

Outcomes for children and young people affected by modern slavery

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

Research Summary

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Authors: Dr Anna Skeels and Dr Katy Huxley, SPARK, Cardiff University and Hannah Stott, Safe to Grow



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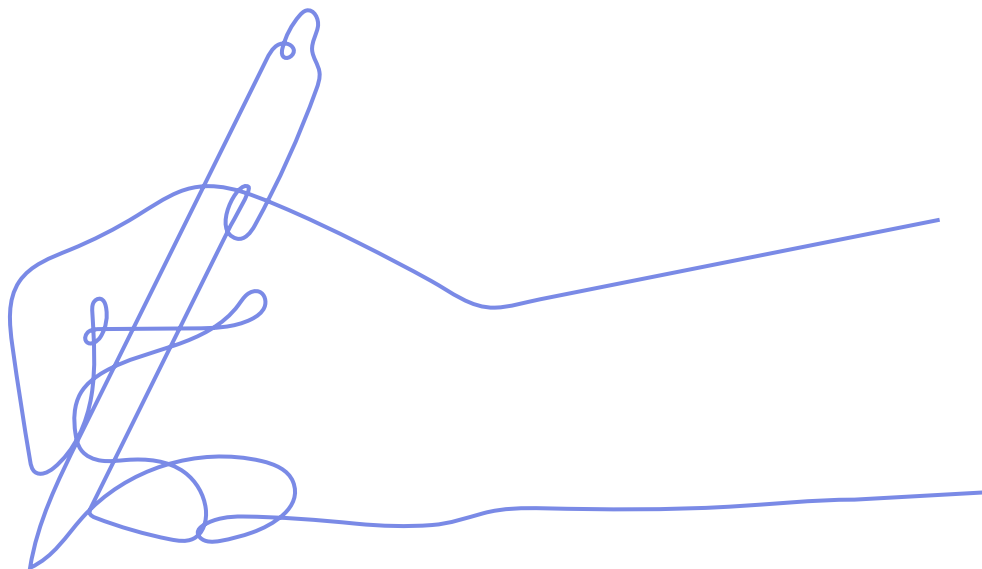
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This is a summary of the report: Outcomes for children and young people affected by modern slavery: An analysis of the Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship service support in England and Wales, based on research conducted by Dr Anna Skeels and Dr Katy Huxley from Cardiff University with Hannah Stott from Safe to Grow, in partnership with Barnardo's.

The 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). The full report can be accessed on the Modern Slavery PEC website at modernslaverypec.org/resources/guardianship-service-outcomes. The Modern Slavery PEC has actively supported the production of this Research Summary. However, the views expressed in this summary and the full report are those of the authors and not necessarily of the Modern Slavery PEC.

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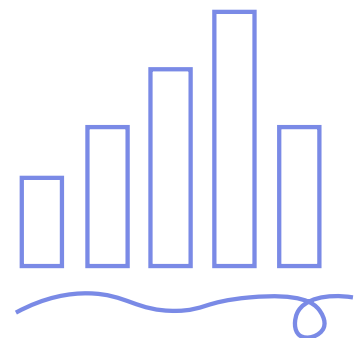


Findings

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 findings from this analysis of the ICTG service and its outcomes for children and young people affected by modern slavery are as follows:

- The ICTG service was found to have supported positive outcomes for all young people participating in the research. All outcomes were important and mattered to them.
- The ICTG service is delivering a flexible, multi-layered 'pyramid of service support' for children and young people with lived experience of modern slavery, resulting in positive outcomes for their safeguarding, protection, well-being, and recovery.
- The research provides important new evidence that the ICTG service is performing in a flexible, adaptive and inclusive way, addressing young people's different priorities and needs.
- The research highlights the importance of ICTG service direct workers as 'trusted adults' for children and young people, considered by them as 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 and valuable insights into the nature of modern slavery affecting children and young people in England and Wales.



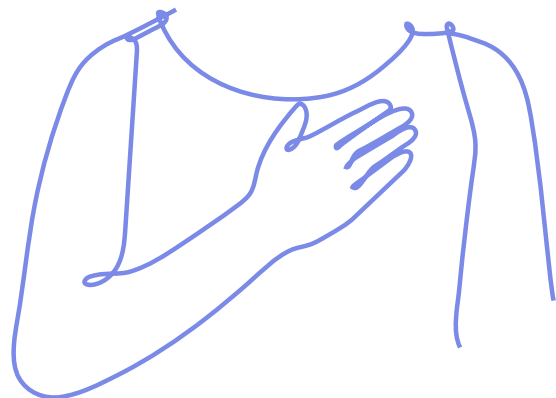
Background

The ICTG service, mandated by Section 48 of the 2015 Modern Slavery Act, introduced the role of the Independent Child Trafficking Advocate (ICTA), now ICTG (Independent Child Trafficking Guardian). 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. Since May 2021, two further roles have been introduced to the service and are undergoing targeted piloting: a 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 adulthood. As of early 2024, the ICTG service is present across two thirds of local authorities in England and Wales, providing both direct and indirect support to children.

This research explores the benefits and limitations of the Barnardo's ICTG service on children and young people's outcomes (long-term safeguarding and protection, well-being, and recovery), 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 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, as well as to engage young people with lived experience of modern slavery from the service as 'advisers' in the research process itself.



Methodology

This study involves four different strands of data collection and analysis, including a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods and both primary and secondary data:

- Quantitative research methods using published National Referral Mechanism (NRM)¹ data and routine ICTG service provision data between February 2017 and September 2022 were used and explored to determine the nature of modern slavery in England and Wales. NRM data included people referred due to potential exploitation as children who were both UK and non-UK born, with and without figures of parental responsibility in the UK. ICTG data included children and young people both UK and non-UK born, with and without figures of parental responsibility in the UK, supported by both 'direct' (DW) and 'indirect' workers (RPC) from the ICTG service (these two categories were not disaggregated into other specific ICTG service roles).
- Qualitative ICTG service administrative data through analysis of 400 (10%) of ICTG service case closure summaries between February 2017- September 2022 was used to tell us how outcomes for children and young people were supported by the service, exploring its benefits and limitations in this regard. These 400 cases included children who were both UK and non-UK born, with and without figures of parental responsibility in the UK, supported by all roles within the ICTG service (ICTGs, ICTG-post 18, RPCs, RPs).
- Regional focus group discussions were held with 56 ICTG service practitioners to gather their experiences and views on the nature of modern slavery identified in England and Wales, 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. These 56 practitioners combined worked directly and indirectly to support children and young people with and without a figure of parental responsibility in the UK, both UK and non-UK born. They included 15 managers, 23 ICTGs, 12 RPCs, 2 ICTG Post- 18s and 4 RPs.
- Q-methodology (or 'Q') was deliberately selected to draw out 25 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 relation to its impact on their protection, safeguarding, well-being and recovery. These 25 young people included 2 who were UK born and with a figure of parental responsibility in the UK and 23 who were non-UK born and without a figure of parental responsibility in the UK. They were supported by 1 manager, 1 post-18 ICTG, 1 RP and 11 ICTGs.

1. 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.

The participation of young people with lived experience of modern slavery as research participants in – as well as 10 ‘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.

This 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.

Findings

The ICTG service was found to have supported positive outcomes for all young people participating in the research. These outcomes were important and mattered to them.

Analysis of this data shows that 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 to them.

25 young people were asked to rank 28 outcome statements, drawn from the Creating Stable Futures Positive Outcomes Framework² and further developed and tested with our group of 10 young advisers, on a grid from Disagree to Agree, all starting with ‘Because of support from my Barnardo’s worker...’

Being ‘safe and protected from harm’ is agreed with as an outcome from the Barnardo’s ICTG service by 24/25 of young people (one young person was being supported by the service through a challenging period at the time of the research) 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.

The following table 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:

2. The [Creating Stable Futures Positive Outcomes Framework](#) (Hynes et al, 2022) is an aspirational set of positive outcomes co-developed with young people with lived experience of human trafficking migrating to the UK.

| Because of support from my Barnardo's worker... Statement | Agree / 25 |
|--|------------|
| ... my culture, religion and identity are respected | 25 |
| ... I have people I can trust who support me | 25 |
| ... I feel supported and more confident about getting older | 25 |
| ... I do not feel alone | 25 |
| ... I understand what's happening to me and what others are telling me | 25 |
| ...my experiences and needs are understood | 25 |
| ...I am able to have fun and enjoy myself | 25 |
| ...I have hope and can plan for a better future | 25 |
| ...I am safe and protected from harm | 24 |
| ...people do what's best for me | 24 |

The following table 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:

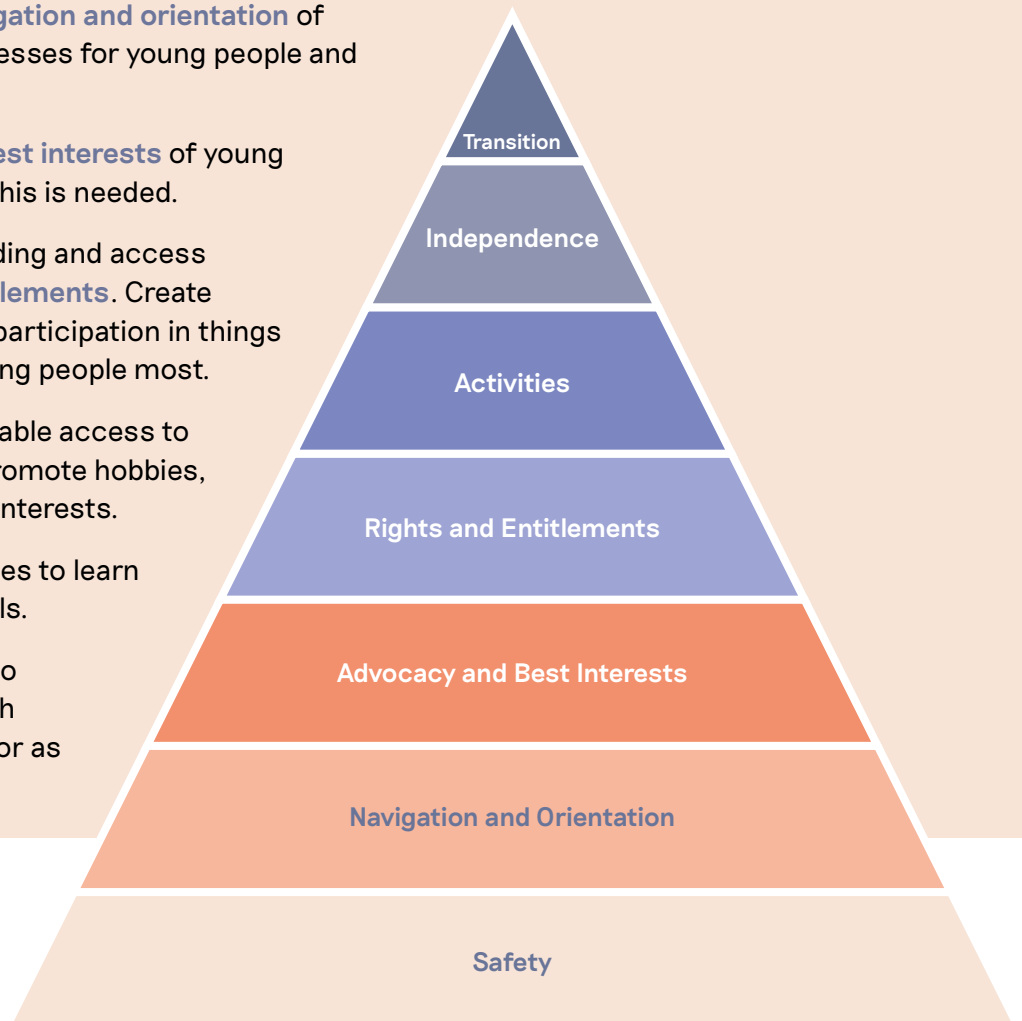
| Because of support from my Barnardo's worker... Statement | In top 6 Agree / 25 |
|--|------------------------|
| ... I am safe and protected from harm | 14 |
| ... I am well cared for and my needs are met | 13 |
| ... people do what's best for me | 10 |
| ...I have people I can trust who support me | 8 |
| ...my culture, religion and identity are respected | 8 |
| ...I feel supported and more confident about getting older | 8 |
| ...my body and mind are healthy | 8 |
| ...I know my rights and what support I should have | 7 |
| ... I have friends that are good for me | 6 |
| ...I am listened to and what I say matters | 6 |

The ICTG service is delivering a flexible, multi-layered 'pyramid of service support' for children and young people with lived experience of modern slavery, resulting in positive outcomes for their safeguarding, protection, well-being, and recovery.

The research includes a systematic analysis of ICTG service case closure summaries (400, a 10% purposive sample of all cases between May 2017-Sept 2022). Case closure summaries allow us to better understand the nature and nuances of ICTG service support. The analysis of this data reveals how the service delivers a multi-layered 'pyramid of service support', with different categories and frequencies of support activity, that enables positive outcomes for the safeguarding, protection, well-being, and recovery of children and young people with lived experience of modern slavery.

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.



This newly conceptualised ICTG 'pyramid of service support', based upon case closure data, can be further validated using other evidence from the research. Data from the focus group discussions with 56 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.

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.

The ICTG service is flexible and adaptable allowing children and young people to navigate this support differently, achieving different outcomes at different times depending on their needs.

The research provides important new evidence that the ICTG service is performing in a flexible, adaptive and inclusive way, addressing young people's different priorities and needs.

The use of Q-methodology (or Q), a participatory approach with a statistical component that is innovative in this context, reveals how the ICTG service delivers positive outcomes that matter to children and young people, as well as how this varies between different groups. Using Q, 25 young people are asked to rank a set of 28 outcome statements from 'most disagree' to 'most agree', all starting with "Because of support from my Barnardo's worker..." Q also identifies five groups of young people that are statistically significantly different to each other in how they rank outcome statements in relation to their needs and the support received. These five groups can be characterised as follows:

1. **'Safe, well and moving forwards'**: The ICTG service is enabling these young people to focus on their immediate well-being and recovery, helping them to feel safe and supported in the 'here and now', focusing on achieving positive shorter-term outcomes.
2. **'Believed, engaged; perhaps needing culturally competent support'**: Because of the ICTG service, these young people feel believed and that they can make positive contributions to their community. They are safe, cared for and on their journey to recovery but might need further support tailored to their unique identity, cultural and religious needs.
3. **'Feeling prioritised and learning to trust'**: These young people are benefiting from having a trusted adult from the ICTG service who they can rely on to put their interests first, for some, for the first time in their lives.

4. **'Good support networks, quietly confident'**: The ICTG service has enabled these young people to feel understood, supported, more confident and in control about getting older and able to make choices about their future, receiving support on key issues such as asylum claims and education.
5. **'Finding a way through crisis and transition'**: Because of the service, these young people remain supported and connected to other services, despite facing severe challenges at this point in their lives, such as homelessness. They have their trusted ICTG support worker to help them focus on their wellbeing and protection.

The research highlights the importance of ICTG service direct workers as 'trusted adults' for children and young people, considered by them as 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.

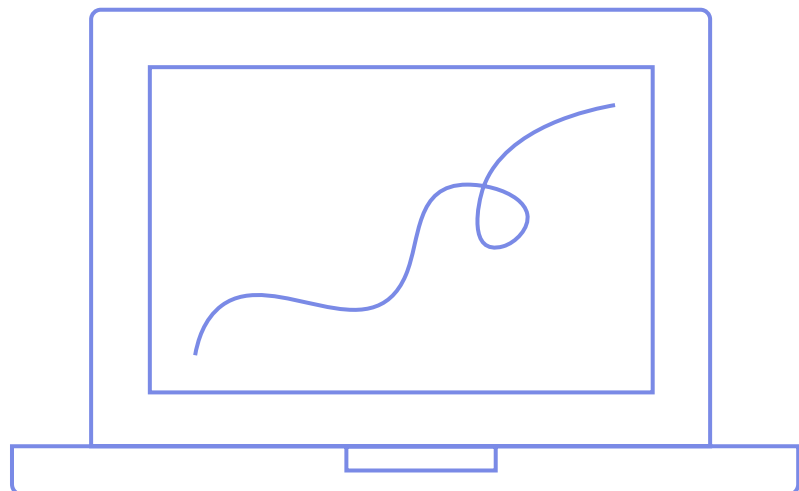
Building trusting relationships with children and young people is the first of the five ICTG service aims. Outcomes relating to support, advocacy, and the child's best interests were the second most cited in practitioners' five most important outcomes for children and young people from the ICTG service 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 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.

The ICTG service does not work alone to support children and young people with lived experience of modern slavery: a range of professionals create a network of safety and support around each child. The research shows 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 children and young people and for their recovery.

ICTG service practitioners can provide nuanced data and valuable insights into the nature of modern slavery affecting children and young people in England and Wales.

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 practitioner perspectives allow us to reflect both on reported and perceived patterns in the nature of modern slavery and the challenges faced by the service in responding to these. Practitioners' comments can act 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. For example, ICTG service data reveals more about the geographic nature of trafficking than the NRM (capturing trafficking into the UK) and is more likely to be an accurate reflection of type(s) of exploitation experienced by children within the service, indicated by the lower rates of 'unknown' exploitation types compared with NRM data. There are limitations to this landscape, associated with outcomes for children and young people, however, over which the ICTG service has no control.



Priority recommendations

'A survivor-informed focus on outcomes can influence agendas for policies, research, and interventions'

Modern Slavery PEC, 2023:3

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 of 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.

This research reveals that 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 to them.

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.

The 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.

Previous 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). However, this has not been systematic nor the substantive focus of the research.

Positioning outcomes as defined by children and young people at the centre of this research has benefited the young people involved, provided a fuller understanding of the ICTG service, the support it provides and its outcomes for children and young people.

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 research shows how such flexibility has enabled the service to support a wide range of needs and deliver positive outcomes for children and young people at varying stages in their recovery.

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.

Data from the National Referral Mechanism and ICTG service for England and Wales provides a partial picture of children and young people and modern slavery as well as the outcomes for these children and young people.

A combination of such administrative data along with ICTG service practitioner perspectives can be revealing. It allows us to reflect both on reported and perceived patterns of modern slavery and practitioners' feedback can act 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 generate insights 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.

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 with other public administrative data sets (for example justice, health, local authority data) 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.

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, and appropriately share with other professionals, issues of concern and barriers faced by children and young people at the point of transition from the service, including for those who are 'aging out' of the support provided.

Analysis of case closure data reveals ongoing needs for children and young people at exit from the ICTG service, providing insights for those supporting post-service including the transition into adult services.

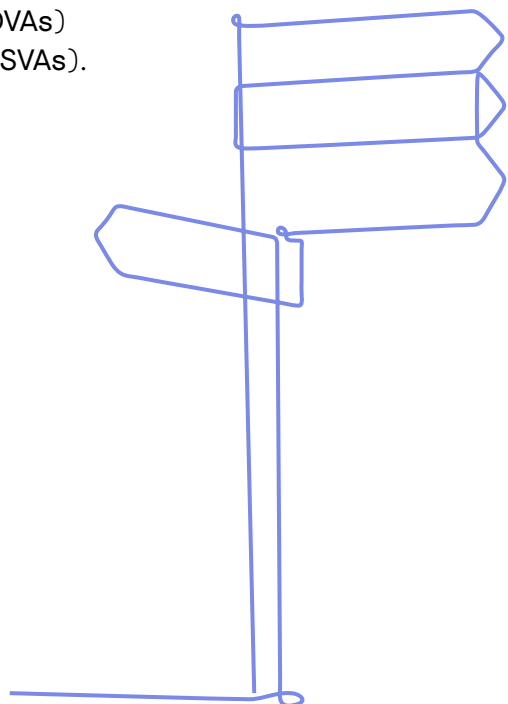
Recommendation 3 – Establish and/or continue to support a 'young researchers' group for the service: The ICTG service should seek resources to establish or provide ongoing support and funding to a 'young researchers' group, or equivalent participatory mechanism, that will enable the meaningful participation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

A 'young researchers' advisory group, involving 10 older and more resilient young people supported by the ICTG service, was established for the purpose of this research. The group was supported to engage in research design, analysis of findings and dissemination of results. Benefits for these young people included learning new knowledge and skills, for example, in research and creative writing, gaining in personal confidence and self-esteem, meeting other young people from the service, developing their interpersonal skills and making new friends, sharing their views and experiences and seeing how these are heard and being used to influence the research and inform the service. As stated by one ICTG service practitioner engaged in the research, children and young people should 'not be passengers' but actively engaged in shaping the nature, delivery and review of the service and such a mechanism would help to facilitate this on an ongoing basis.

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 of the ICTG service on outcomes 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) 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).



MODERN SLAVERY & HUMAN RIGHTS

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Led by the Bingham Centre

The Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC) was created by the investment of public funding to enhance understanding of modern slavery and transform the effectiveness of law and policies designed to address it. The Centre funds and co-creates high quality research with a focus on policy impact, and brings together academics, policymakers, businesses, civil society, survivors and the public on a scale not seen before in the UK to collaborate on solving this global challenge.

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Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre
c/o British Institute of International and Comparative Law
Charles Clore House, 17 Russell Square, London, WC1B 5JP

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office@modernslaverypec.org

www.modernslaverypec.org