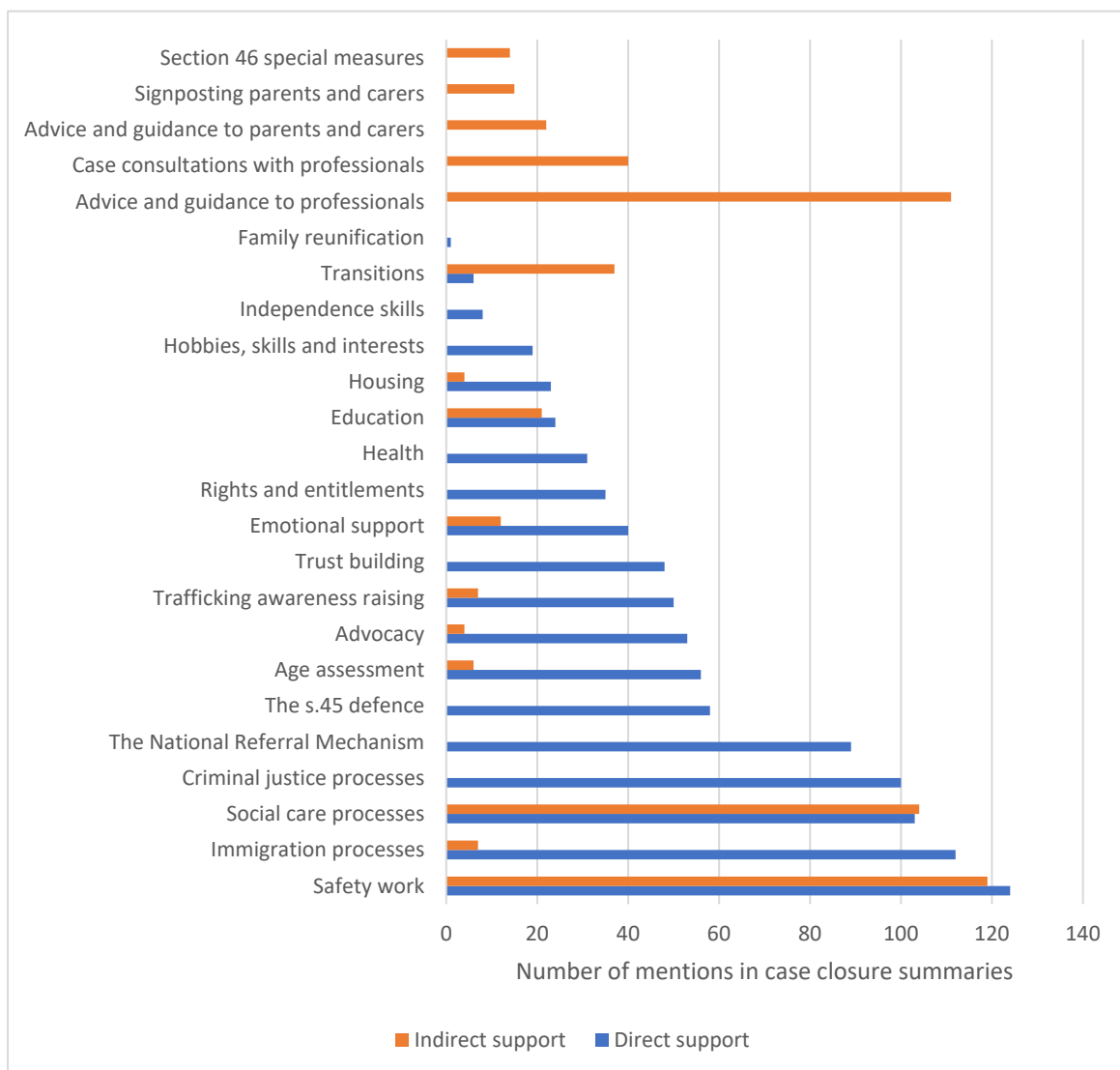
Note: This comes from ICTG service monthly data which was shared and not complete for the period of study.

Case closure summaries allow us to better understand the nature and nuances of ICTG service support. A case closure summary is completed by an ICTG service practitioner at the point a child is transitioning out of the service. Case closure summaries provide

information about interventions offered by the service and areas of activity and support focused upon. The summaries offer an indication of what has worked well for the child and any challenges with support, access to support and work with other professionals. Finally, they outline ongoing support needs that may be required after the work of the service has ended, and where this might come from. As such, they provide a rich source of information to better understand children’s ‘journeys’ through and out of the service.

We used the case closure summaries to identify categories (and frequencies) of support offered to children and young people both directly (via ICTGs, ICTG-post 18s and RPs) and indirectly (through RPCs) by the ICTG service (see Figure 7). These figures indicate that whilst there were similarities in support offered, particularly around safeguarding, there were also significant differences in terms of advocacy and advice.

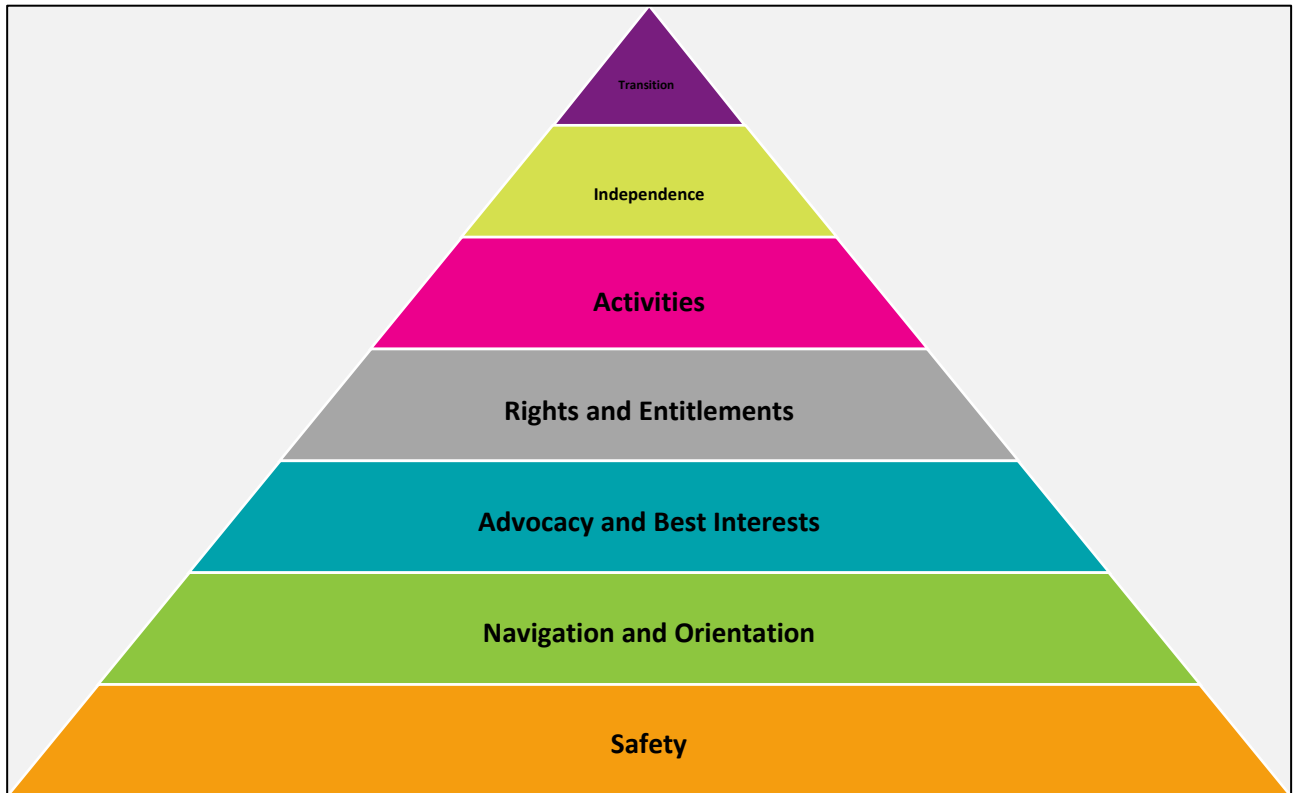
Figure 7: Types of support offered to children as recorded in case closure summaries, May 2017 to September 2022



Through an inductive approach, we developed a coding framework ‘ground up’ from the data in our sample of case closure summaries, as well as from reflection on the ICTG service aims and related outcome areas (specified in Section 2, also see Appendix 3). All qualitative data was systematically coded to the framework and analysed. Drawing on the populated framework, we identified and articulated a set of higher-level themes representing ICTG service support for children and young people, for example those codes ‘clustering’ around safety and protection or those relating to entitlements and rights. To best conceptualise these themes, we have newly described them as an ICTG ‘pyramid of service support’ to demonstrate where the evidence suggests that the work of the service is targeted, how it is distributed and where it provides both foundational and transitional support for children and young people (see Figure 8 below). Whilst not necessarily operating in a linear fashion, ‘safety’ appears in the ‘pyramid’ as the significant, firm foundation for support (as the area most referenced in the case closure summaries) and ‘independence’ and ‘transition’ enable a positive journey out of the ICTG service (least explicitly referenced in the case closure summaries but the point towards which all other support contributes and leads), with needs-led and varied navigation of other support layers in-between.

This newly conceptualised ICTG ‘pyramid of service support’, based mainly upon case closure data, and importantly connected to the ICTG service aims set out in Section 2, can be further validated using other evidence from this research. Data from the focus group discussions with ICTG service practitioners and the 25 Q-sorts with young people supported by the ICTG service both, for example, rank ‘safety’ as the foundational area of support and most important service outcome. Table 7 below shows the most common five outcome areas identified by 45 of the practitioners in the focus group discussions as most important for children and young people from the ICTG service (each practitioner independently and simultaneously submitted their ‘top five’ to the researcher, without conferring) which broadly reflect and agree with the layers from the pyramid of service support. ‘Safety’ was by far the highest ranked service outcome by these 45 practitioners, with ‘advocacy and best interests’ and ‘rights and entitlements’ ranked slightly higher than in the pyramid (which makes sense given these are core to all ICTG practitioner roles) (for further detail, see Appendix 5).

Figure 8: The ICTG ‘Pyramid of Service Support’



1. Work alongside young people and their networks to build a foundation of **safety**.
2. Facilitate the **navigation and orientation** of systems and processes for young people and their networks.
3. **Advocate in the best interests** of young people whenever this is needed.
4. Enable understanding and access to **rights and entitlements**. Create opportunities for participation in things that matter to young people most.
5. Encourage and enable access to **activities** which promote hobbies, skills, talents, and interests.
6. Create opportunities to learn **independence skills**.
7. Aid young people to **transition** well, with ongoing support for as long as is needed.

Table 7: ICTG service 45 practitioners combined top 5 ranked service outcomes for children

Theme/s	Mentions	Rank	Pyramid (P) layer	P rank
Safe/safeguarded/ protected	60	1	Safety	1
Trusted adult/relationship(s) /supported	40	2	Advocacy and Best Interests	3
Rights, participation/voice	38	3	Rights & Entitlements	4
System outcomes (e.g., asylum granted/not prosecuted)/services accessed	36	4	Navigation & orientation	2
Recovery, wellbeing, increased integration	36	5	Independence/ Transition	6&7

Table 8: Top 10 ranked outcome statements from 25 Q-sorts based on # 'Agree'

No.	Because of support from my Barnardo's worker... Statement	Agree/25
3	...my culture, religion and identity are respected	25
11	... I have people I can trust who support me	25
27	... I feel supported and more confident about getting older	25
15	... I do not feel alone	25
28	... I understand what's happening to me and what others are telling me	25
4	...my experiences and needs are understood	25
23	...I am able to have fun and enjoy myself	25
20	...I have hope and can plan for a better future	25
16	...I am safe and protected from harm	24
10	...people do what's best for me	24

Table 9: Top 10 ranked outcome statements from 25 Q-sorts based on # in top 6 'Agree'

No.	Because of support from my Barnardo's worker... Statement	In top 6 Agree / 25
16	... I am safe and protected from harm	14
7	... I am well cared for and my needs are met	13
10	... people do what's best for me	10
11	...I have people I can trust who support me	8
3	...my culture, religion and identity are respected	8
25	...I feel supported and more confident about getting older	8
22	...my body and mind are healthy	8
24	...I know my rights and what support I should have	7
13	... I have friends that are good for me	6
27	...I am listened to and what I say matters	6

Table 8 shows the top ten ranked outcome statements from the 25 young people's Q-sorts based on the number of young people (out of 25) who Agreed with them. Table 9 shows the top ten ranked outcome statements based on the number of young people (out of 25) for whom this statement was in their top 6 highest ranked 'Agrees' i.e., they agreed *more strongly* about these statements than others (Appendix 8 shows the full ranking of all 28 statements).

Being 'safe and protected from harm' is agreed with as an outcome from the Barnardo's ICTG service by 24/25 of young people and is the *most strongly* agreed with by young people out of all 28 of the outcome statements. All 25 young people agreed with the statements 'I understand what is happening to me and what others are telling me'. 'I am well cared for and my needs are met' is the *second most strongly* agreed with outcome statement by young people out of 28 which aligns with the importance of 'navigation and orientation' and 'best interests' in the 'pyramid of service support' as well as the ICTG service aims.

In summary, this comparison or 'triangulation' of these three sources of data from the research shows alignment between outcomes recorded in children's case management files, practitioners' perspectives from working in the ICTG service and the experiences of

young people. We now explore each layer of the pyramid, drawing on data from the case closure summaries, the ranking of outcomes by 45 practitioners in the focus group discussions and the Q-sorts with the 25 young people.

4.1 Safety

In case closure summaries, from point of referral, right through to transition and closure, safety was a common theme, providing a necessary and continuous foundation for support. 243 case closure summaries specifically cited safety planning and work focused on safety. Evidence on outcomes related to safety was included in 165 of these 243 summaries. This evidence demonstrated positive safety outcomes for 80% of these 165 children and young people (they were safer) with another 17% considered still at risk, 2% neither more nor less at risk and 1% at increased risk at the point of transition from the service. For the majority of children, then, their situation was considered safer at point of transition from the service than when support began.

Figure 9 provides an overview of the types of safety-related activity mentioned. From the outset both direct and indirect workers focus on building relationships with young people, professionals, parents, and carers to better safeguard and protect children. They advise on implementing safety plans, which include a range of measures within and outside young people’s homes, known through Barnardo’s assessments (for example Shuker, 2013), service practice and ICTG service evaluations to promote safety.²⁴

Safety ‘mapping’ is a type of work undertaken to look at risks to individual children, but also children that may be connected to them – it is a systemic, place-based approach that ‘maps’ out potential risks, including suspected perpetrators and how these can be mitigated. Online safety relates to support young people to understand how to keep safe online with information, advice and guidance.

Figure 9: ICTG service activity focusing on safety.

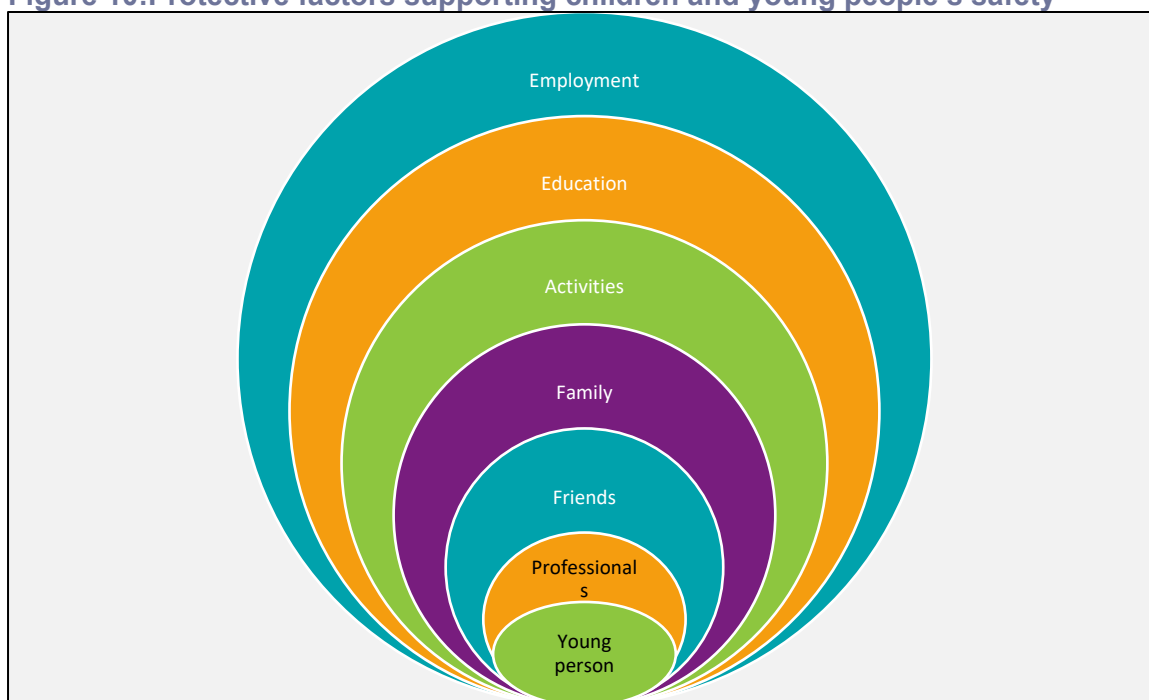


²⁴ This is known from the ICTG service evaluations, the evaluation of Barnardo’s Safe Accommodation Project <https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/85055/barnardo27s-sa-project-evaluation-full-report.pdf> and the knowledge built up in the service relating to safety planning.

Case closure summaries show that direct workers spend time with young people exploring their awareness of trafficking and how to mitigate potential risks both in person and online, develop healthy relationships and build safe networks of support. When risks escalate or change, direct workers intervene with guidance and advice, recommending amendments to safety plans to fit evolving situations. Indirect workers regularly attend multi-agency meetings, case consultations and trainings where they put forward measures known to be successful in disrupting individuals and groups perpetrating abuse. They advise on risk mapping and contextual approaches to safeguarding.²⁵

Data in the case closure summaries also identify several protective factors aiding young people’s safety and supporting their overall wellbeing. This includes safe networks of support including professionals, carers, friends, and family, as well as access to activities, education, and employment (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Protective factors supporting children and young people’s safety²⁶



Safety (being safe, feeling safe, safeguarding) was ranked first by 45 practitioners in focus group discussions, mentioned 42 times as a priority outcome for children and young people, or 60 times if safe accommodation and education as a protective factor are also included: access to, provision of, participation in and the importance of full and appropriate education (‘the right education’). Practitioners outlined a range of safety-related practices and activities including safety planning, safety tools and strategies, disruption techniques, risk mitigation, timely interventions, and collaborative safeguarding (alongside other professionals). ‘Family’ was only mentioned once and ‘friends’ not at all, although there was a strong focus on building trusted and healthy relationships for safety which might well include both.

All except one of the 25 young people engaged in Q-sorts agreed with the statement ‘I am safe and protected from harm’ because of support from the ICTG service (with the 1 young person reflecting on her current situation which her RP was working to address). 14 out

²⁵ Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, children’s experiences of significant harm beyond their family and home. This approach recognises the different relationships children have in their schools, peer groups, online and in their community.

²⁶ Size of the circles does not represent relative importance. The figure just shows the different protective factors that can ‘wrap around’ a child or young person and which are important to consider in terms of support.

of 25 ranked this statement as one of their top 6 out of 28. For all the non-British born young people engaged in the Q-sorts (23/25), safety as an outcome was something that, because of the ICTG service, was being realised in practice in their lives.

In relation to the protective factors of Education and Friends (see figure 10 above) only four young people participating in the research disagreed with the statement 'Because of support from my Barnardo's worker...' 'I can have the education I need' (4 ranking this in their top 6) (see Appendix 8). Three of these disagreed because they had already been supported by other non-ICTG professionals, such as Social Workers, to access education. The fourth young person disagreed as he could not study the subjects that he wanted because of his immigration status in the UK. Only three young people disagreed with 'I have friends that are good for me' (6 ranked in their top 6, see Table 9) two of these because they felt they hadn't needed support in this area from Barnardo's and they had been able to make friends themselves. The other young person was the one mentioned above who also disagreed with 'I am safe and protected from harm' and for whom the current context was volatile.

'I can have safe contact with my family if I want to' was the statement most disagreed with by young people engaging in the research as being because of support from their Barnardo's worker (10 out of 25 young people disagreed, see Appendix 8). This is important given that Family is a protective factor for these young people (see Figure 10 above). This was because there was no-one for them to have contact with, there was no connection, they didn't want contact or contact was not a safe option. For two young people, previously separated from but now in contact with their families (QYP3, QYP12), the Red Cross had helped them to trace family members (although this was through a Barnardo's referral in both cases). One young person *did* want contact with his family, but he disagreed with the statement because he felt Barnardo's had not yet supported him with this.

In summary, safety was a foundational outcome for children, which young people considered was achieved through support from the service and most prioritised by practitioners, although other organisations and activity outside of the service also contributed to children and young people's safety and protection, as set out later in this report.

4.2 Navigation and Orientation

Navigation and orientation are highlighted in case closure summaries by practitioners as important areas of their support for children, whether supported directly (ICTGs, ICTG post-18s and RPs) or indirectly (RPCs). This navigation and orientation support relates to formal systems and procedures, for example immigration, social care, criminal justice and the NRM and advice and guidance across a range of topics highlighted in case closure summaries (see Figure 11): ***'I am very appreciative of all the support and guidance allowing me to navigate through the legal systems'***²⁷

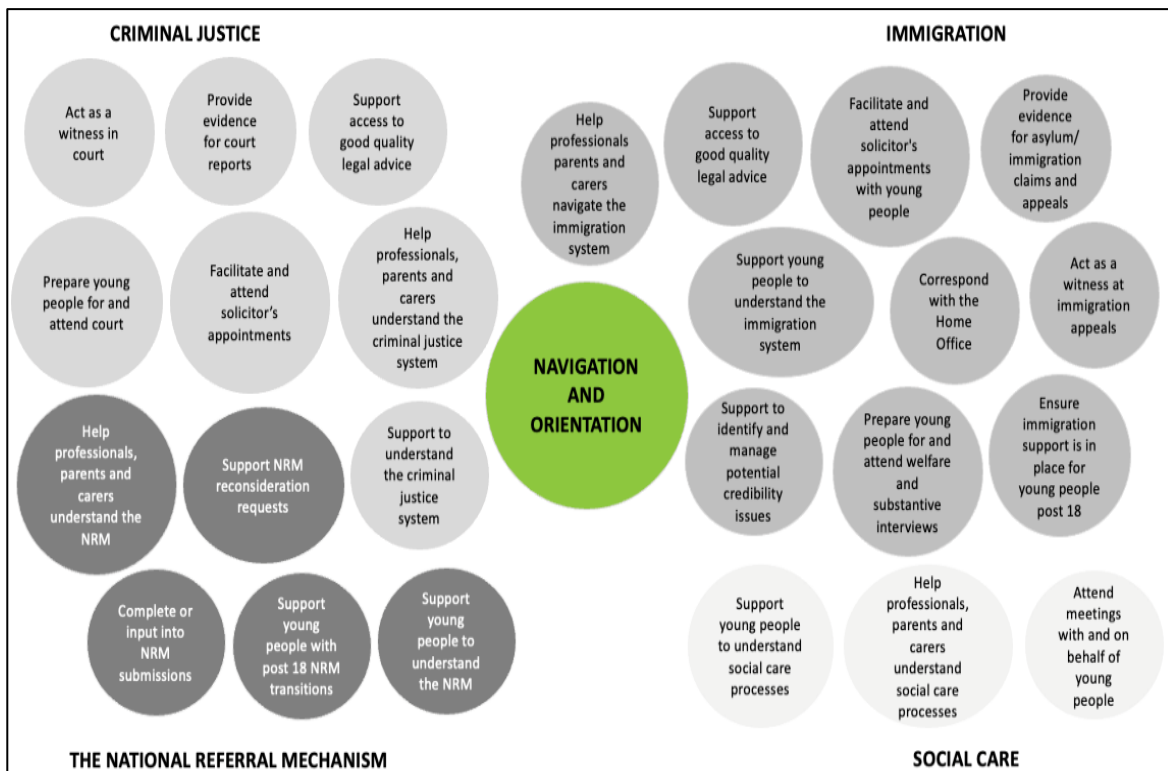
Practitioners in FGDs also mentioned increased understanding and navigation of these formal systems and procedures 22 times in relation to achieving positive outcomes for children and young people (for example, successful asylum claims or not being prosecuted). Navigation and access to a range of services, for example health care, was also mentioned 14 times and featured in the case closure summaries (see Figure 12).

²⁷ Quote from social worker included in closure summary reflecting on criminal justice system support from RPC.

Figure 11: Advice and guidance topics reported by practitioners in case closure summaries.



Figure 12: Support offered within different systems and processes.



All young people participating in the Q-sorts agreed with the statement that 'I understand what is happening to me and what others are telling me' (5 ranked this in their top 6), suggesting that, because of support from the ICTG service, they could orientate themselves in relation to these systems and processes, albeit to different degrees. All young people agreed with the statement 'I am well cared for and my needs are met' (4

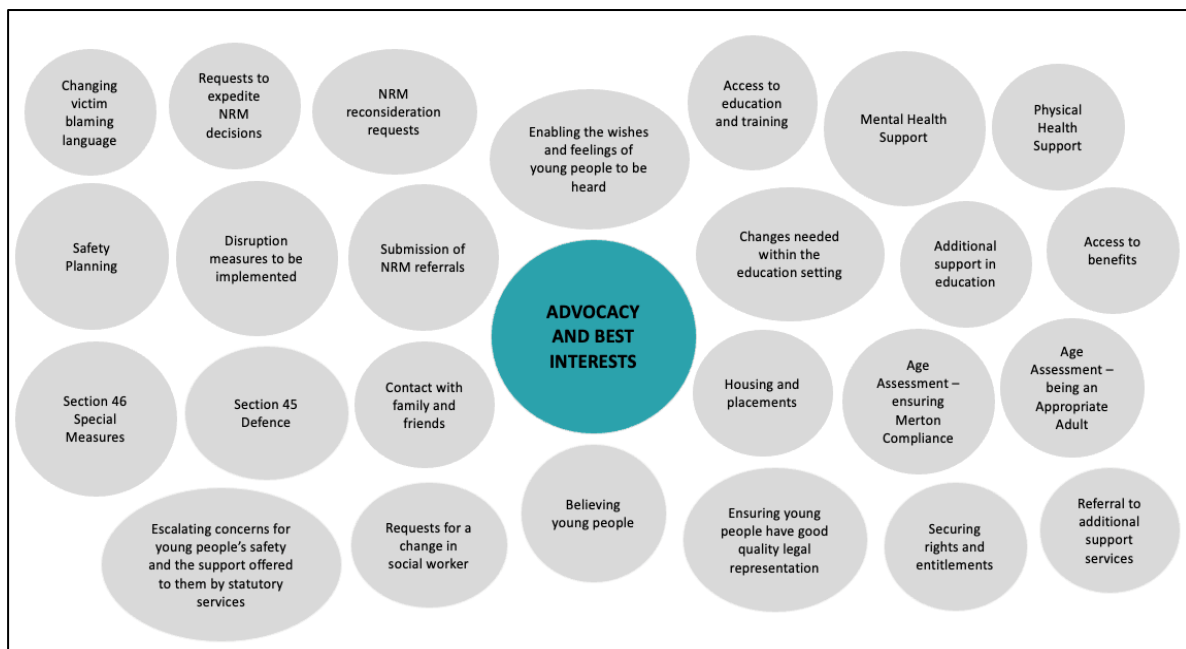
ranked this in their top 6) suggesting that navigation of services and support relating to their more immediate needs had been successful.

Eight young people disagreed with the statement ‘important decisions in my life are made quickly’ (2 ranked this in their top 6), but five of these were because they perceived decisions made quickly as a bad thing for them and for their lives. For two others, both UK-born young people, their disagreement with this statement reflects the volatile situations that they were in but was not a critique of their ICTG worker: such decisions were considered as being out of their control. This gives value to navigation and orientation as important components of ICTG service support and shows that young people are aware of the importance of the *right* decision being made (as opposed to a fast decision) and that they recognise the role of the ICTG service in supporting this.

4.3 Advocacy and Best Interests

Within 65 of the case closure summaries, support through advocacy and a focus on the child’s best interests were highlighted and presented in different ways. Children and young people were directly supported, their confidence built to be able to share their views and take part in decision-making processes important to them. RPCs also advocated indirectly for children and young people’s views to remain at the centre of any decisions being made. Figure 13 provides examples of what was advocated for alongside and/or on behalf of children and young people. Almost all the 65 case closure summaries identify the young people as more confident in expressing their views at point of transition from the ICTG service.

Figure 13: Advocacy and Best interests – areas of focus



Outcomes relating to support, advocacy and the child’s best interests were the second most cited by 45 practitioners in FGDs, with 40 mentions. These include those about having a ‘trusted adult’, as well as other positive, trusting, healthy relationships and the nature or qualities of such support - structured, consistent, positive, caring, trauma-informed and ongoing - being in place.

Aligning with this, all young people undertaking Q sorts agreed with the statement ‘I have people I can trust to support me’ (8 ranked this in their top 6, see Table 9) and all except

one agreed that ‘people do what’s best for me’ (10 ranked this in their top 6, see Table 9), the exception being the same young person already mentioned, with this disagreement referring to others, not to the ICTG service support worker. In this case, this demonstrates even more the importance of a trusted relationship with an ICTG service worker, advocating for this young person’s best interests.

4.4 Rights and Entitlements

Both direct and indirect workers from the ICTG service enable young people (and the professionals, parents, and carers around them) to understand their rights and entitlements, for example in relation to their status in different formal systems such as criminal justice, immigration and social care. Awareness of rights and entitlements was highlighted as an outcome in 60 case closure summaries, with 73% of these 60 identifying the young people as more confident in knowing their rights at point of transition from the service.

While ‘rights’ only had six explicit mentions by practitioners in the focus group discussions in their top 5 outcome areas for children and young people from the service, many of the other outcome areas they prioritised can be seen as also rights-related and can be differently categorised as such, for example outcomes related to understanding of and status within criminal justice and immigration systems or in relation to education entitlement and mental health support. Participation as a right was also prioritised by practitioners with 32 additional mentions of children and young people sharing their views and opinions, being heard, and influencing others as a result.

Only one young person engaged in the research disagreed with the statement ‘I know my rights and what support I should have’. The same young person and one other disagreed with ‘I am listened to and what I say matters’ and ‘I am involved in decisions made about me’. All young people except one agreed with the statement ‘I can make choices that are important to me’ (3 ranked this in their top 6), ‘I can get support to communicate with others’ (4 ranked this in their top 6) and ‘what I say is believed’. Based on this, we can see that these young people have had their rights and entitlements explained to them and that they are being ‘active participants’ not ‘passengers’²⁸ in their own protection, the support service they are receiving or in other aspects of their lives.

4.5 Activities

The ICTG service encourages children and young people to engage with a range of groups, clubs and activities, including those promoting their culture and religion. Case closure summaries include reports of practitioners directly assisting access to activities, attending alongside children and young people and, in some cases, securing the funding required to finance them. RPCs advocate indirectly for young people to engage in new experiences and opportunities. These activities also provided opportunities for young people to share their views, wishes and feelings about topics that were important to them, as well as build new friendships and networks.

Evidence within the case closure summaries also suggests that enabling young people to access activities, according to their interests and needs, promoted their safety, development, and sense of belonging. This was particularly so for young people supported who were newly establishing themselves in the UK: ***“Whilst [the young person] initially appeared a little isolated, he now has a very active social life and spends time with friends, at the gym and at the mosque.”*** (ICTG practitioner).

²⁸ Wales team practitioner quote from FGD

It is encouraging that all young people participating in Q sorts agreed with the statement 'I am able to have fun and enjoy myself' (3 ranked this statement in their top 6) and gave examples of a range of activities they had got involved in or which had been enabled by their support worker and/or funds from the service.

Importantly, all young people also agreed with the statement 'my culture, religion and identity are respected' (8 rank this in their top 6) and gave examples of where their ICTG service worker had enabled them to connect with these important aspects of their identity and lives. For example, young people spoke about instances where they had been supported to identify and visit places of worship and gain access to communities aligning with their own faith, as well as to find culturally appropriate food and items for their homes. All young people except one agreed with the statement 'people treat me similarly to other young people my age' (2 rank this in their top 6) and this one young person disagreed because he did not consider himself to be a young person but an adult. All young people agreed with the statement 'my experiences and needs are understood' (4 rank this in their top 6). Practitioners in regional focus group discussions also emphasised the importance of outcomes for children and young people related to their identity being respected and their cultural and religious needs being considered and met, as well as the importance of cultural and community participation, inclusion, and integration to reduce their isolation.

4.6 Independence

Support for independence was also highlighted in case closure summaries. Direct workers helped children and young people to learn skills for independent living, which included budget management, shopping, cooking, paying bills and accessing benefits. Young people were aided to understand where they should go in case of emergency and how to contact landlords and utility companies. Both direct and indirect workers advocated for suitable placements and housing options, including 'Staying Put' arrangements for young people requiring continued support from a foster carer after they have turned 18. Advice and guidance were provided which focused on safety and how ongoing or new risks could be identified and mitigated as young people became more independent. However, in some cases further support was deemed necessary to prepare young people for independence beyond the point of case closure.

Practitioners in focus group discussions spoke about independence skills and their importance and mostly linked these to readiness for a positive and supported transition out of the service.

4.7 Transition

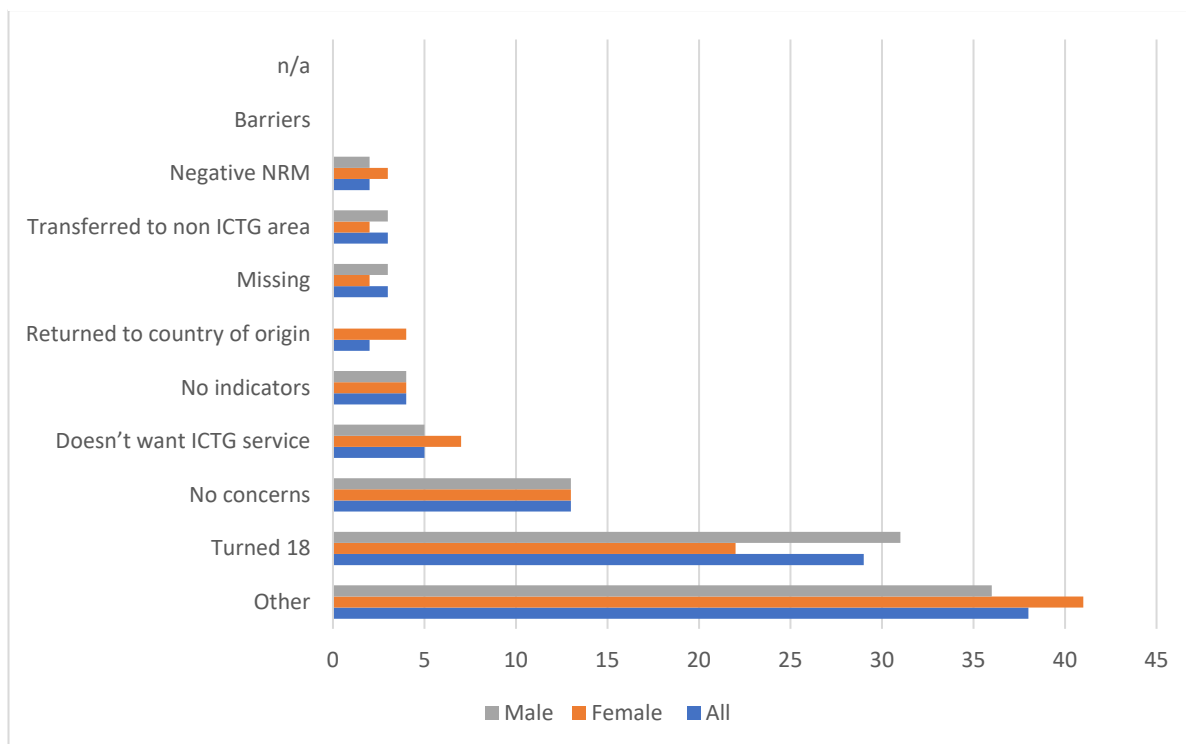
When a young person transitions from the ICTG service, their support worker is required to 'close' the case and choose a reason for closure for the case management file. Both a primary and a secondary reason for case closure can be recorded.

From the ICTG service data analysed in this research, 54% of cases were marked as 'closed'.²⁹ We considered closure where we had closure reason, closure dates and the necessary reference data to link to, and where there were no duplicate entries for an individual. This left 1,442 complete records of case closure. The reasons given for a case being closed and a child exiting the service are chosen from a limited selection (see Figure 14). These limited choices do not reflect many of the milestones that children spoke about as being valuable to them (see Section 5 in the report), and furthermore they tell us little

²⁹ The analysis of case closure should be treated with caution as this data is taken from the 'monthly' data files within the ICTG service data, which was not complete. More cases may be closed than was seen within this variable. See Appendix 1 for further information.

about whether case closure was appropriate, or the young person was ready to transition. However, it is important to note that data recording within the service is subject to a number of requirements: it is operational rather than evaluative and evidence-based rather than subjective/opinion-based, given that it needs to be available for future court cases and for children and young people to access at any point, as is their right, meaning the language must avoid triggering any additional trauma.

Figure 14: Reasons young people were closed to the service February 2017 to September 2022 (percentage of monthly ICTG service data, N=1,442)



The 'other' category was the highest selected reason for closing a case, which includes, for example, closure where all advice or actions on a case have been completed or where no further support is required (see Table 10). The second highest reason given was that the young people had become too old to access ICTG services (29%), which are intended for those under 18, and we can see that there is variation by gender here, with males having a higher proportion of cases closed due to their age (Figure 14). Young people also transitioned from the service where there were no further trafficking concerns identified (13%), where a negative conclusive grounds NRM decision was not being challenged (2%) and where the young person no longer wanted support from the service, triggering an exit from ICTG service support (5%). Again, closure due to not wanting service support does not necessarily signify that all is well for that young person.

In addition, 3% of case closures from the ICTG service data were because the child or young person was 'missing' (from local authority support and thus all services). Whilst 'missing' should not be considered a service outcome, it is a negative outcome in relation to modern slavery, ICTG service support and ongoing protection. Further analysis of missing occurrences within the monthly ICTG service data indicates that 403 or around 10% of children had a missing episode at some point within their interaction with the service, with 2% of children having missing episodes recorded more than 10 times. These figures may well be under representative of missing episodes, including due to lack of full information on missing episodes being shared with the ICTG service by social care or the police. The Modern Slavery Act review in 2023 now requires that all missing children are to remain open to the ICTG service even if they are missing.

Table 10 : Proportion of children with ICTG case closure's recorded secondary reasons for case closure (monthly ICTG data)

Secondary closure reasons	Percentage
Not ICTG area	1
Child transferred to local authority outside ICTG coverage	2
Service not required	2
Lack of professional response	7
Negative NRM decision	7
No longer needs support	7
No trafficking concerns	8
Actions/advice concluded	21
No further response needed/requested	36

ICTG service data indicates that 40% of recorded case closures (less than 1,000 young people) for the period under review resulted in a transfer to another support service. 56% of these young people remained engaged with local authority children's services and 14% were referred to local authority adult services.

From the case closure summary sample, in 45% of cases, children's services or adult social care continued to assist children and young people after cases were closed. Where neither remained involved, young people tended to be helped by non-governmental organisations. These were often specialists in assisting trafficked young people and adults or in advocating for young people more generally. This was the case for 10% of young people. For 23% of young people, provisions came from a range of at least two or more providers, including children's or adult social care, non-governmental organisations, Youth Offending Workers, therapeutic services, residential workers, and workers from specialist exploitation teams.

Where durable solutions for young people seeking asylum were noted in case closure summaries, 67% of these young people were still waiting for a decision at point of transition from the service. There is no specific question about this in the closure summaries but generally, practitioners identified this in the summaries as an ongoing need and something that would require continued support post transition from the ICTG service. For those 32% young people who had received an asylum decision, all had been granted Refugee Status. Evidence within the closure summaries suggested that for many young people, waiting for their asylum decision was the biggest factor negatively impacting on their mental health and wellbeing and highlighted the importance of continued support for them in this area and for this important outcome after transitioning from the service. This finding related to asylum status places the ICTG service within the wider landscape and shows the limitations of the outcomes for children and young people it can enable or provide.

In addition, pending NRM conclusive grounds decisions were noted in 60% of the 400 case closure summaries where the NRM had been mentioned as an unresolved outcome, where no decision with regards to a positive or negative conclusive grounds decision had been made. It was clear that direct and indirect workers helped young people and professionals to understand and navigate the post-18 NRM process, ensuring young people could remain in the NRM after moving on from the service (if they gave consent to do so).

From the case closure summaries, a small proportion of young people, 12% in total, were recorded as having no known ongoing support post transition. Some of these young

people had been long-term missing so it was not possible to put transition plans in place. A small number of young people had returned to their country of origin, and it was unclear what support was available to them due to a lack of information sharing from social care. This was a matter of continued concern for practitioners in focus group discussions.

Evidence from the 400 case closure summaries suggests that direct and indirect workers commit to ensuring ongoing support is available to all young people where this is required post transition. In general, workers did not transition and 'close' young people's cases until alternative support was in place and almost all young people were identified as having some form of ongoing support after transition.

Whilst informative, this data does not, however, tell us anything about how children and young people were *feeling or experiencing* transition from the ICTG service. The case closure summaries include some focus on well-being, with this being mentioned in 47 of the 400 cases. Of these 47, 47% of young people were identified as being happy or happier than on referral into the service, 22% with improved confidence and 20% with an improvement in wellbeing. Although the numbers of closure summaries containing this information was relatively low, this could suggest support from the ICTG service goes some way to improving overall wellbeing. Some quotations in the closure summaries support this, for example:

"I feel [the young person] is now in a very different place to where we started. He is engaging with school and has a much better relationship with family. I am happy that social care is willing to offer further safeguarding support if he should need this in the future. I totally agree with [his] mother's observations of him – it is clear that he is taking better care of himself from how healthy and happy he looks in comparison to when we first started working together." (ICTG practitioner).

Practitioners in the focus group discussions cited outcomes related to recovery, associated with independence and transition, amongst their top five outcomes for young people from the service. These align with some of the above, for example including positive mental health, self-image and confidence, increased integration, feeling included, able to heal, their identity respected, feeling happiness and well-being with 36 mentions. A further 12 mentions focus on aspirations, planning, achievements and having hope for the future.

All 25 young people undertaking Q-sorts agreed with the statements that, because of support from Barnardo's, 'I feel supported and more confident about getting older' (8 ranked this in their top 6) and 'I have hope and can plan for a better future' (2 ranked this in their top 6). All but one, who felt limited by his status in the UK, agreed with the statement 'I can achieve things' (3 ranked this in their top 6). In relation to recovery, all but one young person agreed 'I feel calm and in control of my life' and all but two 'my body and mind are healthy' (8 ranked this in their top 6). All young people agreed with 'I do not feel alone.'

5. A 'trusted adult' and coordinated support

Key Finding 7: The research emphasises the importance of ICTG service direct worker roles (ICTG, ICTG-post 18, RP) as a 'trusted adult' for children and young people affected by modern slavery and who they consider instrumental to their participation, protection, and achievement of positive outcomes.

Key Finding 8: Both direct and indirect (RPC) worker roles in the ICTG service act as a critical 'coordination point', navigating systems, mobilising services, and connecting professionals to drive positive outcomes for children.

5.1 A 'trusted adult'

Building trusting relationships with children and young people is the first of the five ICTG service aims. In describing its Guardianship Service, Barnardo's states: 'We meet children face-to-face to build trusted relationships to support them through the complex systems and processes they find themselves in.'³⁰

From the Q-sort responses outlined in the previous section, it seems unlikely that the 'pyramid of service support' provided by the ICTG service could secure such positive outcomes without building trust between the ICTG direct worker and the young person. This is demonstrated by the way in which trust has been highlighted as an essential factor throughout the Q-sorts and how much young people attribute their positive outcomes to their Barnardo's worker's support.

Outcomes relating to support, advocacy, and the child's best interests, as already mentioned, were the second most cited in practitioners' five most important outcomes for children and young people from the ICTG service shared in the focus group discussions. This included having a 'trusted adult,' as well as positive, trusting, healthy relationships in place, and the nature or qualities of such support - structured, consistent, positive, caring, trauma-informed and ongoing.

Aligning with this, all 25 young people participating in the research – all of whom were or had been supported by a direct worker from the ICTG service – agree that, because of Barnardo's, 'I have people I can trust to support me'. Therefore, while different outcomes can be associated with five different groups of young people and their experiences of ICTG service support, the value placed on a trusted relationship with a Barnardo's support worker, and the benefits that come from this, was shared.

For two of the young people participating in the research who were experiencing a period of crisis, one supported by an ICTG, the other by an RP, this direct relationship with their support worker was *the one thing* that they both focused positively on: '***You were the only one, from the beginning, who really talked to me***' (QYP14) and:

- 'Do you have people you can trust?'
- 'Yeah'
- 'And that includes [RP] and...?'
- 'Oh, it's only [RP]!' (QYP6).

³⁰ [Guardianship Service - NCTC - Barnardo's](#)

Although some young people were being supported by several different professionals, for example by social workers or their Personal Advisers,³¹ it was their Barnardo's support worker that they felt made the difference: **'...she's the one talking to me and she's the one helps me with...so many things...if I start talking about [ICTG], maybe I can talk the whole day!'** (QYP16).

This sentiment articulated above that the Barnardo's support worker is 'the only one' to make a difference is also expressed in a quote from a case closure summary by a parent of children referred to the ICTG service: **"Thank you so much, you are the only person that the children have spoken to."** (Parent) And, again, in another case closure summary by a foster carer of another young person who had been referred:

"You are the only one that I think [the young person] has really trusted and has helped him." (Foster Carer)

One ICTG worker in a focus group discussion spoke about the importance of having a 'trusted adult' for the children and young people referred to the ICTG service, given the world they've inhabited:

'...a lot of our children and young people do struggle with trust because...they've been through these horrific experiences of trauma and been trafficked and being...told that they're going to have this amazing life, or they're going to work and earn all this money or whatever the circumstances. And then that's not the case. So, you've got to think about young people who have had really negative experiences with authorities...'

She also spoke very articulately and at length about how direct workers in the ICTG service build trust with children and young people and how they are uniquely positioned, in terms of their mandate and roles, but also because of their values and shared ways of working and how they view children and young people, to be able to do this:

'I think there's lots of different ways we support children and young people to feel this way...We do have time to build those relationships...So we really think about what is going to help them to feel safe when we come out to see them...which obviously kind of contributes towards building that trust...'

I think the contact we have with children and young people is meaningful and I'd like to think that we do identify where the needs are and what work we need to do, but that we have no agenda, you know? So, like, we're not a tick box service, we're very holistic and very child-centred around what it is they need, and we go at their pace...I try to include the young person as much as possible in... how our sessions are going to be...run and what we'll discuss in those sessions...'

...and then the other thing...consistency. I think we are really good at being consistent with young people, especially when we first meet challenges around building those relationships and building that trust. And you know, we don't give up. We turn up every week, if we have to, at a time and a place that's agreed, and if it takes a year to build that relationship, then that's what it's going to take.'

These values, and the strong commitment and perseverance in delivering the ICTG service described by this practitioner helps us to understand why these relationships are so important to the children and young people they support.

³¹ The Children and Social Work Act 2017 introduced a new duty on local authorities, to provide Personal Adviser support to all care leavers up to the age 25, if they want this support.

In addition to the importance of the trusted relationship with an ICTG direct worker and what this, as an interpersonal experience added to their lives, young people also spoke about how this enabled them to trust others, for example connecting with confidence to other people socially, to professionals, services, and opportunities and, as a result, being able to achieve other positive outcomes. One young person, speaking about her ICTG post-18 support worker, shared how much of the changes in her life she attributed to her support – she feels she is in a much better place *because of her*:

‘Yes. So...when I first came to this house, I was so lonely, and you came, and you befriended me, and you were so kind and caring. And you took me out and you introduced me to other people, and I made friends... all thanks to you. And you were always there for me. You made me feel not lonely anymore.’ (QYP8)

Another young person, supported by an ICTG direct worker, articulated how, for her, the 28 outcome statements in the Q-sort were ‘all related’ because the relationship with her trusted support worker was at the centre of it all:

‘It’s all kind of related...I mean. It’s all kind of the same...because I feel supported, because...she’s always there when I need to ask or something. I mean, all the things I agree, it’s linked, everything, so I don’t know which is strongly or less agree or less, less, agree. Just all agree is my opinion...I don’t know how to explain but I know what it feels like inside’ (QYP13).

From a rights-based perspective, the fact that these young people were, in the main, clearly able to talk to and share their wishes and views with their support workers, reflects both their agency and active participation in their own protection. It also positions participation as an instrumental right through which all other rights can be fulfilled, with young people’s support workers as conduits or vehicles enabling this:

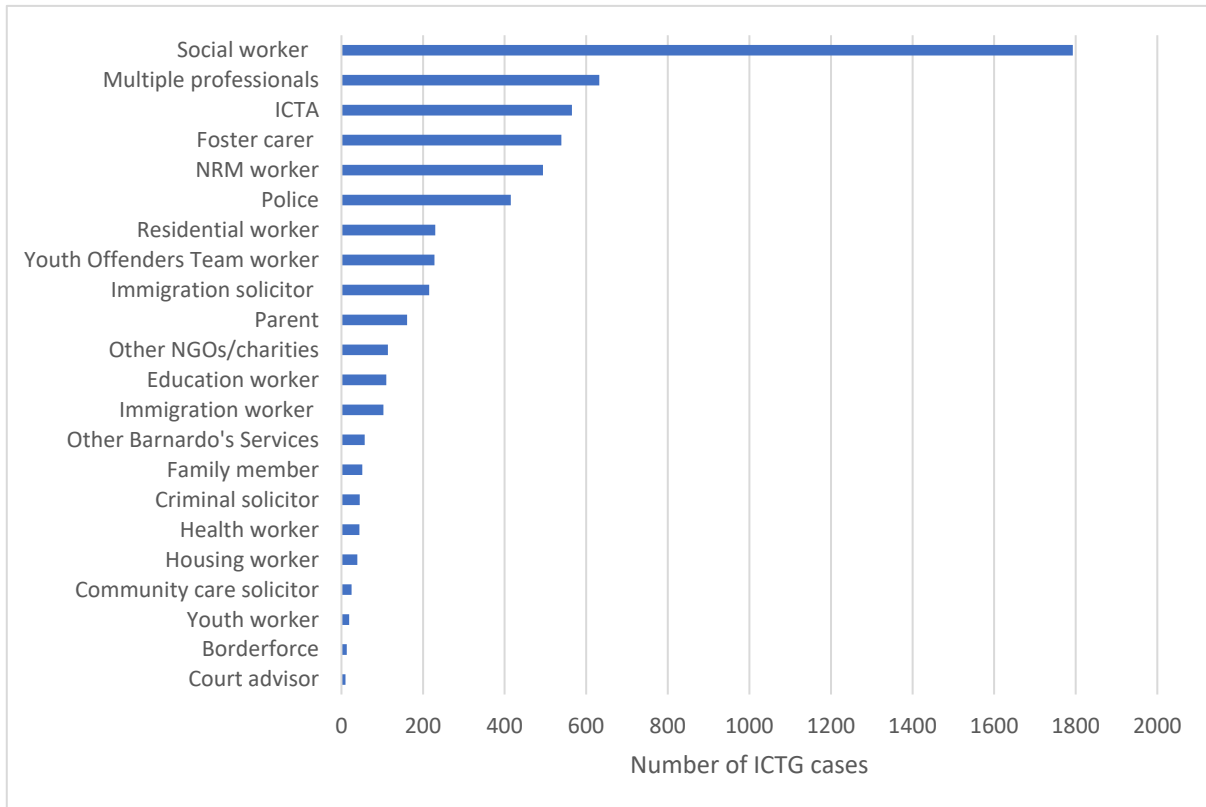
‘Yeah, so ever since I met you, you started working with me. I felt safe. I felt that I’m protected and that I have a voice’ (QYP11) and ‘Thank you - you heard me when no-one was listening’ (quote from young person in case closure summary thanking their ICTG for the support provided).

5.2 A coordinated point of support

The ICTG service, as already mentioned, does not work alone to support children and young people with lived experience of modern slavery. As shown in Figure 15.

Figure 15 shows whether engagement with professionals and families was ever recorded within the wider ICTG service data for February 2017-September 2022. It indicates that a range of professionals create a network of safety and support around each child. Social Workers were by far the most common professionals engaged with the ICTG service in provision of support, recorded in almost 1,800 cases.

Figure 15: Professional network supporting children and young people as recorded in ICTG contact data, February 2017 to September 2022



Note: There is missing data within the Contact data provided for the research (rather than as recorded by the service) and so results should be treated as indicative.

The complexity of many cases and the complexity of support systems, mean that both direct and indirect ICTG workers play a vital role in collaborating with other professionals to ensure information is shared and progress made for a child or young person and for their recovery.

In the focus group discussion with RPCs, we asked them to describe their present-day role, its influence on other professionals and on outcomes for children and young people, as well as its limitations.

RPCs, we were told, provide advice on modern slavery legislation and the NRM. They advocate for young people through letters to the court, making sure a young person is seen as a 'victim' (in terms of formal recognition through the NRM process as well as in relation to criminal justice proceedings where criminal exploitation has occurred) and keeping Children's Services involvement open. They take part in case consultations, child protection and Child in Need meetings and input into pre-sentence and court reports. They write letters of support to, and communicate with, other professionals (see RPC Case Studies 1 and 2) build positive relationships with them and create networks, connecting people together and providing professionals with a safe space and sounding board to discuss modern slavery concerns.

RPCs contact the Single Competent Authority for updates on children and young people's NRM decisions and ensure others are kept informed. They map risks to children and young people, other actors, and places of concern. They follow up on missing children. They cross check whether connected young people were referred to the NRM and provide disruption advice and advocacy. They deliver training and awareness raising and attend / support NRM panels. They challenge and educate others, share relevant resources, think creatively, and help to problem solve. They are a pair of 'fresh eyes,' reframing, and rejuvenating others' perspectives on children and young people with lived experience of modern slavery.

Changes witnessed in other professionals' attitudes, knowledge, and practice by RPCs in connection with their influence and work included:

- an improved professional curiosity,
- looking for causes and indicators of modern slavery more effectively and better recognising exploitation,
- demonstrated learning from what RPCs have said (for example refraining from using victim-blaming language, see RPC Case Study 3) and done (for example, safety planning) and then doing this themselves,
- good practice leading to improved confidence in the ICTG service and recognising its value, meaning less chasing of other professionals and more organisations wanting to engage,
- maintaining consistency of support, contacts and information on children and young people despite professional handovers in other services,
- escalation of concerns leading to greater safeguarding responses and support of police operations leading to more children and young people being referred.

RPC Case Study 1 - Education as a protective factor and addressing multiple areas of risk.

A 16-year-old who had claimed asylum was living with his mum in a hotel. The young person was acting as a carer for mum due to her poor mental health. The young person was also struggling with mental health issues and had stopped attending school. The RPC applied for and obtained a £300 Cost of Living voucher for the young person and his mum and wrote a support letter to the Local Authority to advocate for them to be put into permanent accommodation, quoting studies on young people being groomed by criminal gangs and going missing from hotels. The RPC wrote a similar letter of support to the school, asking for flexible learning/reduced timetable to be considered, to accommodate the young person's mental health issues and his caring responsibilities, quoting the same studies and highlighting education as pull factor. The young person is now back in education.

More tangibly for children and young people and their outcomes, positive changes owing to ICTG support also included:

- reduced sentences or charges being dropped against young people within the Criminal Justice System,
- Children's Services keeping cases open when they were trying to close,
- young people getting increased access to services and opportunities due to advocacy for a strengths-based approach (e.g., football, youth club), things they enjoyed doing and increasing their well-being,
- more information being shared with the Single Competent Authority by others so that NRM decisions were timely, even expedited in time for court appearances, and had all the relevant information,

- vulnerabilities associated with neurodiversity are better identified and safety plans improved,
- implementation of a Slavery and Trafficking Risk Order (STRO) or other smaller-scale actions such as flagging addresses (see RPC Case Study 4) and making sure police have a modern slavery investigation open for every child referred to the NRM.

RPC Case Study 2 - Keeping a young person safe whilst appearing in court.

An RPC was working with a year 15-year-old boy who was at risk of criminal exploitation. The young person had been police protected away from their home due to threats to life from a rival gang. It was believed that the young person owed the gang member £10,000. The young person was due to appear in court in his hometown where co-defendants would also appear. As the young person had a conclusive grounds NRM, the RPC wrote a letter to his solicitor explaining section 46 (special measures) and the risks posed to the young person if he returned to his hometown to appear in court. As a result of this, the young person was able to appear in court via a video link. This not only positively impacted the young person but also his family who had moved with him. The young person was able to comply with the court orders whilst remaining safe with his family. This not only kept him safe, but it made a huge difference to his mental health and the worry of returning to his hometown.

RPC Case Study 3 - Challenging 'victim blaming' language.

The RPC attended a Child Protection Review Meeting for a Romanian child who had been identified as a victim of modern slavery through both sexual and criminal exploitation. The Child Protection plan was visible on the screen at the conference where the child was present. The RPC requested the Child Protection plan be taken off the screen as the language was victim-blaming and incredibly triggering for the child with reference to 'potential custody'. The RPC redirected the conversation to reframe the inappropriate language and terminology. Following the meeting, the investigating officer asked the RPC to rewrite the Child Protection plan and work on a separate plan for the child.

Such shifts in attitudes and practice, benefiting children and young people's outcomes, are important in a context where other professionals (for example Social Workers) are the 'gatekeepers' in relation to the RPC role and work. Other professionals can limit the impact of an RPC by not sharing the necessary information or not following up on contact from the RPC and not referring the child or young person for ICTG service support. They can also prevent RPCs having contact with parents or parents being aware that an RPC is involved, knowing who they are and how they might help their child. In addition, RPCs involved in the focus group discussion emphasised that there is an attitudinal barrier when a child turns 18, with a shift in perception from 'victim' to 'offender', creating new vulnerabilities associated with this transition.

RPC Case Study 4 - Recognising the signs of exploitation that others have missed.

A young person believed she was in a relationship with an older adult male, who was exploiting her sexually and criminally. She was telling the professional network that she was no longer in contact with him and didn't need any help. When the RPC joined the network, she was able to explain to the social worker and other professionals that the young person was likely exhibiting signs of 'disguised compliance' and that this is common in cases of grooming. The young person was also exhibiting other indicators that she was still being exploited that the professional network had not recognised. The RPC helped the professional network to be able to recognise these indicators and act on them accordingly.

The network believed that the older adult male was still in contact with the young person, but did not have any evidence, only a hunch. Through involving police ANPR markers on the perpetrator's cars and enhancing the young person's safety plan, the network was able to identify that they were indeed in contact and in fact had been spending time together, despite bail conditions to the contrary. The network was able to find evidence of this through police bodycam footage and CCTV footage. Because of this evidence, the threshold for an Interim Slavery and Trafficking Risk Order (STRO) was met. The RPC educated the network on what a STRO was and how it could help keep the young person away from her exploiter and keep her safe. The RPC is currently working closely with police to instigate the STRO, as they were also not aware of what a STRO was and that they could apply for one. If successful in obtaining a STRO against the older adult male, he will not be able to be in any form of contact with the young person and may be banned from her locality. Breaking of these restrictions will result in a prison sentence of up to 5 years.

The young person is not able to keep herself safe because she is a child who has been heavily groomed, manipulated and coerced into believing that the older adult male is a safe person in her life. Hopefully, if this STRO is approved, she will be kept safe from her exploiter and will be able to move on with her life and process what has happened to her in her own time.

6. Five outcome profiles

Key Finding 4: The ICTG service is flexible and adaptable allowing children and young people to navigate service support differently, achieving varied positive outcomes at different times depending on their needs.

Key Finding 5: All young people engaged in the research agree that the ICTG service has supported them to achieve positive outcomes across a range of outcome areas that are important and matter to them.

Key Finding 6: Five different outcome profiles and associated groups can be identified which are significantly different to each other in how they rank outcomes from the service in relation to their needs and the support they receive.

Whilst all 'layers' of the ICTG 'pyramid of service support' are important, conceptually providing a sequence from a base layer of safety towards independence and transition, in practice young people navigate these layers in different ways and combinations at different times according to their changing needs. As a result, young people can be seen as having different service support and outcome 'profiles' at a particular point in time.

This section draws on the 25 Q-sorts undertaken with young people supported by the ICTG service as part of this research. Using Q, these young people were asked to rank 28 outcome statements on a grid from Disagree to Agree, all starting with 'Because of support from my Barnardo's worker...' (although many of them had no 'Disagrees'). Analysis of the data shows that all young people engaged in the Q-sorts agreed that the ICTG service had supported them to achieve positive outcomes across a range of outcome areas that are important and matter to them. It also shows that, from 19 of the 25 Q-sorts, five groups of young people can be clearly identified where the responses of the *individual young people within each of those groups* are statistically significantly *similar* to each other in how they rank the outcome statements in relation to their needs and the support they have received and where the five *groups* are statistically significantly *different* to each other. This identification of areas of consensus and difference around a central theme (here, outcomes from ICTG service support) and grouping participants accordingly with confidence and rigour is what Q-methodology is designed to achieve (see Appendix 7 and 8 for further detail on how data is analysed using Q). This is its strength compared to other participatory methodologies where the researcher might undertake this analysis, identifying groups from the data based on his or her perspective.

Each of these five groups, their outcome 'profiles,' and demographics (see Appendix 6) are now explored and considered in turn in relation to what they uniquely tell us about these young people and what they consider their primary outcomes from having ICTG service support. In combination, they can also say something about the flexibility and adaptability of the ICTG service which can be seen to 'wrap' its support around these young people in response to their varied experiences and needs. Finally, these outcome profiles tell us something about the journey(s) of recovery for young people through the ICTG service more broadly than in connection with these specific groups but also for other young people and suggest the kinds of 'profiles' of support and related outcomes might be required at different moments or stages.

This approach of exploring outcome 'profiles' for groups of young people as part of an assessment of the ICTG service is different and new. This research aims to conduct an evaluation 'with a difference' in relation to the ICTG service and its previous external

evaluations, putting children and young people at the centre, for example through advising on and informing our approach, methods and how we conceptualise and measure outcomes. In relation to our research objectives, we are interested in what children and young people in the service consider 'the benefits and limitations of the ICTG service' for the outcomes it enables that matter and are important to them. We draw on the Positive Outcomes Framework because it represents a complex and holistic view of children and young people affected by modern slavery and their recovery and we use this frame as our 'lens' for evaluating the service in their terms. Children do not experience their lives or support interventions in silos, and this reflects and reinforces this.

The use of Q-methodology allows children and young people to tell us, from their experience, which positive outcomes they feel have been enabled by the service (Agree) for them (the benefits of the service) and which have not (Disagree) (its limitations), along a sliding scale from most agree to most disagree and why. We can, then, as we have done, look across this data and see how many children and young people agree that they are safer and more protected because of ICTG service support or healthy in body and mind. This allows us to aggregate across different children and young people/groups.

What Q also involves is telling us with confidence about the *distribution* of these benefits and limitations. We would in theory find out if there was a group (or groups) of young people for whom the service was not delivering positive outcomes, or certain positive outcomes, and the demographics of these young people and where the service might be having less relevance, being less effective and efficient for them.

What Q has *actually* told us, however, is that the service is positively benefiting *all 25 young people*, albeit in different ways and at different stages in their recovery. It continues to be relevant and effective for young people who rely heavily on it, for those who are experiencing periods of crisis and transition, for those that are closer to independence and, as such, the service can be flexible, needs led and deliver for them all. All of this relates to a consideration of assessment, evaluation, and outcomes in terms of what matters to these children and young people amidst the complexity of the lives.

Whilst not explicitly framed/organised by common or standard evaluation criteria, these are still being applied. The outcomes set/framework used is very much about the service's relevance to children and young people (and is tested by the young people's advisory group first to ensure this 'fit' as well as in the Q-sorts asking children and young people is there anything they would add or remove from the Q-set, anything missing?). It is also about the 'coherence' of the service – does it meet this wide range of outcomes that children and young people affected by modern slavery need and that reflect a holistic view of these children and young people and their recovery. The Q-sorts are about children and young people judging both the effectiveness of the service (does it deliver in practice the outcomes that it sets out to achieve, based on their experience?) and its efficiency (what are the timelines involved for these important changes and decisions for them and their lives and what do they think about these?).

Profile 1: Safe, well and moving forwards...

The ICTG service has enabled these young people to concentrate on themselves, their immediate well-being and recovery. It has helped them to feel safe amongst the people and within the spaces that are immediately around them and to focus on positive next steps for their lives.

Profile 1 relates to a group of six young people, the largest of the five identified groups. This group includes five males and one female, all non-UK nationals, with an average age of 16.8 years and average length of time in the service of 16.6 months. Two of these young people had left or were about to leave the service.

Because of ICTG support for them, this group of young people agree strongly that they are safe and protected from harm - the foundation of the 'pyramid of service support'. All are already in education and feel supported to access the education that they need: 'already in college...could help him if needed in the future' (QYP3). The ICTG service has enabled these young people to feel less alone, and they feel their support worker has had a key role to play in this: 'I don't feel lonely with [ICTG]' (QYP1). They also feel they have been supported to be healthier in body and mind, calmer and more in control of their lives:

"I was in this bad place for a very long time...and when [ICTG] started working with me, he made me feel very calm. He took me out. He talked to me, he listened to me and believed in me, and that made me feel as if I am important." (QYP5)

The two statements that particularly distinguish this group from all other groups are that 'I am well cared for and my needs are met' and 'important decisions about my life are made quickly'. More than any other group, these young people agreed that the people directly around them, including their support workers, were helpful and caring: 'I feel cared for like a family member' (QYP19). One support worker set out for a young person what being 'cared for' might involve:

'That means that you're, you get, like, plenty of food. You can use the bathroom and have a shower. You've got a comfortable bed. You know, people help you get to college, and all those things.' (ICTG practitioner)

It is perhaps *because* of feeling so cared for in the here and now - and the actions taken by ICTG workers to facilitate this - that, more than any other group, these young people feel that important decisions about their lives have been made quickly and that this has been good for them and their recovery: ***'I've been able to move out and live more comfortably, have fresh air, life is wonderful! And I feel happier day by day.'*** (QYP19)

These young people feel relatively in control of their current situation and are moving towards independence: ***'I made friends myself...I lived in a house with lots of people and I were [sic] able to'*** (QYP5). They are prioritising themselves, and are not yet looking at their wider community:

'I don't feel like there's anything that I can do right now [to help my community] ...maybe in future, but what Barnardo's is giving me, it's about me... right now, I feel it's more focused on my health and my happiness on my side and things like that...' (QYP1)

Whilst gaining confidence in their immediate settings, this group feel uncertain and lack confidence about getting older: 'I don't know about the future' (QYP19). However, this does not mean a sense of hopelessness or despair. The ICTG service has enabled the young people in this group to feel that they can achieve things, have hope and plan for their future.

This profile reinforces the idea that safety and protection are the firm foundation of ICTG service support, including education as a protective factor. These young people are and feel safer as a result. There is a clear sense that the ICTG service has impacted on their well-being and helped them on their journey to recovery, with a stark comparison with what their lives were like before such support was in place.

Profile 2: Believed, engaged; needing more culturally competent support?

Because of the ICTG service, these young people feel others believe what they say and that they have contributions to make to and can engage with their community. Although safe, cared for and on a journey to recovery, they are not fully certain of their rights, feel somewhat isolated and in need of culturally competent support.

Profile 2 relates to the second largest group of young people, which includes 3 male and 1 female, all non-UK nationals, with an average age of 16.7 years (very similar to Profile 1) and average length of time in the service of 11 months (almost six months less than Profile 1). One of these young people was about to exit the service.

This group of young people agree *most* with the statements that, 'what I say is believed' and 'I can do something to help my community' and *least* that 'my culture, religion, and identity are respected' and 'I know my rights and what support I should have'.

Due to the ICTG service, these young people feel strongly that what they say is believed - 'I feel this is what's happening' (QYP2). This includes being believed by their support worker:

'I believe in [ICTG practitioner] because for all this length of time that I have been supported and whenever I have problem issue, I speak to them, and they listen to me...So obviously this should prove that they believe in me...' (QYP24)

Perhaps connected to this belief in them, this group feels significantly able to help others in their community. One young person, recently returned from a youth centre he'd been introduced to by his support worker, described how he'd got involved, met new people, and felt able to help (QYP16). Another said: ***'Obviously everyone wants to help, to be helpful in the community...we all try to help.'*** (QYP24)

These young people also feel enabled to enjoy themselves and have fun: ***'So they help me join the team, the football team, which is how I...have new friends'*** (QYP2); to trust - ***'she's honest and always understands him'*** (QYP16) - and to develop a healthier body and mind.

Whilst these young people all agree with the statements about respect for their culture, religion, and identity - 'I respect others and I have been respected' (QYP24) - and knowing their rights - 'Yes, the Barnardo's worker have explained...have told me '...this is what you are entitled to' (QYP24) – they collectively rank these significantly lower than all other groups. One young person said that his culture and religion were very important to him, but that he did not feel he had yet received help on this or support from Barnardo's (QYP16). This group also agree less than all other groups with the statements 'I do not feel alone' and 'the risks I face are understood':

'I have said my problems and things I need to say so I don't feel, don't know whether that has been accepted, whether it...matters to them or not, but I have been listened to.' (QYP24)

There is a sense, then, that these young people might need some culturally competent support, to feel that their identity, along with associated risks and cultural and religious preferences can be better understood. Whilst not explicit as a distinct 'layer' in the pyramid of ICTG service support, cultural competence in service delivery and support for children and young people who have been affected by trafficking is essential for their full and ongoing protection and recovery. It is important to note, however, that this group *does* feel cared for, safe and protected from harm and their needs met, because of the ICTG service.

Profile 3: Feeling prioritised and learning to trust...

This group of young people feel that, because of the ICTG service, they have an adult in their life that they can trust and rely on, who puts their best interests first. They are seeing benefits from this relationship and are not ready to be without this important support.

Profile 3 relates to a group of three young people, 2 male and 1 female, all non UK nationals and with an average age of 17 years. Their average length of time in the service is 15.3 months. One of these young people was about to leave the service.

The outcome statements that this group agrees with more than any other group are 'the risks I face are understood', 'I have people I can trust to support me', and 'people do what's best for me'. What this feels like to a young person from this group is articulated below:

'...you know, before I met you, I never trusted anybody at all, because of the experience that I went through, being exploited, and being abused. So, I

never believe that anyone would help me, but after meeting you, you made me feel that I can trust in you. I could talk to you. I could confide in you and all that because of the support that you gave me and have been giving me.'
(QYP11)

Connected to this deep feeling of trust is the sense for these young people that *they* are the priority - 'everyone is working on my best interests' (QY11) - and that they can rely on the support they receive: ***'Yeah, because every time I struggle with something, I needed [sic] help with something, I can call Barnardo's and they always, always help me with that.'*** (QYP21)

These young people are experiencing a trusted relationship with an adult, perhaps for the very first time: they value it, can depend on it, and it has helped them to meet their needs. Out of this, they feel protected, listened to, cared for, involved, respected, and understood. And it is out of this trusted relationship that other things can come: ***'they helped me with find [sic] more friends 'cos I did not really have any friends when I came here...and I feel less lonely because of that.'*** (QYP21)

These young people are not looking too far beyond what they have right now. As such, they are more dependent than others on their support workers and the ICTG service at this point in their lives. They are cautious and not focusing too much on the future, their achievements or on getting older and moving on:

'Hmm, because, at the moment I don't feel that I'm ready to make decision [sic] for my life quickly. Not yet. Because to me, if it's important, you should think carefully and think very hard. You can't make the decision quickly about important thing [sic]. You should take time.' (QYP8)

Whilst these three young people combined have the second longest average length of time in the ICTG service, two of them have been supported for less than a year and this comes through in their response and degree of dependency on the service. The third young person is reflecting on the support he has received over more than two years and their experiences of being able to trust someone and feeling prioritised align. What is clear is that the ICTG service has been able to understand the more immediate needs of these young people at an important time in their lives, to provide and take on responsibility where needed.

Profile 4: Good support networks, quietly confident

This group feel supported by Barnardo's as well as by their own networks of social contacts and friends. Unlike others, they can have safe contact with their family. They feel provided for materially and emotionally by the ICTG service and are positive about their future.

Profile 4 relates to three young people, all male non-UK nationals, with an average age of 17 years and average length of time in the service of 10 months, the shortest out of all the groups. None of these three young people had left, or were about to leave, the service. This group of young people is distinguished by agreeing more strongly than any other group with the statements 'I feel supported and more confident about getting older' and 'I can make choices that are important to me'. They are the *only group* that agree with the

statement that, because of support from my Barnardo's worker, 'I can have safe contact with my family if I want to'.

These young people do not feel isolated or alone and are well connected to support networks, including their Barnardo's worker, family, and friends: 'I don't feel alone because I have other plans and I have people around' (QYP9). Through activities enabled by their Barnardo's worker, they also feel more engaged in their community: '**Yeah, you help me to meet other people, to have a spare time on Saturday and, also, to get involved with sport activities**' (QYP18). Unlike all the other groups, these young people feel they can have safe contact with their families if they want to. One young person, who was provided with a mobile phone by his support worker, said he felt calmer, 'because I could speak with my family' (QYP18).

While they feel the particular risks they face as an individual in their current context are not fully understood, these young people do feel supported, for example through their education being taken seriously (all had received or believed they would receive help to get into college) their status claims progressed - 'paperwork, my seeking asylum...that is something I've been receiving support about'(QYP18) - and their broader well-being considered: '**Because always he found...that he gave him support mentally...and materially...provide [sic] him with support and whatever he needs.**' (QYP9)

Like the group related to Outcome Profile 3, these young people are neither keen nor impatient for decisions to be made quickly: 'It might not be the best for him...it takes it's time for this important decision to be taken' (interpreter for QYP9). However, they feel more in control and able to think about their future: 'he sees it as something he looks forward to' (interpreter for QYP23). One young person appears far along on his journey towards independence, reflecting on the support he has received:

'He wishes for Barnardo's to support other young people like him because he is thankful for the people around him and the support he gets and wishes this for others' (interpreter for QYP9).

This group contrasts with the previous group in that they are more independent, taking on more responsibility for their own lives and for decision-making, because support from Barnardo's has enabled them to do so. The Barnardo's support worker takes more of a background, facilitation role here rather than being the essential and sole trusted adult in the young people's lives. This demonstrates a service effective at being needs-led.

Profile 5: Finding a way through periods of crisis and transition

These young people feel unsafe, uncared for, unwell and not in control and appear to be in crisis. Because of their ICTG support worker, however, they feel they have someone who understands them and who they can trust. This ICTG worker is very important for their protection and safeguarding at this point in their lives.

The group related to this Profile includes three young people, 2 female and 1 male, UK and non-UK nationals. Like groups related to Profiles 3 and 4, they were an average age

of 17 years. None have left the service, and they have an average length of time in the service of 13.6 months.

This group of young people is distinguished from all other groups by agreeing *less* with the statements 'I can achieve things', 'I am well cared for and my needs are met', 'my body and mind are healthy', 'I feel calm and in control of my life', 'I can make choices that are important to me' and 'people do what's best for me'. The only statement this group agrees with *more* with than other group is 'I can get support to communicate with others.' In summary, this group can be characterised as experiencing a period of crisis outside of their or their ICTG service support worker's control.

This is certainly the case for two of these young people. One has had their living situation deteriorate rapidly. The other young person is relatively new to the service and currently reflecting a lot on the experiences they have been through. These situations make it more challenging for positive outcomes to be achieved. The ranking of outcome statements by both these young people reflects their difficult contexts and the severity of the challenges they face, rather than a lack of effective support from the service: 'all these statements [would] be so different if this is two months ago' (QYP6), meaning their outcomes were more positive because of the previous level of support from their ICTG. Achieving any positive outcomes at this point in their lives, for both these young people, is difficult, but, because of their ICTG worker they feel that their experiences and needs are understood, and their identity is respected: '*...she always listens and...she asks questions about religion...I'm Muslim and...I remember I said I didn't know where the mosque was. And then she showed me...*' (QYP14).

These ICTG workers are creating a space for these young people to talk, playing an important role, and in particular supporting their mental health during these challenging times: '*Yeah, I would like to talk to ICTG, maybe I'll say my feeling not good. And then she'll, like, tell me what, like, peace things I can do to, like, keep me, like, calm.*' (QYP14)

Unlike young people associated with Outcome Profile 4, these two young people feel less stable in their interpersonal relationships. Contact with family is not possible - '*Yeah, it's difficult right now*' (QYP6) - and they do not feel that they have good friends: '*Not so many friends at minute...people are just not good friends to me!*'(QYP6). As such, the protective layers of family and friends are not in place.

The third young person in this group is not in crisis but, like the other two, is in a period of transition and about to leave the ICTG service. As a result, this young person agrees with the same outcome statements as the two young people above, *not* because they are in crisis but because they, rather than Barnardo's, is enabling these positive outcomes at this stage in their recovery. This young person is still, however, keen to talk about how their ICTG worker has been able to support them, for example through chats about getting older or contacting their social worker, Personal Adviser, and lawyers on their behalf. Like the young people associated with Outcome Profiles 1 and 4, this young person is more independent and self-reliant and has been supported by a wide range of services.

When we look across the five groups and associated outcome profiles, we do not see any clear associations or patterns between the characteristics of these young people and what they feel about outcomes enabled for them through ICTG service support. More what we see is a service that can be flexible, adapting to young people's different combinations of needs at different times, whoever they are and whatever stage of service support and recovery they are in.

7. Conclusions and Findings

This study aimed to explore the benefits and limitations of the Barnardo's ICTG service on children's outcomes (long-term safeguarding and protection, well-being, and recovery), to situate these amidst the nature of modern slavery affecting children in England and Wales and set out what this might mean for policy and practice. It sought to address three main research objectives:

1. What is the nature of modern slavery affecting children in England and Wales?
2. What are the benefits and limitations of the ICTG service provision on children's outcomes (long-term safeguarding and protection, well-being, and recovery)?
3. How can services, and policies, support the recovery of children with lived experience of modern slavery?

This research addresses an identified, evidenced gap and is the first external analysis of the ICTG service to centre the views and experiences of children and young people, and their definitions of outcomes, with other data and perspectives organised around these, as well as to engage young people with lived experience of modern slavery from the service as 'advisers' in the research process itself. It is the first study to draw on the Stable Futures project's Positive Outcomes Framework (Hynes et al, 2022) to employ this as an outcome evaluation tool in practice with young people (both UK and non-UK born) and to use Q-methodology in the field of child modern slavery research in the UK. And finally, this research uses regression analysis for the first time in an assessment of the ICTG service, providing more than descriptive analytics from quantitative data sets for an extensive period of ICTG service delivery.

In Section 2, this report began by summarising the evolution of the ICTG service, currently commissioned to Barnardo's, and its external evaluation. It raised the 'problem' of effectively measuring outcomes for children and young people with lived experience of modern slavery both whilst being supported by, and once having moved on from, the ICTG service. The staggered evolution of the ICTG service, with its changing roles, accompanied by variations in outcome measurement tools, has prevented any systematic, consistent measurement of outcomes for children and young people supported by the service to date. The nature of case closure within the ICTG service, as well as the limitations of data sets available, due to having no funding or remit to track longer-term outcomes and wanting to avoid children and young people's dependency on the ICTG service, prevents any longer-term measurement or tracking of outcomes for children and young people beyond case closure. In addition, it is suggested that the reporting of outcomes for children and young people from the ICTG service to the Home Office can present only a partial picture of the ICTG service, service outcomes and children and young people themselves. Section 2 introduces a set of outcomes as defined and articulated by young survivors of modern slavery for the analysis of ICTG service delivery. It draws on the outcomes from the Stable Futures project's Positive Outcomes Framework and co-develops these with an advisory group of young people with lived experience of human trafficking. By incorporating these outcomes as defined by young people affected by modern slavery, there is an opportunity for such measurement to provide a fuller, richer, and more nuanced picture of ICTG service support.

In Section 3, drawing on quantitative data sets from the NRM and ICTG service, as well as qualitative data from focus group discussions with ICTG service practitioners, this report sets out the nature of modern slavery affecting children in England and Wales. The increased referrals of children to the NRM (and so to the ICTG service) and the increased complexity of the nature of exploitation within the current political landscape presents a challenging environment within which ICTG service support is delivered. External barriers

including age of referral to the service, delays and challenges with the formal statutory systems and processes set up to address child modern slavery and a hostile environment including negative public perceptions place limitations on outcomes for children that and young people that the service can achieve.

Section 4 of the report introduces a 'pyramid of service support', representing the combination of support activities conducted by the ICTG service as recorded in case closure summaries, newly conceptualised by this research. The layers of the pyramid are set out and analysed in turn with case closure summary data triangulated by data from the focus group discussions and Q-sort activity with young people from the service. We find that perspectives on what the service delivers and the outcomes for children and young people that this contributes to are well aligned. A focus on Transition in this Section highlights ICTG service support for young people at point of case closure, including handover, but also limitations in what the service can achieve for young people once they have reached the age of 18.

Section 5 shows how the set of outcomes adapted from the Stable Futures project's Positive Outcomes Framework and developed for the research are employed through using Q-methodology with 25 young people from the ICTG service. This reveals numerous positive outcomes that matter and are important for these young people from having ICTG service support. Some of these positive outcomes are shared by all (or almost all) these 25 young people, for example feeling safe and protected from harm. Other outcomes can be identified as significant in different combinations for distinct groups, resulting in five different 'outcome profiles' for young people attributed to ICTG service support. Section 5 also shows that young people can engage safely in research about outcomes for them from the ICTG service using Q-methodology and can share their experiences and views. They can be active participants, rather than 'passengers', in relation to the service that supports them.

Finally, Section 6 focuses on the central importance - and unique role - of the ICTG direct worker as 'trusted adult' and enabler of positive outcomes for children and young people supported by the service, as well as the role of both direct and indirect ICTG service workers in the effective coordination of services, support, and professionals 'around the child'.

In summary, the Key Findings of this research are as follows:

- The nature of modern slavery is a challenging and complex landscape within which the ICTG service strives to deliver positive outcomes for children and young people.
- ICTG service practitioners can provide nuanced data based on their professional experience working at 'ground level'. This is additional to data captured in the NRM and provides valuable insights into the nature of modern slavery affecting children and young people in England and Wales.
- The ICTG service delivers a multi-layered 'pyramid of service support' enabling positive outcomes for the safeguarding, protection, well-being, and recovery of children and young people with lived experience of modern slavery.
- All young people engaged in the research agree that the ICTG service has supported them to achieve positive outcomes across a range of outcome areas that are important and matter to them.
- The ICTG service is flexible, allowing children and young people to navigate this support differently, achieving varied positive outcomes at different times depending on their needs.

- Five distinct groups of young people are identified through the research who are significantly different to each other in how they rank outcomes enabled because of ICTG service support. These five 'outcome profiles' can be characterised as below and demonstrate the holistic, responsive, and adaptive nature of the service:
 - o Safe, well and moving forwards...
 - o Believed, engaged; perhaps needing culturally competent support...
 - o Feeling prioritised and learning to trust...
 - o Good support networks, quietly confident...
 - o Finding a way through crisis and transition...
- The research highlights the importance of ICTG service direct workers' (ICTG, ICTG-post 18, Regional Practitioners) unique role as a 'trusted adult' for children and young people, who consider them instrumental to their participation, protection, and achievement of positive outcomes.
- Both direct and indirect (Regional Practice Coordinator) ICTG service workers act as a 'bridge' or critical 'coordination point', navigating complex systems, mobilising services, and connecting professionals to drive positive outcomes for children.

8. Recommendations

‘A survivor-informed focus on outcomes can influence agendas for policies, research, and interventions’ (Modern Slavery PEC, 2023:3)

This study has drawn on and developed a set of young survivor-informed outcomes for its analysis of ICTG service support. This, along with the other methods and analysis employed, provides us with a bank of new evidence which has the potential to inform the development of (and practice within) the ICTG service, shape the policy context, and suggest agendas for future research. This is articulated below as a set of evidence-based recommendations to drive positive outcomes for children and young people affected by modern slavery in England and Wales. These recommendations are grouped according to their intended audience and so are for the UK Government and for the ICTG service currently run by Barnardo’s respectively, followed by recommendations relating to further research.

8.1 For the UK Government

Recommendation 1 - Extend the ICTG service to the whole of England and Wales, commence Section 48 and produce its regulations: The UK Government should extend the ICTG service to the whole of England and Wales, based on the evidence on how it supports the attainment of positive outcomes for children and young people affected by modern slavery, formally commence Section 48 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and draft and adopt the regulations that sit beneath this.

Recommendation 2 - Include children’s participation in any commissioned evaluation or research on the ICTG service: The UK Government should fund the meaningful participation of children and young people affected by modern slavery and supported by the ICTG service, where safe and appropriate to do so, as part of any UK Government commissioned evaluation of, or research on, the ICTG service, including in defining the outcomes that matter to them.

This also means that the UK Government:

- Considers as essential the views and experiences of children and young people affected by modern slavery and supported by the ICTG service in determining the shape and development of the ICTG service,
- Considers appropriate opportunities in partnership with the ICTG service for children and young people affected by modern slavery to be ‘at the table’, contributing to what’s needed in terms of current and future policy change impacting on the ICTG service and their lives,
- Works together with the Barnardo’s currently commissioned to run the ICTG service to champion language that positively highlights the agency, capabilities and contributions of children and young people affected by modern slavery and which drives wider recognition of the ICTG service support available, its positive outcomes for children and young people and their recovery.

Recommendation 3 - Maintain a dynamic, responsive and needs-led ICTG service: The UK Government should further encourage and support the flexibility and needs-led nature of the ICTG service and its constituent roles. This will allow the service to continue to respond to the dynamic landscape and policy context of child modern slavery in England and Wales and to the different needs of children and young people affected by modern slavery, maximising positive outcomes for them.

This flexibility and needs-led approach should be informed by further exploration of gaps identified including:

- Whether children and young people who currently have no direct support from the ICTG service, for example those indirectly supported by RPCs, might also benefit from direct support from a 'trusted adult', a role which our evidence shows has benefits for children and young people's outcomes and which may not be possible for other services or professionals to provide.
- Young people who have had contact with the ICTG service but have been moved or trafficked out of the UK and where there's a lack of awareness around the legislation or tools that might be used for these young people's ongoing safeguarding and protection.

Recommendation 4 – Further coordinate access to ongoing ICTG service intelligence: The UK Government should draw routinely on the intelligence of ICTG service practitioners working with and for children and young people with lived experience of modern slavery, coordinated through established intelligence mechanisms and routes, for example the regional anti-slavery partnerships.

To explore the measurement of outcomes for children and young people post-exit from the ICTG service and in the longer-term, the UK Government should investigate the practical potential of data sharing for secure data linkage within a Trusted Research Environment, and, if feasible, explore the legal feasibility in relation to data protection regulations, privacy notices and any other governance around data sharing. Linkage to other anonymised or de-identified data sources could provide a much broader understanding of engagement with education, aspects of the courts, health services, or use of Census data to consider family backgrounds. The potential for linkage depends upon holding the necessary personal information to perform linkage successfully and the legal position on data sharing, whilst the area of focus would depend upon each of the UK nations variable structures, processes and access to routine administrative data for public tasks and legitimate research.

Recommendation 5 – Investigate secure data sharing to measure post-service outcomes: The UK Government should explore the measurement of long-term outcomes for children and young people post-exit from the ICTG service through data sharing for secure data linkage within a Trusted Research Environment and its legal feasibility in relation to data protection regulations, privacy notices and any other governance around data sharing.

This could include:

- 'Real time' information on perceived emerging patterns and trends.

- Feedback on the process and results of modern slavery investigations for children and young people instigated by the NRM, including for historical cases of exploitation outside of the UK.
- Identification of potential 'loopholes' encountered in practice which are enabling or preventing or delaying response to children's exploitation.
- The importance of a shift to alternative language or framing so that modern slavery is recognised and effectively addressed, for example contextual safeguarding rather than focusing on harm within the home.

Whilst ensuring data necessary for reporting to the Home Office are maintained, such intelligence might be used to inform and amend existing categories and sub-categories of 'type of exploitation' so that these better reflect the nuanced and intersecting nature of child exploitation.

Within Wales, England, Scotland, and Northern Ireland there have been extensive efforts by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), Office of National Statistics (ONS), ADR (Administrative Data Research), HDRUK (Health Data and Research UK) and others to develop structures and resources for administrative data linkage. Should administrative ICTG service data be made available via secure platforms within trusted research environments (TREs) such as the Secure Anonymised Information Linkage databank (SAIL) in Wales or the Secure Research Service (SRS) in England, it could be possible to link this data to other administrative records. For example, by linking to education data, engagement/absence from the education system and transitions through it, could be examined, or linking to family court and justice datasets could provide better understanding or interactions within legal spheres. There may be other sources of data held within the Home Office or Barnardo's that could be used to investigate a plethora of research and evaluations. A list of currently available administrative data on TREs can be found across a number of websites. This data could then be made available to approved projects within TRE settings under TRE output control rules to data owner approved projects and utilised by Digital Economy Act Accredited Researchers (who have undertaken specific training on safe use of data).

8.2 For Barnardo's ICTG Service

Recommendation 1 - Develop a participatory, holistic outcomes measurement tool: The ICTG service should develop a suitable participatory, holistic assessment and outcomes measurement tool for the service, based on the meaningful participation of children and young people, to effectively and fully measure and report on outcomes for children and young people supported by the ICTG service.

- It is recommended that young people from the service take part in the development of this tool, alongside ICTG service practitioners and other professionals where relevant. Guidance should be developed which outlines how the assessment and outcomes measurement tool should be completed, reviewed, and updated and
- Training should be provided to staff, during induction and throughout their time in the service to support understanding and completion of the assessment and outcomes measurement tool.

- A process for quality assuring completion of the assessment and outcome measurement tool should be built into service auditing processes, which include ways in which gaps in data can be identified and mitigated against.

Recommendation 2 - Routinely record outstanding concerns at point of transition: The ICTG service should systematically record issues of concern and barriers faced by children and young people at the point of transition to better understand the challenges facing the ICTG service in enabling positive outcomes for children and young people prior to service exit, including for those who are ‘aging out’ of the support provided and to inform future service development.

Recommendation 3 - Establish or continue to support a ‘young researchers’ group for the service: The ICTG service should seek resources and funding to establish or provide ongoing support to a ‘young researchers’ group that will enable the meaningful participation of children and young people affected by modern slavery and supported by the service in any future evaluations or research.

8.3 For further research

To fully understand the benefits, and limitations, of the ICTG service in relation to outcomes for children and young people, further research is required to:

1. establish the longer-term impact for children and young people affected by modern slavery once they have left the ICTG service, potentially possible through a multiple source, linked administrative data approach (see UK Government Recommendation 5 above). The opportunity to conduct interdisciplinary research using linked data should be assessed in terms of its feasibility legally, technically, practically and value.
2. ensure all voices are heard by (a) exploring the views and experiences of children and young people with a parental figure of responsibility in place for them in the UK who are indirectly supported by the ICTG service and for whom outcomes have been reported to date mostly ‘by proxy’ and (b) conducting participatory research, potentially also through using Q-methodology, on the experiences of younger children and children and young people with more severe special and educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in relation to outcomes from ICTG service support.
3. further investigate the role and impact of ICTG service practitioners as ‘trusted adults’ for children and young people with lived experience of modern slavery, drawing on the substantive evidence in the wider literature on outcomes from ‘trusted adult’ and adult mentor support and connecting to research on other similar independent advocacy roles.

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Appendices

All associated appendices cited in this report are numbered and available as a single document, 'Appendices: Research Methods and Materials', available at [Modern Slavery PEC | Modern Slavery PEC](#).

Appendix 1: Administrative Data Analysis Technical Report and Future Research Directions

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MODERN SLAVERY & HUMAN RIGHTS

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