



A CELCIS Emerging Insights Series Webinar:

Supporting the shared responsibility to identify and respond to child criminal exploitation now.

Video transcript

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Heather Ottaway

I'm Dr Heather Ottaway and I am the Head of Evidence and Innovation at CELCIS and I'm standing in for Claire Burns, who's our director as she is unable to join us today. Also to note just before we start, given the focus of this series of webinars, we really appreciate that what is shared and discussed may be upsetting. So please do take time out if you need to, during the webinar, and afterwards.

Published in March, Shattered Lives, Stolen Futures, the report of the Jay Review of Criminally Exploited Children, which was commissioned by Action for Children, starkly set out how the lives of children and their families are being blighted by exploitation across the UK. And that a new system of prevention, a legal code and support is required, designed with the explicit purpose of tackling the criminal exploitation of children. And we're joined today by Sharon Maciver,

who's the National Director for Child Criminal Exploitation at Action for Children. And she's going to consider with us how best to equip practitioners, parents, carers, families and communities to prevent, identify, protect against and understand the risk of child criminal exploitation. And she's also going to speak about the work underway on the development of a national framework for practice. We're also going to be joined by Deanna Nielsen, Director of Safeguarding at Action for Children, and Donna McEwan, Practice Development Advisor at the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice in the discussion part of the session. So we're firstly going to have a presentation from Sharon, followed by a discussion to draw out the themes and questions about what we've heard. And then we'll move on to the Q&A part of the webinar before we close. And I'm just going to say over to you, Sharon.

Sharon Maciver

Okay, thanks, Heather. And it's great to be here today. And welcome to everybody who's joined us for this webinar on child criminal exploitation with a specific theme of a shared responsibility. And I think the fact that we've had such a huge turnout for this webinar is bittersweet. It's great in the sense that there's such interest in the area and how we can learn and work together. But it's quite tragic at the same time that we're living in a society where these harms are being caused to children. And I suppose that's where I would like to start today's discussion - in that tens of thousands of children across the UK are being groomed, manipulated and coerced into criminal activity. They are being abused and traumatised, they're criminalised and sanctioned, they have their liberty removed, they can be removed from their families from their peer groups, their local areas, all as a result of being exploited. And this is our starting point today, to consider is that good enough? And could we collectively be doing more to safeguard children? It's our shared responsibility and something that I would like you all to think about as we start the discussion today.

So firstly, I think it's helpful that we have a shared understanding within this group of what we mean by child criminal exploitation. And across the UK, there is no statutory definition that exists. There is a number of different summaries of what child criminal exploitation is within various policies and frameworks. And what I've done is to kind of summarise what the core components of those definitions are. And the kind of key areas that we would look at is around coercion, around an element of control, manipulation and deception by the perpetrators. And we're talking about children who are committing illegal activity for the benefit of another AKA an exploiter, and that they will be a victim as well as a child engaged in criminal activity - that we should be framing this as child abuse - and that's our starting point. The only final point to note before we move on around defining criminal exploitation is this notion around consent. Often children will not acknowledge their own exploitation and nor do they need to within the human trafficking and exploitation Scotland Act. It does state that children do not need to consent to their exploitation for us to treat them as victims of exploitation. So, it's just quite important to know.

So why is this area so challenging to deal with? Well, we know that criminal exploitation ultimately stems from vulnerability. Children that can be living in poverty that might have experienced difficult early childhood that may be excluded from education - there's a range of vulnerabilities that could lead a child to be criminally exploited, as well as a number of other challenges that they may face throughout their childhood. But with criminal exploitation, we're dealing with the intended harm and abuse, so the exploitation, but we're also dealing with the associated harms as a result of that. And those associated harms could be things like family relationship breakdown, it could be a child's involvement in serious violence as a result of the pressure from the exploiters that they're involved in to be a part of something to be a part of a group, or a criminal gang, that not only commits illegal activity linked to serious organised crime, but may also be involved in serious violence against others. So those associated harms are another complex challenge that we've got to deal with and often leads to a number of unintended consequences. Children won't understand when they become involved with these exploiters that it might impact on their family life, their education, where they live, the fact that their families may be threatened, they may lose friends, and they may be seriously hurt themselves, they don't often think about these unintended consequences. And as professionals, we've got to balance all of that in a dual system, that we work to protect children and safeguard them at the same time where there's a criminal justice response. So, it's just to kind of highlight to everybody that this is not an easy issue that we're trying to address and tackle here. And it is very complex. So, to kind of bring the discussion to life, I'm going to use the case study of Jamie. And we're going to come back to Jamie at several points through the discussion. But for now, I just want you to look at this slide and think about what does this information tell you about Jamie? That's all you need to think about is that this information was shared at an agency meeting. And this is what we know so far, about Jamie. So, I'll just give you a couple of seconds just to digest what's on this slide. And we'll come back to it.

So, if we think about, you know, Jamie, we're at that multi agency meeting. And we talk about child criminal exploitation and use a variety of different terms - professional language that we would use to describe what child criminal exploitation is. It could involve county lines, trafficking, we might talk about Serious Organised crime, and serious violence. But what does that actually look like? It looks like fear of repercussion. It looks like the exclusion of pit that twice, I must have been very keen to highlight that lack of hope and optimism for young people. It can be young people fearful in terms of the threats and intimidation posed to them and family members. So it's important to think about when we're using language to describe something that we fully understand what this means, and feels like for children.

Because when we asked them, this is what young people told us is their reality. The professional language means nothing to them. They don't understand what we mean by serious organised crime or child criminal exploitation, and certainly would not want us to tell them that they're exploited children. How they would describe it is this and they do describe it as this push and pull that they do in some ways, we'd argue get something out of this. They feel like they are somebody they have a sense of status, they have a sense of purpose and belonging, that in their view that they're choosing to be involved. This is an important point that actually was raised that the Jay Review by a police officer down in England, that had said, children do choose to be involved in serious organised crime. And when he said that originally, I rolled my eyes and thought, oh, yeah, of course they do. But actually, he then followed that up to say children do choose to be involved in serious organised Crime. However, we should be viewing it through the lens that children do, if we are to take responsibility as the professional supporting those children, we know that there is no rational choice within that. And he's right. Because these children often once they're involved don't see a way out. They can't possibly envisage one for a moment. If we're asking them to move away from that lifestyle. What will that look like? That will mean moving away from my peers, not knowing who's got my back, because these people will give them a sense of belonging, and acceptance. They won't know how to go about re-engaging with education, for example, to get a job, the skills and qualities they might need for that. What will that mean in terms of their status? And who will they be? And how will they achieve that? So there's all of these things, whilst balancing the fact that they know that there's a significant level of threat and intimidation towards them. And that's something that they're not comfortable with. But equally, how do they navigate their way through that? On the opposite side of it, what we will see isn't what's going on internally for that young person. We will see that they're difficult to engage with in quotation marks, that they won't be attending school, that their offending might have escalated that they might be cocky, they might be challenging and use phrases, we might say that they don't understand the seriousness of what they're involved in, they might be absconding. And then it's our responsibility to address that. So you can understand the challenges that we have, if we don't, firstly, understand the reality for the young person, but then only focus on how we perceive the situation from our professional lens. We need to bridge the gap between the perception and the reality. And so I think it's helpful if we're talking about criminal exploitation stemming from vulnerability, we understand what those stages of vulnerability are. I used to talk about this being the stages of exploitation, but it's actually not. These are stages of vulnerability. And if we view it in that way, in the sense of, at what stage can we intervene to prevent exploitation, we're going to have a much better outcome longer, further down the road. So initially, if we think about vulnerability, we might see the things that we described earlier around a child not being engaged with education, there might be some missing episodes, some emotional dis-regulation, challenges within the family. They may then form relationships in the community where they might become involved in some low-level offending, antisocial behaviour, they may dabble in a bit of substance misuse. And at that point, we would see these young people as troublesome. We then wouldn't be

thinking about well, how will that make that motivate a young person to become engaged with an exploiter? So, they may look to identify drugs in their local area, they may be looking for a sense of belonging and gravitate towards a group that's likely to exploit them. But at this point, often we're not thinking about that, as professionals, we're thinking about how do we engage them with education? How do we stop that offending? How do we kind of speak to them about the peer group that were associated with that we're not necessarily comfortable with, but are we thinking about the potential for an exploiter to be working away in the background, out of plain sight, that could then be moving to the next stage and coercing a young person into criminal activity. Because once we know, our young person is coerced, that they're being groomed. And once they're groomed, they're likely going to be compelled to commit criminal activity. And it's at this point, the child is abused, it's too late by this point, it's not too late to intervene, but it's too late in terms of the abuse that's been caused. Then we land ourselves in the predicament of, do we criminalise these children for their engagement in illegal activity? Or do we protect and safeguard them as victims of exploitation? And that all centres down to how we identify it, how we perceive it, and work together as a multi-agency to respond to it.

So, if we come back to Jamie, that we talked about to start with, I'd asked you all to think about what do you know about Jamie from this slide? So, this is information that was shared between multi agencies, so taken from each individual agency and brought together in terms of a discussion, but actually, it doesn't really tell us an awful lot. It's a series of facts on a screen that says he doesn't go to education. He's not really engaging with professionals, that he's going missing. He's aggressive and hostile, is under the influence of substances. There are concerns about drug use and knife crime, or possession of a weapon. And he's not really attending anything. But we don't really understand what's going on for him. So, we should be asking the questions in these situations, what do we know? But most importantly, what do we not know? We don't know where he's going between the hours of waking up in the morning and going to his bed. We don't know who he's with how he's getting there, how he's funding, what he's doing on a day-to-day basis. We don't know what his peer group are like. We don't know why he's in possession of a knife. We don't know why he's got drugs. We don't know if those drugs are to be disposed of what the impact that would have on him. We don't know if he's using a knife with the intention to use on others or to protect himself. So, without all of that knowledge, how does that impact our ability to safeguard and protect? And most importantly, what language are we using to talk about exploited children? And we're going to go on to look at Jamie's life in more detail. And the idea of language is something that is really quite important in terms of how we identify it and then communicate it with our wider partners, but also in how do we then respond to children based on the language we use to describe their exploitation.

So, this is quite a complicated slide. I'm not going to go through every single detail here, but to summarise Jamie's life story: he is a young person that had social worker involvement since birth, that there were issues throughout his early years with parental substance misuse, mental health difficulties and neglect. And there were voluntary measures at various points throughout that

time. Unfortunately, one of his parents died when he was eight years old. When he moved into secondary education, Jamie told us that when he was younger, the focus from social work was very much about his parents challenges and difficulties. But at some point, he quite distinctly remembers the problem then became him. And that was his perception that he was the problem. He had a really unsettled time in school and he was excluded. He was disruptive in class. In the terms of his case notes, challenging and disruptive. He had an offence in 2017, when he was about 12-13 years old. I'm referred to EEI (Early and Effective Intervention). That was diverted back to education. But understandably, given the challenges he had with education, it wasn't necessarily the best solution at that time, in terms of what was going to work to support Jamie, with him engaging with professionals. Unfortunately, COVID then kind of impacted things. And for a period of time between 2020 and 2022, there was a lack of agency oversight as a result of lockdown. And as a result of Jamie, at that time, not necessarily meeting the thresholds for intervention.

What we saw in 2022, was a real escalation. And on one particular day, Jamie was charged with 30 offences linked to robbery, theft, and possession of drugs. So, between 2017 and 2022, we didn't really hear much about Jaime and what was going on for him. But we knew all of these vulnerabilities existed for him as a young child. So, skip ahead to 2022. And in one day, he's charged with a number of these offences. So arguably, you would say that there's been a lot of ongoing intelligence gathered on Jamie for him to be charged with these offences in one day. He was referred to the Crown Office as a result of these offences. And when we looked into some of the case files and records on Jamie, the language used certainly did not support a focus on exploitation. He was seen as a perpetrator in the language talked about involvement in crime, choosing to be involved and very victim blaming. The concerns continued for Jamie, and unfortunately, he became associated with a serious organised crime group. And he was continuously absconding and there was a real strain on the family that resulted in a family relationship breakdown, where he was then living between who we would believe as different exploiters. If we fast forward then a few months on that there was a threat to life notice, issued to Jamie as he tried to move away from his involvement. At that point, Jamie told us, I'm more concerned about receiving this threat to life and what that means for me than the threat of not delivering the activity for the exploiters that he's dealt with. So that demonstrated the level of threat and intimidation and violence that this group were using against Jamie. So, in terms of Jamie's story, I think it's quite evident from this, that this is an exploited child. However, when we looked at the previous slide, would anybody have assumed that this was the extent of what was going on for him? I'm not overly convinced. And it's easy - I think we do all too often - where we piece everything together after the event. So, Jamie's quite clearly been harmed and abused by exploiters. And it's clear to see now, however, there are various touch points where we could have intervened at an earlier point and potentially in a different way to get a different outcome. So, I appreciate that's all very negative, and I will talk about some of the positives in terms of responses. But I think you know that Jamie is one of 1000s of children that we're trying to support and that we see these challenges time and time

again. And that largely comes down to the fact that we don't have a national strategy in terms of how to tackle child criminal exploitation. I'm yet to go into a multi-agency meeting where there's not the absolute will of all the professionals involved to try and find a solution to protect children who are being exploited. I think we're all trying our very best in terms of finding a solution to this. But ultimately, it all boils down to well, who has the responsibility and who's accountable, who owns and leads this? We are all responsible. And that's obviously the title of the webinar. However, when we're dealing with a child who needs protection through child protection measures, but is also going through the criminal justice system, because they've committed criminal offences, there is a disconnect between those two systems. And so, we need to be really clear about how we share information and thinking not only just what information is shared, but how is it shared? And what language are we using when we're sharing that information? Because if we think about Jamie, if we had used different language to say that this is a young person that has been exploited by serious organised crime, rather than involved in criminality, choosing to be involved, associated to serious organised crime, you can see how that feels very different in terms of having a child centred approach. Because it is really complex in terms of the level of risk that we're dealing with. And often, I think it's quite tempting to think about what more can we add in, in terms of trying to reduce the risk, rather than thinking about well, what are the kind of core components that's going to support this young person? And are we as a partnership, willing to kind of sit and manage this risk for a period, recognising that exploitation isn't a one-off event, it's a journey. Children and exploited into this. And therefore, we need to spend a bit of time thinking about how we then support them to come out of that. So that is a journey in itself as well. And I have put in here that the challenge is how we think about the wider systemic issues. And, you know, I know that it's kind of blue sky thinking that we could change the world and address poverty and do all these things. But we need to aspire to these things, if we're going to have a kind of holistic approach to tackling criminal exploitation.

So then, in terms of what works. What we know works, is really quite simple in a lot of ways, but not always necessarily easy to achieve. So, we know that relationships are what young people say to us are crucial, and helping them move away from their exploiters. But it's also the thing that leads to them being exploited in the first place. So, exploiters, build relationships with young people that say, you can trust me, I've got your best interests at heart. You know, I've got your back. We then as professionals come into their life and say, you can trust us, we've got your best interests at heart. You know, we've got your back. So how do they negotiate that? How do they decide, well, who has been true here, and who do I believe? When exploiters are spending the majority of their time with our young people, and we're only spending an hour or two a week, then there's a clear imbalance there. So, we need to be not necessarily overloading children with services, but thinking who the children have positive pro social relationships with that we can tip the balance tip the balance, that they're spending more time in a company with people that are positive in their lives, and people that are likely to exploit them. And the role of lived experience

is really significant here. Within Action for Children, we employ mentors with relevant lived experience, who can relate to our young people, that can not only relate and help them to move through their journey of exploitation, but help us as professionals understand some of the challenges that these young people are facing - how they might interpret what we're trying to suggest in terms of best practice and how that might look for them. And just get alongside them and give them a sense of hope and optimism that, yes, they're involved in this now that there is an alternative future for them. And that is really about the core components about relationship-based practice. But then the system needs to play into this as well. So are we robust in terms of our risk practice and, as a workforce, are we confident in identifying, assessing and responding to child criminal exploitation? And to do that we need to make sure that we're doing this with children and not to them, so making sure that if we're applying approaches such as contextual safeguarding or child protection processes that we are involving children and families as equal partners within all of this.

There's only a few slides left. But I want to come back to Jamie's story. And I have toyed with this slide - taking it in and out numerous times, because it is a really busy slide. And it's quite complex. But I think that then just articulates and visualises, the fact that this is a really complex area of practice. And so it shouldn't be straightforward that we see, in order to prevent a child being exploited, we do X Y, Z. I think if it was that easy, we certainly wouldn't all be sitting on this webinar today. But in terms of various touch points for Jamie, of where we could have intervened, it's fairly simple in the sense of if we'd identified the vulnerabilities and addressed them at an early stage, as we all know, early intervention is the key. But we also know that that's not to say that if we identify exploitation further down the line that we can't achieve very successful outcomes. We have and we do. But it's making sure that as a multi-agency partnership, we're all agreeable, as to what child exploitation is, how we can identify it, how we talk about it, how we share information about it, and then how we respond to it. Donna, from CYCJ (Children and Young People's Centre for Justice), and myself are currently writing a national framework for practice recognising how challenging this area of work is. And when we looked at it, we saw that there was a number of different policies, frameworks and bits of legislation where child criminal exploitation cuts across. And so, unless, you know, my role, obviously, I'm immersed in this every day. But if you're not, that's really difficult to think what parts of this framework, this policy, this bit of legislation do I pull on, in terms of supporting this young person? And equally, how do we make sure that we're not only just focusing on the children that are being exploited? What about the perpetrators causing this harm in the first place? So, we've developed this, are currently in the final process of developing this, national framework which we hope, will pull together the key strands for practitioners in Scotland to help them identify, assess and respond to criminally exploited children.

And I just kind of want to finally touch on the Jay Review, which Heather mentioned at the start, in her introduction. And just a bit of a history about how we got to the point of getting to the review of child criminal exploitation chaired by Alexis Jay. And that was following a review of a number of serious

safeguarding incidents that we looked at in Action for Children where we recognised that these children were coming to significant harm, but also causing significant harm to others as a result of that exploitation. And we looked at it mainly on the basis to make sure that as an organisation that we were addressing the needs of these young people in the best way we possibly could. But what became quite apparent is that, as I've said before, that we were certainly doing everything we possibly could within Action for Children to try and protect and support these children. And so it was the multi-agency partnership that we were working with in each of the areas, and we work across Scotland, England and Wales with the service. And we knew that there was the commitment from professionals, but we were becoming stuck. And we were becoming stuck with the system in terms of was it fit for purpose in supporting children who were being exploited? Or were we trying to fit exploited children into a system that didn't see them as victims who can commit criminal activity. So, the Jay Review then over a series of four days in November last year, we heard evidence from 70 different organisations, and came out with 150 recommendations. So, what we managed to do is whittle those down into three key pillars. And those recommendations centre around the development of a new legal code that's designed to tackle the criminal exploitation of children. So that's increased powers to tackle perpetrators who cause harm to children, as well as new legal orders or the suggestion of to protect children who are exploited. The second pillar looks at policy and practice, and is calling the UK Government to develop a national strategy for preventing the criminal exploitation of children. As we've said during this discussion that we don't have a national strategy. So, what often happens is local partnerships, develop their own responses and often really great responses. But without that kind of national kind of oversight and direction in terms of where we should be going with this, it's really hard to quantify the issue. So, we don't have a consistent way of recording how many children are exploited across the UK. We don't understand, in terms of cross border issues, how different jurisdictions are working because it's not co-ordinate and joined up enough. And in terms of local safeguarding arrangements, often when we're engaging with different authorities they're saying, Well, what is examples of best practice, because we don't really have a benchmark, we don't really have something that's kind of navigating us and helping us to implement a child criminal exploitation strategy. And given the severity of this issue, we really should have that. And the final pillar, that the recommendation looked at was about investment, research and whole system learning. Because if we don't know enough about this in terms of what what's working, how can we do better? And we need better investment for specific dedicated services, but also around research so we can understand better how to support children who are being exploited. So, I just want to end on this slide, because I know there's been quite a lot of information. And I'll kind of leave this up for a couple of minutes for people to digest in case it helps them kind of formulate their thinking around it. But essentially, if we're looking at a response in terms of how do we respond collectively to children that are being exploited, we need to think about identification, our practice response. We need to make sure the child is at the centre of all of this, and that we have the system that supports us in terms of the legal code, the policy and the practice that

everything flows together in terms of a whole system approach to tackling criminal exploitation. So that was kind of what I wanted to talk about in this discussion. And I know Heather may want to draw out some key themes within that. The final slide that I've got here, and I would ask if anybody is able to scan the QR code and fill in this survey, it's really about understanding from a practitioner's perspective, what their kind of knowledge is how we can look to develop practice around criminal exploitation following the Jay Review, because we're very mindful that the review has shone a light on what the issues are around child criminal exploitation, but we still have a long way to go. We want to make sure that we keep gathering relevant evidence as we're moving through time and not just focusing on the evidence that we gathered last year, because things constantly change and evolve. So having this survey will really help us if anybody has the time to fill that in. And also afterwards, we'll make sure that the link is also sent out as well. If anybody's having problems there with the QR code.

Heather Ottaway

Thank you so much, Sharon. What a fascinating presentation. And so much to talk about and so much to unpick and I think I was particularly struck around that change of language to vulnerability and how powerful that actually is in terms of how we think about supporting children. So, we're going to move to the next part of the webinar, which is the discussion. And we're going to be also joined by Deanna Nielsen, who's Director of Safeguarding Action for Children, and Donna McEwen who is Practice Development Advisor at the Children and Young People's Centre for Justice (CYCJ). Donna isn't feeling too well today, so we have reassured Donna that will only bring you in when, when absolutely needed. And thank you so much for being here. My first question is, is to what extent do we adequately protect children who are being criminally exploited at the moment?

Sharon Maciver

So that's a good question. And I think just following on from what I've said during the presentation, is that I'm always struck by the commitment and dedication of practitioners working with criminally exploited children on the ground, to support and protect them. And there's always the willingness to do that. But often, it's that issue around where do we become stuck? And often, it's in cases where there's the most serious concerns around risk, where we know at this point, children have been harmed and abused. And it's thinking about what where do we go next and that is some of the challenges that we saw when we looked at the system in depth, we saw that the system really doesn't have a place for children who are exploited but also engage in an illegal activity. And that's a constant debate - do we see children as criminals? Or do we see them as victims of exploitation? And it's something that I talk about a lot in terms of that debate. But actually, we should be stopping that debate, we shouldn't be having the debate in first place, because children are victims of exploitation. And so again, it's what you were saying about language and how we change the language around it that children are coerced into committing illegal activity as a result of that exploitation.

Heather Ottaway

Thank you. Deanna?

Deanna Nielsen

Thanks, Heather. I just want to fill in about Action for Children's annual safeguarding review that we've just done, where we survey practitioners on the frontline and children and young people. And in terms of your question about where we see good practice, I think it's sometimes on a locality basis, where services take the opportunity to understand what's going on for children and young people in their environment, even if it's those services that are not ostensibly working with exploitation. So, they'll find out, for example, that young people are really concerned about the state of their neighbourhood, the lack of things to do. And I think when doing that type of kind of contextual analysis, it helps us to sort of understand what's happening to children and young people on a daily basis where they live. And then services can take action in a preventative way.

Heather Ottaway

That's really helpful Deanna. And it leads me to my next question, which is about what helps children who are most at risk of criminal exploitation and both touched on it. Sharon, you touched on it in your presentation, but what's your sense of what most helps, and I would probably add when as well.

Sharon Maciver

I think the 'when' sits more with professionals. So, we know what helps children, in terms of intervention, is early intervention. So, we know the point when we intervene when children kind of present with those vulnerabilities. If we identify that at an early stage, we can get in there and try and divert them from potentially having any engagement with exploiters. And if they do have early engagement with exploiters, we can divert them positively away from that. However, once exploited, I think it's quite different in terms of what young people would tell us that they want, and that they talk about. And it's more about the qualities of a relationship. So, they talk about people having patience, being able to build trust, being able to kind of turn up day in and day out and recognise that things will go wrong, and that they need to keep trying. And it always sits in my mind that a young person had said, what they really valued with their peer mentor was, if they mucked it up was their words one day, that their mentor would just come and say, well, okay, let's start again tomorrow. And that ability to not, you know, focus on the history in terms of everything that happened, but just take each day as it comes. Because often children will say, you know, there's parts where they won't acknowledge that exploitation, but there's absolutely times where they will want to move away from this lifestyle. And it's making sure that, that those relationships are there to surround the child at the point where they want to move away and support them to do that. Tragically, that's often at points of crisis. So, making sure that services are flexible and adaptable to respond to those crises. So, whether they've been harmed, they've been arrested, a member of the family has been threatened, for

example, they may seek outside support services. So that ability to respond and adapt to that, but relationships are the key for young people in terms of what they see works for them.

Heather Ottaway

Absolutely. Deanna, do you want to come in? I saw you nodding a lot. Did you want to come in there at all?

Deanna Nielsen

No, nothing really to add, Heather, but just I think what came out of the Jay Review with young people and families giving evidence was the fact that people that want to exploit children are very persistent. They respond very quickly to the needs of children. And we have to get better. In some ways. It's a real challenge, I think.

Heather Ottaway

Yeah, absolutely. Linked to that, the review talked about a welfare first approach. And I saw that on the diagram as well around the management of offences committed by exploited young people. What might that welfare approach look like?

Sharon Maciver

So, I think it's a combination of a lot of the areas I touched on in the presentation. It's about how we perceive children to start with, how we talk about them, the language that we use to describe what they're involved in. But also then making sure that we have relevant legislation here that we can use for children, but it's not used well enough at this point. So, we've got the human trafficking and exploitation Scotland Act. And within that there's the Lord advocate's instructions, around the presumption against prosecution for children. And within that the language is helpful if we all adopted it to talk about children don't need to consent to their exploitation, that in terms of describing what exploitation can look like, that trafficking doesn't necessarily need to be cross border, that it can be within localities. If we're looking for this to be welfare first, we need to make sure that we're using what we've got. So, what have we got in terms of policy and legislation? And how can we make sure that everybody is aware of what's available at the tips of our fingers, if you like to support children? But, also making sure that in our approaches to that, we are coordinated - in the absence of a statutory definition that partnerships are agreeable about what child criminal exploitation looks like for them? But also, then how do we include children and young people in responses? So, with children we often develop, or we do with all children, a contextual safeguarding risk assessment when they're referred to us, where they engage in that. So, they talk to us about where they feel safe, where they don't feel safe, what relationships they identify as healthy for them or not healthy. And we work with them to try and, you know, work together to find a solution to this, and how we can communicate that with partners. Because if they feel part of the plan, they're much more likely to engage in that. That's never about saying they've got to acknowledge their own exploitation. We never put that stipulation on young people recognising they're not likely to, to acknowledge that.

Heather Ottaway

Thanks, Sharon. Donna, do you want to come in?

Donna McEwan

Yeah, I'll try. I think it's good just to say that this is all grounded in GIRFEC (Getting It Right For Every Child). And you know, it's the Scottish policy, Getting It Right For Every Child, that's the welfare approach. Our Children's Hearing System is embedded in the principles of Kilbrandon. And I think it is really important that's always the starting point for any child. And then I think we have the advancement of the whole system approach as well and the continuum of responding to children who come in contact or conflict with the law. And quite often, as Sharon has already highlighted, that's the first point that we often recognise a child has been criminally exploited. So, we have a basis and a foundation that's embedded in Scotland of a welfare approach to children, and children that come into contact or conflict with law. So, the rest of this should be building layers upon that, but everything should be coming back to it, and we've just got the passing of the Children's Care and Justice Bill, we have the implementation of UNCRC from the 24th of July. So, within Scotland, we have a really rich opportunity to take forward that approach, particularly for children that have been criminally exploited.

Heather Ottaway

Thank you, Sharon - Donna - Sorry. And I think that that leads me on to the next question, which is about the framework that you're developing, as within the context of UNCRC and GIRFEC, but also the practitioner guidance on criminal exploitation, which was published last year, what will your framework do that is different or moves things on and specifically looks at children and the needs of children.

Sharon Maciver

So, as you mentioned, Heather, the National Guidance on Child Criminal Exploitation was published last year by Scottish Government. And that was a piece of work that Donna and myself were involved in through the Divert Workstream as part of the Organised Crime Task Force. And what we identified from that is the guidance was the kind of starting point, that it described what child criminal exploitation and criminal exploitation as a whole, what that looks like. But it was about children and vulnerable adults. And so we wanted to make sure that we have something more for practitioners, that I think I mentioned that there's a raft of policies, frameworks, bits of legislation that's applicable to exploited children, but how do agencies make sense of that and how do they then apply it? And what we were seeing across the board was real kind of mismatch in terms of what was being used and how and when. And that wasn't, you know, it wasn't that anybody was doing it wrong. But it was just about people making best use of their own interpretation and understanding of what exists. So with the framework, what we've tried to do is kind of pull the key elements out of all of those different frameworks, policies, bits of legislation into one, hopefully accessible, easy to understand and digest document that

practitioners can use to help them as a partnership or as an individual agency to identify exploitation, how to assess the kind of challenges associated with it, and think about their responses to that. So, in no way is that kind of mandating what areas and partnerships should do. It's all about guiding best practice. And with that, what we want to then do is pilot the framework with a number of different local authorities and get an understanding of is this framework helpful for them? Are there things that are missing within that? Is there specific tools that they feel could help them in practice and develop over the course of the next year? A toolkit that'll sit next to that? What's the view hopefully next year that we can roll that out nationally, and all local authorities.

Heather Ottaway

That's so good to hear. And I think that will be incredibly helpful in what we're all acknowledging, this morning, is such a complex area. And I'm going to move away a little bit into something a bit different, which is about: just wondering about what the help and support that parents and carers have said they need and they're looking for?

Sharon Maciver

Yeah, we support a lot of parents and carers, in terms of children who are exploited. And one of the striking things I think that often changes things for parents is when we help them to understand that their child's behaviour isn't a deliberate act, it's not them choosing to go out and not come home when they should do, it's not them choosing to be aggressive and violent in the home, or to take drugs into the home. They are exploited. So, often we will receive referrals, for example, for children, where their placement of home is very unstable, that they may be in residential care. And there'll be a number of challenges around that. And parents will say, you know, the police are coming to my door all the time, you know, I'm sick, fed up with them challenging me and they don't listen to the rules and boundaries that I'm putting in. And they feel completely powerless. However, when we shift that balance to help them understand that this is about exploitation, and granted that you are a very important relationship in their life. But if it's a case of breaking the rules that you have around a curfew of coming in at 10-11 o'clock at night, or the threats of violence that are coming from the exploiters, it's understandable why they're making these decisions, and also helping them to see that they're absolutely active partners in supporting this, that whilst they feel very powerless in terms of the harm being caused their children in the community, that if we empower them to think about the stronger the relationship is with you at home, the less likely they're going to have those needs met by exploiters in the community that almost gives parents a role that they feel I can't control a lot of this that's going on here. But actually, I can control what's going on at home. So reframing things supporting parents. But I have to say a lot of the work that we do is meeting children and families' very basic needs, which is quite tragic, so often that we will have to do - before we even start any work around exploitation - making sure they have their basic needs met. Because if there's drug debts within families that they might be trying to pay off themselves, can they afford their food? Do they have the right, some of them don't even have beds, you know, their windows might have been smashed as a result of threats and intimidation, it's addressing all of those

things to create a sense of safety, that then allows parents to engage with us. And that's often the starting point when children won't engage with the service or won't engage with us, that we can engage with parents or family members alongside that.

Heather Ottaway

Thanks, Sharon. I just want to check in with Deanna and Donna whether you want to add anything to that.

Deanna Nielsen

I think that was a really good point. I was going to talk about the results of the annual safeguarding review again about the extreme poverty and hardship that families sadly find themselves in, in the UK. And one of the other things that emerged was about the number of children that are waiting for either mental health treatment or treatment for learning difficulties and some kind of very complex conditions. And I think parents want the needs of their children met as early as possible, really, because these are some of the key vulnerabilities that can lead to exploitation.

Heather Ottaway

Thanks, Deanna. I'm going to ask you all one last question before we move on to questions from people that are attending the webinar today. And that is, what one thing could people attending the webinar today do to help support action against the criminal exploitation of children?

Sharon Maciver

Good question. One thing that people could do, I think, come together, I would say as a partnership. Come together to consider, as to those three questions, what do we know about children that are being exploited? What do we not know, in areas about children that are exploited? And how does that impact our ability to safeguard them? Because if we understand the communities that these children are living in, and the harms that they could potentially experience we're going to identify earlier, we're going to have a more robust response to that. And we'll hopefully have a better outcomes. So I would focus on the multi-agency partnership coming together and agreeing their response.

Heather Ottaway

Thanks, Sharon. Donna?

Donna McEwan

I would just add to be curious. And to have this as something that's in your, your lens or your visor, that you think about what might be happening for a child. And I think to also remember that the indicators of child criminal exploitation, or the potential indicators, are indicators of many other difficulties that children face. So, it might not be an indicator of criminal exploitation. But if you're open, and you're thinking about that, at least you could then rule that out, rather than not actually have that understanding. So, I think be curious, be open, trust your skills as a practitioner and know the indicators of things that are not going well for children, maybe child criminal exploitation, as well as other things.

Heather Ottaway

Thanks, Donna. That's so helpful. Deana?

Deanna Nielsen

No, nothing else. For me, really, I think, following on from what Donna said, it's all about people feeling confident, isn't it, in their work with children. When they know, children well, to be able to kind of be that curious person, and then put forward what they think is going on to the network.

Heather Ottaway

And it goes back through what you were saying, Sharon, to about relationship-based practice, and having the time and space to develop those relationships in whatever capacity you're working with people in. Okay, we've had quite a lot of questions through - thank you so much for the questions that you've been asking. We've got a little bit of time to think about them now. I'm going to focus on questions that pick up on things that we've not already discussed, or that extend things that we've discussed already in the first two parts of the webinar. So first question is someone saying that they're interested in the approach and consideration for older young people and adults who themselves have been abused and exploited throughout their lives and then become involved in the exploitation of other children or young people for a range of reasons. They're asking about legal powers. So should legal powers be used to address this through that lens of perpetrators when, as we've all been talking about today, they are also considered as vulnerable too, and victims?

Sharon Maciver

Yeah, that's a brilliant question. And something that we've grappled with, as we've talked about the development of new legal orders, and how we will protect children or older adolescents, older adults that, as you say, have been exploited or may still be exploited, but are then exploiting others. And it is a challenge in terms of how we would identify that and respond accordingly. I suppose my view on that is that if we don't have a response in terms of trying to disrupt perpetrators that we're going to continue to see more and more children being exploited. And again, it all comes down to how we assess and understand each individual's experience of exploitation, and how we can communicate those messages when we're thinking about the application of various different parts of legislation.

Heather Ottaway

Thanks, Sharon. Deanna or Donna, would you like to come in there?

Donna McEwan

I agree with Sharon, it is an aspect, and I think that the further, somebody perhaps moves away from their own exploitation, that that can shift our assessment and our response to them that it becomes much more punitive and much more justice focused. Unfortunately, I wish I did, but I don't have the answer for this one. But I think we have to keep challenging the current legal position or understanding. And I think that's where the more minds involved in this work, will help us evolve that response in that approach. So, I'm sorry, I don't have an answer. But hopefully, we'll get there.

Heather Ottaway

Thank you, Donna. Linked to that, someone else is asking about do you think there can be learning from what we've learned in working alongside children who display harmful sexual behaviour in so much as there's both vulnerability and behaviour that can cause harm?

Sharon Maciver

Yeah, and I think they can coexist. And that's what we're seeing in terms of criminal exploitation, that children can possess vulnerabilities and cause harm. With exploitation, I think what we're seeing as children will cause harm as a result of that exploitation. And what I referenced was about the associated harms. So, this is also a very complex area of practice, where we've had young people that have been exploited into criminal activity, but then perhaps committed a serious violence offence. Now, how can we say that that's a child exploited to commit that? We can't necessarily in terms of having the relevant evidence around that. But what we can do is provide context, whether that's to the Procurator Fiscal or whoever, around a child is being exploited. And as a result of that, they may have then gone on to commit another criminal offence. So, I think it is difficult, and I think there are crossovers between how we would support children. Donna, you might have more to add to that.

Donna McEwan

I was just going to say, I think, yeah, let's not reinvent the wheel. Let's use what we already know. And I think the particular shift around CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation) off the back of Rotherham probably is the big one in everybody's head. But that shift and how we look at the people that are harming and abusing our children, and framing this very strongly as child protection. This is child abuse. And I think it's also that wider contextual, sorry, the wider societal messaging as well, that the shift in language that Sharon has highlighted - that children cannot consent to their own exploitation. Whether they benefit from it or not, is actually, completely irrelevant. So how do we support everybody to shift the understanding that criminal exploitation is child abuse, and that's how it should be responded to. So, I think there's lots of learning from CSE, there's lots of processes - contextual safeguarding, for example - developing out of that transitional safeguarding. So how we use what's there, but we continue to build on it and think about the nuances for CCE (Child Criminal Exploitation), that maybe what we do already know, maybe just doesn't quite hit the mark for that. But lots to take forward from it.

Heather Ottaway

Thanks, Donna. Deanna, did you want to come in and I was going to bring you in a little bit too about contextual safeguarding specifically.

Deanna Nielsen

Thank you, I suppose just to say if we understand the context of a child or young person causing harm, or offending, I guess that helps law enforcement colleagues to be even more preventative and understand why these things are happening, doesn't it? So, in terms of a whole system response, I think,

understanding that context, as Sharon has said, is really important. One of the things that also came out of our annual safeguarding review in Action for Children was about a need to kind of equip practitioners a little bit better in terms of contextual risks and how to manage those. So one of the things we are recommending is for all services, working with children and young people, they start to engage in things like contextual risk assessments: what I said of you earlier about surveying children and young people about what's going on in their lives and communities, and how to do things like peer mapping, the different kinds of elements of contextual risk assessments that can be really, really useful.

Heather Ottaway

Thank you, that's really helpful. Building on that, too, we've had another question about has exploitation been more prevalent in Scotland since the increased age of criminal responsibility, and are you concerned about a further increase in age of criminal responsibility with limited to no legislation to protect these children? And that was the question.

Sharon Maciver

I don't think there's been an increase, I think that the level of exploitation is great anyway in Scotland. And that, obviously is a concern for all of us. But if we're talking about, you know, for me, I suppose what I'm thinking about here is we're asking, has there been an increase as a result of the age of criminal responsibility? So, for me, we're talking about how have we been able to identify it in terms of criminalising children. But as the focus of this, what we're trying to suggest is that we should be seeing these children as victims and avoiding the criminalization of children who are exploited. So that would kind of be my stance on that. Donna, I don't know if you have anything further to add?

Donna McEwan

Sorry, I'm just struggling a little bit. I'm not concerned about the increase in the age of criminal responsibility. I think as Sharon's highlighted, we do have different ranges of policy and legislation that's in place, I suppose it's about, we need to be able to recognise evidence that Criminal exploitation is occurring in order to then take action against the people who are exploiting our children. The legislation under the Trafficking Act TEPOs (Trafficking and Exploitation Prevention Order) and TEROs (Trafficking and Exploitation Risk Order), whether somebody's at risk of exploiting or trafficking somebody or whether they actually have, we just don't know. The data that's around in terms of how you know, that is being taken in relation to children that have been criminally exploited. So I think we have the legislation, I'm not concerned about the age of criminal responsibility increasing, I would wholeheartedly want it to increase way beyond what most people were probably comfortable with. But that's a different seminar. And I absolutely agree with Sharon that this is a really strong opportunity to not criminalise our children. So, I'm wholeheartedly for that. But I'm not concerned about that. I think it's more about improving recognition, using what we have better and understanding that if we do need something additional, then creating the evidence base for what that additional legislation should be. You can't legislate yourself out of everything. So, we have to change practice, opinions and viewpoints as well.

Heather Ottaway

Thanks, Donna. And that beautifully segues into another question, which is someone is saying they're interested in your ideas about how to support local authorities to actually implement good practice guidelines. The person is saying often I feel the intent is there, but the resources and adequate workforce numbers just aren't. If these issues aren't addressed, and it's very difficult to provide the support and intervention children and young people deserve. Deanna, do you want to come in first?

Deanna Nielsen

I was just typing out an answer to that question, actually, because I think it's a really, really good one. And I think, yes, local authorities are struggling very much under the weight of kind of budget cuts to prioritise early help and prevention. But I think that's the kind of key strategy really, to have an early help and preventative strategy that looks to consider families and what they're experiencing a range of kind of help services there, but also very much for young people. It's got to include young people and their individual needs as well as families' needs. And we need to make early help something easy for families, to have a kind of the Strengthening Families perspective, rather than something that kind of punishes families coming forward for help. So it's all about the way that services are designed and how we reach families and how we make it easy for us to be reached.

Heather Ottaway

Thanks, Deanna. Donna, I'm going to give you a break. Sharon, do you want to come back in?

Sharon Maciver

I suppose with the framework, what we were trying to do with that, and we hope we will achieve is making it fairly easy for local authorities to think about, what have they already got in place to protect vulnerable children? And does that need to be slightly adapted for criminally exploited children or is what they already have fit for purpose? And that's why we're piloting the framework across a number of authorities for us as well as local authorities to take stock and understand what exists in terms of best practice. I would say children have talked us in terms of what they require. What they talk about is having time with professionals having, you know, a dedicated person that they can call their own to help them through this journey is really helpful. So obviously, I'll always advocate for specialist services around this area. However, there is lots that local authorities and partnerships can do to work together to address the harms of criminal exploitation. Although it seems a really overwhelming and complex area of practice, we shouldn't be over complicating the response, we've got the response there through current child protection processes, it's just making sure that we're all completely on the same page in terms of understanding what we're dealing with, with criminal exploitation and making small adaptations.

Heather Ottaway

Absolutely, and it's interesting isn't it, because what I have in mind is some of the findings from our Children's Services, Reform Research (CSRR) about some of those challenges around being able to have and maintain those positive relationships in a workforce that is continuing to be depleted and exhausted, and with very high case notes. And I suppose it was also making me wonder are there things that you are recommending specifically that should happen on a national basis, as well as a regional and local level of that direct work?

Sharon Maciver

So first and foremost, we're recommending that we need a statutory definition that sits across all jurisdictions. So we have a common understanding of what exploitation is, because while, I suppose we all generally do have a sense of what criminal exploitation is, if we can't hold people to the definition to say this is exactly what we're talking about, we run the risk of certain agencies may be seeing it in a slightly different way. So having a kind of more punitive approach to others, for example. So that would be the kind of fundamental and then watch it flow down from there is the direction about how they should sit predominantly in the Child Protection space. And I think, you know, where we're at in Scotland is that child criminal exploitation originally sat with serious organised Crime, in terms of the serious organised crime strategy that was developed was the first strategy to talk about child criminal exploitation. So naturally, that sat predominantly with law enforcement. And we used to talk about children has been involved in organised crime. However, we've shifted that narrative now, which is great. And we need to continue to build on that to see children as the victims of exploitation, and that should sit within a child protection space, there's always going to be that connection with law enforcement, but we should be moving away from using police data to identify children that are being exploited. And too often we're relying on that, and we shouldn't be, we should be confident enough to identify it at an early stage. So that would kind of be the desire, I suppose that we see it firmly sitting within a child protection arena, with a strong link to law enforcement in terms of the disruption of perpetrators. And that coming together.

Heather Ottaway

Thanks, Sharon. And I just wanted to pick up on one of the things you said there, which is about one definition across the four nations of the UK, can you say a little bit more about why that's important?

Sharon Maciver

Largely because this is a cross border issue. So, children are being harmed within our communities, they are being trafficked out of our communities, to different jurisdictions, and certainly from my work in terms of having a kind of UK oversight, that we see children that are trafficked from Scotland, to England, to Wales, to even within Scotland to different parts of Scotland. So I think we need to have that common understanding in terms of a definition and then obviously, then to expand on that have a clear understanding of how different jurisdictions respond to children that are found within their localities and what to do about that, because that's another complex area of practice about how to

respond to children from England, for example, that might be found in Scotland, and Scotland with children that might have been found in England.

Heather Ottaway

And the complexity about some of those different legal systems, particularly that are around that, too.

Sharon Maciver

Absolutely. And it's difficult because with every jurisdiction, for them to completely understand the legal system in each area, nobody's going to be able to achieve that. I find it difficult enough in the role that I'm in. However, if we can have a kind of basic common shared understanding of how these systems work, and what are the responsibilities - and it's more about the responsibility of the jurisdiction if a child is found in their area rather than having to then think about the responsibilities if it's an English child, etc. etc.

Heather Ottaway

Thank you. Another question, which is about thinking about dedicated services and their availability. So, the person's asking, I'm interested in the idea of dedicated support services, I've had a very positive experience of dedicated support services. However, when I later worked in a much smaller local authority, I was very aware that those dedicated support services didn't exist. So how do we meet the needs of children and young people who live in smaller local authorities and I would say probably in the Scottish context, remote local authorities?

Sharon Maciver

It as a challenge, and obviously, I'm from a small remote local authority in terms of, you know, services available to children. And again, I keep coming back to this, it's about the strength of the partnership and how they're able to work together to identify it. I would say it does limit children who don't have access to services in that area as a result of rurality or, you know, funding cuts, lack of resources, and they are at disadvantage. However, that's not necessarily saying that they shouldn't receive the support that they require. But it might be that they don't have the kind of variety of services on offer to them that they may well do in in a bigger city. So, it is a challenge, but one that we need to address. And that was certainly a recommendation from the Jay Review, that there needs to be more investment in this area and more specific investment - we certainly see in the voluntary sector, a lot of investment around things like early intervention, and there might be kind of youth justice specific funding, but we rarely come across funding that talks explicitly about child criminal exploitation. So, for an area that seems so complex, and cuts across so many policy areas, as we keep seeing throughout this discussion, the lack of investment around this area is really problematic for areas that are looking to develop service specific responses. And it's layered, so the challenge is that we don't have consistent data about the nature and scale and extent of the problem. So, then we are asking for funding about it. So, then we are asked to quantify it, tell us why it is required, but we can't do that at this point. And then we're saying that we're developing national practice and a framework and we don't have a definition. So,

you can see how all of these different elements make it really difficult to provide dedicated services for children around exploitation. But I would hope, as you know, that we've got hundreds of people on the call today that are invested and willing to talk about child criminal exploitation, that as we continue to shout loudly about this issue that hopefully policymakers and investors will see the benefit of investing in this work.

Heather Ottaway

Thanks, Sharon. And I think there's also some really important things that you've all been saying in there about how relationships with children and young people and that reframing around vulnerability, and the day-to-day work that the practitioners do, and how that can support as well. As you say, having these seminars where it provides a space to talk and listen and reflect. Another question, we have got a lot of questions. And we've got a few minutes left so we'll try and get through a couple more. Someone's asking about intervention that can drop off suddenly and completely when young people turn 18. And the potential for them, obviously, to be seen and treated differently by the criminal justice system. And what would be your reflections about that?

Sharon Maciver

I think we see that too often for our children, and specifically children who may be kind of treading that line between, yes they are exploited children, but they're also exploiting younger children. And whilst we might try and hold on to them as victims, when they do turn 18, and they naturally then are picked up by the criminal justice system. It's a very hard change in terms of how they are responded to and something that, you know, young people will consistently say to us, you know, I wish I'd hadn't say that I want it to come off my supervision order. I wish that I had engaged in support that, I didn't realise the impact that this would have on me. So it is a real challenge and something that the practitioners talk a lot to us about, in terms of how do we then respond to children where we are trying to protect them and see them as victims, but then when they turn 18 naturally they also want to move away from services. So, as much as we try and protect them as children under 18, when they turn 18, there's a natural feeling of wanting to be seen as an adult. But equally, we don't want them to be treated as an adult in this circumstance. So, it is difficult and I would just echo the concerns that this person has raised that yeah, we do see it and it is a problem. I don't know if Donna or Deanna have any kind of reflections on how we should be doing that better.

Deanna Nielsen

Just to say it's very hard. And I agree with what you've just said, Sharon. And it can be about the pathways that exist, I think in a local authority for making that transition better for people, I think. Sorry, that's not much of a response. But I think it is definitely a very difficult area.

Donna McEwan

I think where you have children that are care experienced, that are entitled to ongoing support up to 25 (please excuse me, if I've got that wrong), then there is that transitional support. But I think where you have perhaps young people

that maybe don't meet that definition or criteria, or come into the system, just at that age of 18, that perhaps we have not been aware of, and they perhaps are more likely to go into the justice system as opposed to coming in through Children's Services. But I think that there's a strong recognition - we have the Sentencing Council guidelines for under 25s, that that young emerging adulthood phase does need additional supports. How that is progressing, and how we take that forward is certainly something that - thanks for the question, if you've got any ideas, then please stick them on a postcard to us or give us an email after the session. But I think that there is the recognition that that 18-25 age group certainly needs additional support. And UNCRC is quite clear as well that you should be trying to provide and uphold children's rights as children transition into that over-18 age group as well. So perhaps Scotland could lead the way in that one too.

Deanna Nielsen

Just to say a quick thing. As Donna was talking, it made me think about when in terms of the vulnerable adult sphere, you know, we do see vulnerable adults, sometimes being involved in different types of community settings, like religious organisations, for example. And I think those organisations I know, because I've given a speech at a conference quite recently to the church-based organisations and they're often very good at spotting financial exploitation of vulnerable adults. And so, I think the education of those groups is really, really important as to how that can be extended, and involve other types of exploitation as well. But I think sometimes we don't always reach all of the community-based organisations that we would want in terms of messages about criminal exploitation for adults.

Heather Ottaway

Thanks, Deanna. We're heading to be almost out of time. So, I'm going to just ask each of you to just make a final comment about something that you would like the people on the call today to think about or reflect on or takeaway. And I'm going to start with you Sharon.

Sharon Maciver

I think the one thing I would want people to think about is how they talk about exploitation and the criminal exploitation of children to think about the language that they use. And I suppose the title of this - now I'm going to branch into two things - the title of the webinar being a shared responsibility. So how do we talk about it? And how do we make sure that we're sharing that responsibility between us and not putting the responsibility on children to manage that exploitation?

Heather Ottaway

Thanks, very powerful. Thank you. Donna?

Donna McEwan

I'm afraid my brain is not quite working as good as it normally does. But I'll have a punt I think for me it is to really ask the question, to be curious about criminal exploitation in your own work, or the organization's you work with, challenge it, challenge other people to think about it as well. And not just respond in terms

of: it is a child involved in offending behaviour, most likely. I'm sorry, that's not very eloquent, but it's the bit you're getting this morning.

Heather Ottaway

Donna, just thank you so much for being there. And I think that that's something that we can really hold on to about being curious. Deanna?

Deanna Nielsen

Yeah, just a quick one to say, please consider using contextual safeguarding resources for children in a younger age group that you would normally use those resources for you.

Heather Ottaway

Thanks, everybody. So, we're coming to the end of the webinar now. Thank you so much, Sharon, Deanna and Donna. What a valuable session. So much food for thought that we can take away. Just as a reminder to everyone that this webinar has been recorded, and both the recording and the slides will be available and will be shared to the people on the mailing list for this webinar. And just to say, thank you so much everyone for attending and do keep an eye out for the next set of webinars in this series and have a have a good rest of the day.

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Useful Links

The Jay Review Report:

https://media.actionforchildren.org.uk/documents/Shattered_Lives_Stolen_Futures_Report_-_Full_Report.pdf

Current practitioner guidance in Scotland:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/practitioner-guidance-criminal-exploitation>

The Children and Young People's Centre for Justice's (CYCJ) scoping review of Child Criminal Exploitation: <https://www.cycj.org.uk/resource/understanding-child-criminal-exploitation-in-scotland-a-scoping-report>