

Disrupting child criminal exploitation



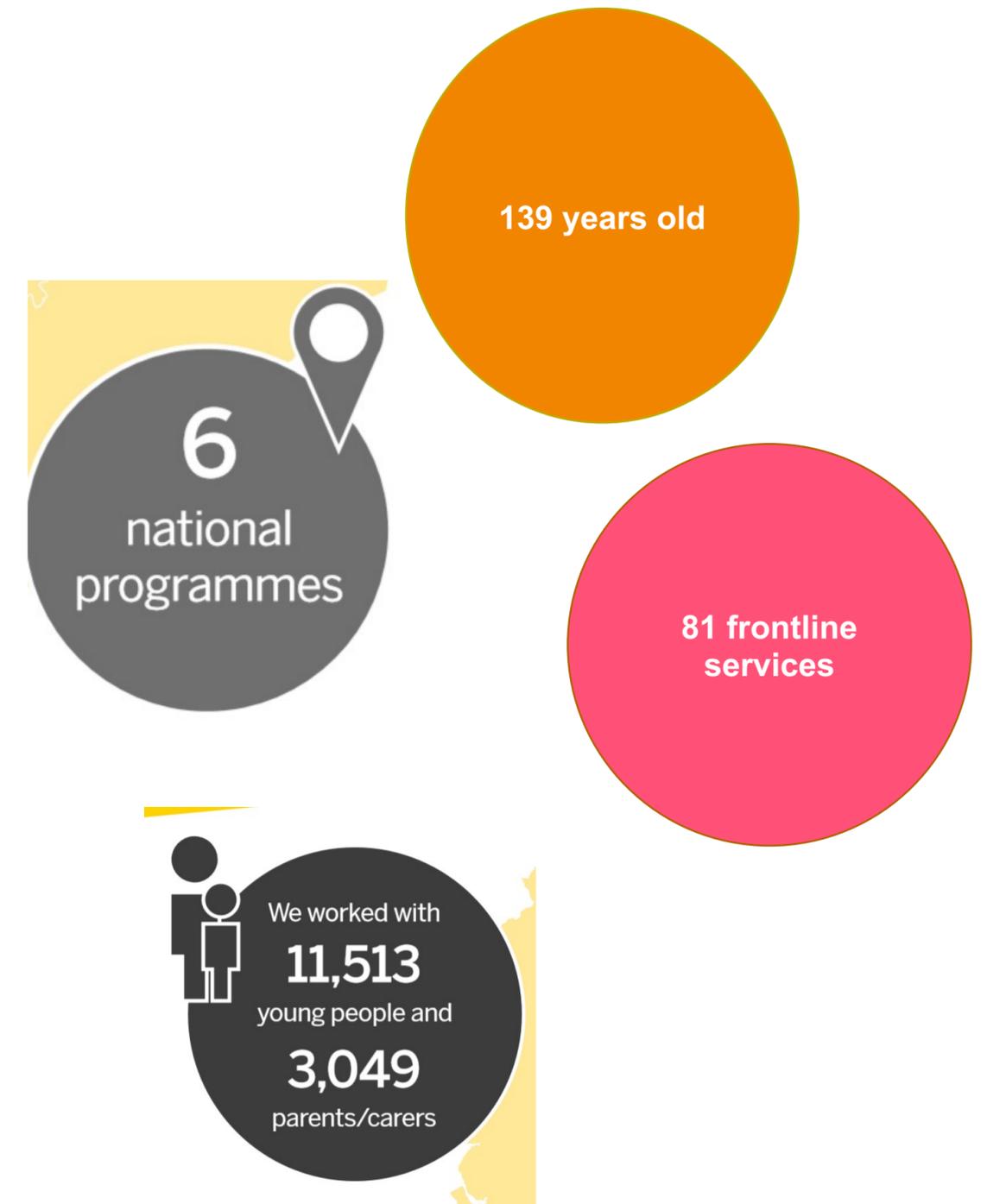
The Children's Society – who we are

National charity delivering in England & Wales:

- local support to children and young people
- policy, research, campaigning and youth engagement

Our expertise lies particularly in:

- Child sexual and criminal exploitation (CSE and CCE)
- Children in care
- Substance and alcohol misuse
- Refugee and migrant children
- Mental health and well-being



Definition of child criminal exploitation

Child Criminal Exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

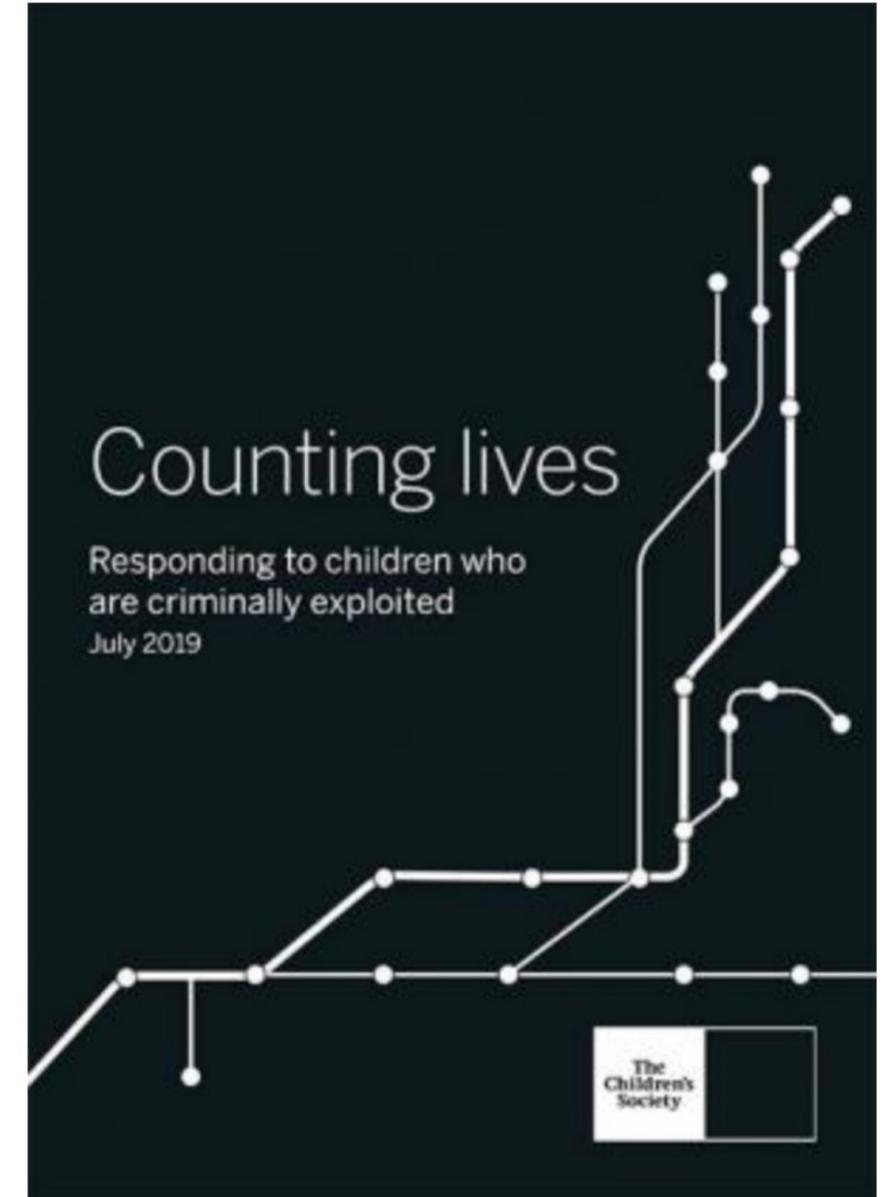
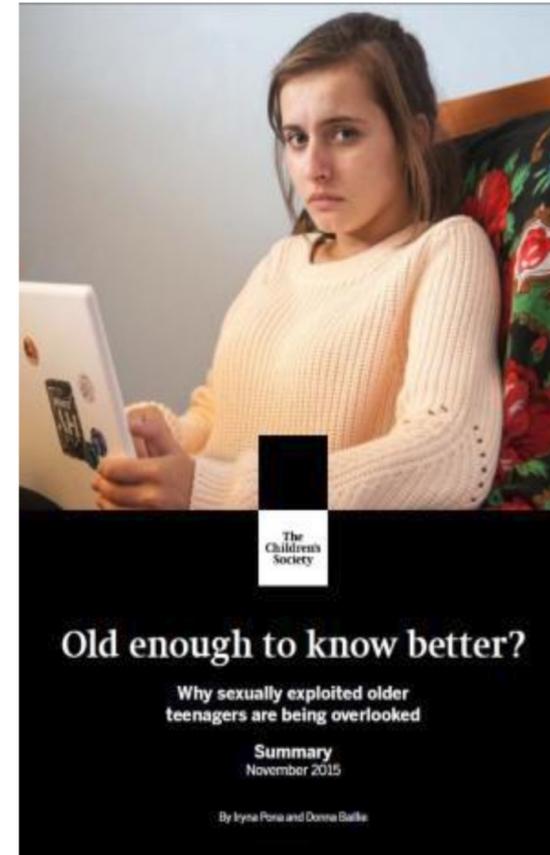
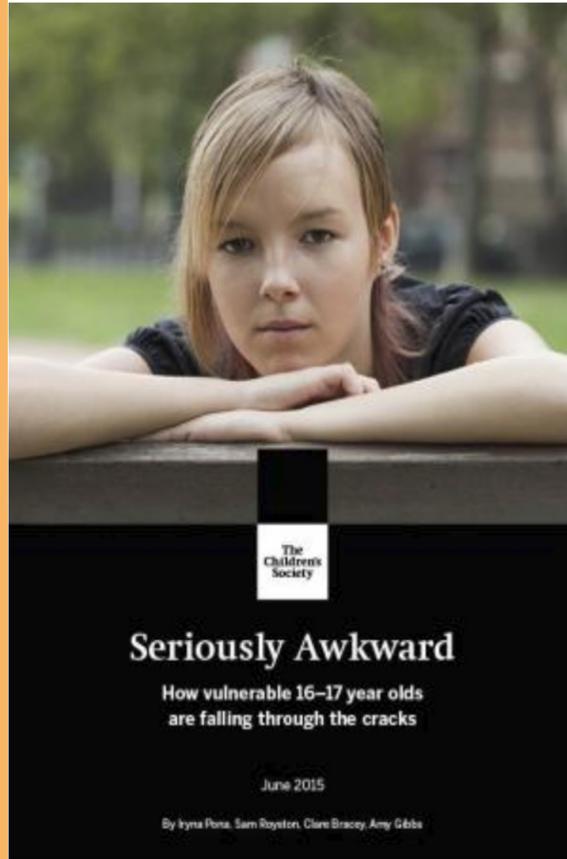
Definition in the Working Together statutory guidance

'**county lines** is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas [within the UK], using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move [and store] the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons

'when someone you trusted makes you commit crimes for their benefit'

Young person's definition

Our research



Key messages from Counting Lives research

- **Any child can be vulnerable to child exploitation but there are some factors that make children more vulnerable**
- **Many children experience multiple forms of abuse and exploitation**
- **Local safeguarding agencies have not yet positioned themselves well to safeguard children targeted for CCE**
- **Children are not yet seen and treated as victims they are more likely to be seen and treated as perpetrators of crime.**

Child criminal exploitation – who is at risk

Any child can become a victim of exploitation. It is through the combination of factors that children become exploited, criminally or in any other way. These factors include:

The child's
own
vulnerability

Vulnerability
created by
society

The presence or
lack of protective
factors in child's
life

The proximity
or access a
perpetrator
has to a child.

Child's vulnerability

Age

'We won't have worked with them under the age of ten because the way our service works are 11 plus, but they have disclosed that their exploitation certainly started before the age of 10' The Children's Society Practitioner (London)

'Our oldest child is 17. We've had a couple of children who've transitioned to the age of 18, so we're working with the adult safeguarding board to look at transition and arrangements.' CCE Specialist (Area 3)

Child's vulnerability

Gender

*“I think it’s somewhere like 70–30 or 80–20. I think it’s more 80–20 in terms of boys than girls. **When we looked back at the history of some of those young people, we’d been thinking that the girls had been victims purely of child sexual exploitation, and what was happening was that they’d always been involved in CCE and the child sexual exploitation had come as part of that.** Yes, over here we have a few individuals in CCE that we’re worried about who will target younger girls for sexual exploitation, but the majority have turned out – the girls who are being sexually exploited – have also turned out to be involved in [CCE], and that’s been the predominant factor.” (Local area professional)*

***The majority of the people that we support have experienced multiple forms of exploitation,** so while criminal exploitation is perhaps the first form of exploitation that gets recognised, or they disclose about, the reality is that they have often experienced other forms of exploitation and abuse prior to that or subsequent to that..” (The Children’s Society Service Manager in Counting Lives report)*

Child's vulnerability

Ethnicity

*'Yes in terms of ethnicity I'd say, I suppose as my work as a practitioner I've worked in different areas and **the ethnicity has very much been reflected to the general population.** So like in Essex there's a lot of young people who're white British, whereas in London we've had more black minority ethnic young people. So I wouldn't say that there's been a specific trend around ethnicity I'd say it's been more reflective of the kind of race ethnicity within that local area.'*

The Children's Society Practitioner

Child's vulnerability

Special Educational Needs

“We know that young people that we work with are most, more likely than not to have speech and language difficulties.’ Area 5

Vulnerability created by society

Looked after children, children in need or on child protection plans

'We've lots of conversations with the police around you know they'll say – "this young person, they're not staying at their accommodation can't you breach them?" And again [we're] very good at bringing people down, and being clear about criminalising people for stuff that wouldn't happen if they were at home. You know they wouldn't be asking us to do that if they were living with their parents.' Area 4

Vulnerability created by society

Exclusions, Alternative Provisions and Pupil Referral Units

'Most people I know are aware, even children, that the difference between a mainstream and a PRU. So to a groomer or a perpetrator that's quite a lot of intelligence when choosing a child to victimise, because to them why would you go to a mainstream school full of A children that can probably read and write better than yourself and express themselves when in harm a lot better than yourself as a perpetrator? Why would we target them when we've got a nice demographic over here, how they would see it, of children that don't really communicate well, haven't really done very well in school and not even schools can deal with them. **So to a groomer that's quite an easy target because it's already showing you've been removed from society and put into an alternative society. So to me that's like a target on your head if you're a child that attends a PRU.'** The Children's Society Practitioner*

Vulnerability created by society

Poverty

*'I think that's one of our biggest concerns. I think our really deprived areas are our biggest concerns because for some young people, we've had it with gangs for years in [Area], where, actually, **if somebody is going to give you food and clothes when you're not getting it at home, well, you know, what's our argument to say don't do that?** You know? If you're starving and your family are starving, and I think one of the youth workers once quoted to me that an eight year old said he was going out grafting and when he challenged the mother about this she was like, well, we need money. You know? If that's kind of your bread and butter and that's what you're learning every day why would you say no?' Area 2*

Lack of protective factors

Family relationships

*“Quite a few of them have grown up **witnessing domestic abuse and more of them they have lost in terms of absent parents, sometimes bereavement and parental separation** and different parent figures coming in and out of the house and then obviously that leads to mental health attachment difficulties and witnessing traumatic events during their early years that they struggle to process and are struggling with the after effects of..’ Area 5*

We’ve got families where the children have been brought up in families where they are part of criminality networks already, so you’ve got – that’s immediately a vulnerability because they’ve already got – they’re being brought up to do this work. So I've got young people who've been brought up in these established crime families as well as being victims, they are then going out and recruiting other young people – from an early age, and creating a lot of fear in the community.’ Area 6

CiN Factors²	2019	2020
Child sexual exploitation	18,720	18,700
Gangs	10,960	14,700
Going missing	15,740	18,200
Trafficking	2,490	3,010

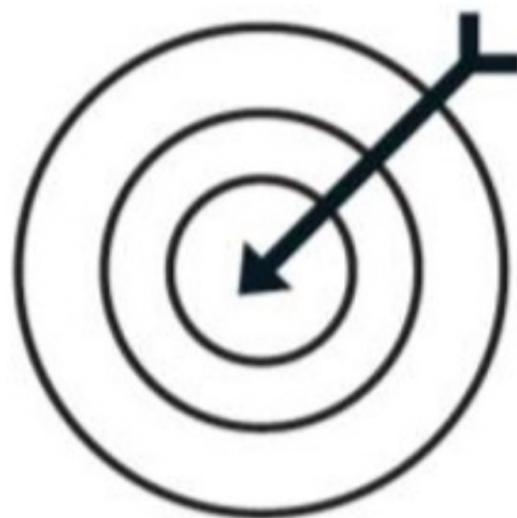
The proximity of perpetrators

Number of times factors were identified in child in need assessments for children referred to children's services

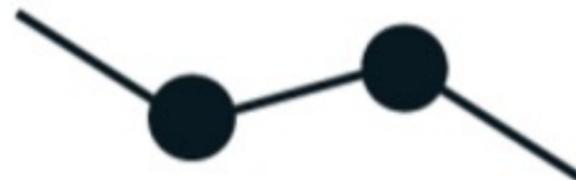
	Modern Slavery Act 2015 - 1	Modern Slavery Act - 2
2015-16	0	1
2016-17	0	21
2017-18	0	26
2018-19	3	5
2019-20	0	30

Number of Modern Slavery Act offences flagged as child abuse

How children become victims of criminal exploitation



Target

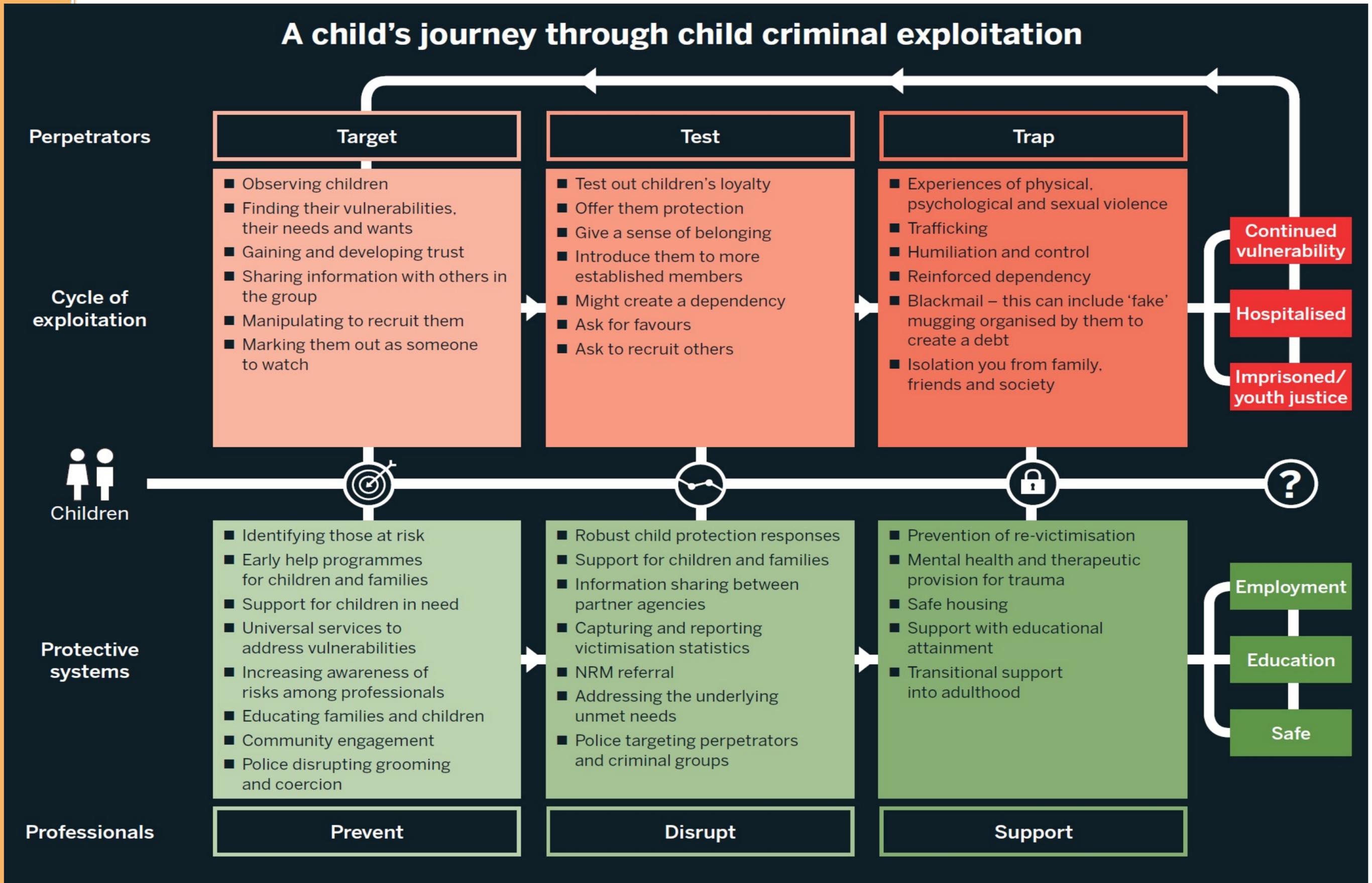


Test



Trap

A child's journey through child criminal exploitation



Changes needed

At the national level

- National strategy
- Changes in legislation to ensure that children are seen and treated as victims of exploitation through definition of child criminal exploitation and coercion and control of children for the purposes of child exploitation
- Better data collection to understand the scale

At the local level

- Local mapping of needs
- Creating pathways for children to access support at 'reachable' moments (eg. at the point of exclusion, arrest)
- Focussed actions against perpetrators (safeguarding plans alongside disruption plan)
- Transition to adulthood support

Useful resources from The Children's Society

Counting lives research report - [Counting Lives Report | The Children's Society](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/child-protection/child-protection-research/counting-lives-research-report) ([childrenssociety.org.uk](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk))

County lines and criminal exploitation toolkit [County Lines Toolkit For Professionals | The Children's Society](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/child-protection/child-protection-research/county-lines-toolkit) ([childrenssociety.org.uk](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk))

Defining child criminal exploitation briefing [Defining Child Criminal Exploitation | The Children's Society](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/child-protection/child-protection-research/defining-child-criminal-exploitation) ([childrenssociety.org.uk](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk))

Thank you for listeninig

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