

Intervention for UN Working Group on Trafficking in Persons: UK intervention on ICTGs and child modern slavery and trafficking trends

UK intervention to be made during agenda item 2: National Issues and priorities concerning child trafficking

Intervention (360 words):

START

- I would like to share an example of good practice from the United Kingdom in supporting child victims of trafficking through a government-funded guardianship service. In addition, I will highlight some child trafficking features and trends which have come to light through delivering this service.
- The Independent Child Trafficking Guardian (ICTG) service provides advice and support for potential child victims of modern slavery and trafficking, irrespective of nationality, and somebody to advocate on their behalf to ensure their best interests are reflected in the decision-making of the public authorities involved in their care. The support they provide is in addition to the statutory support provided to children by local authorities. It is currently delivered by Barnardo's, a national children's charity.
- To date, the UK Government has rolled out ICTGs to two thirds of local authorities in England and Wales (legislation provides for a separate but similar service in Scotland and Northern Ireland).
- Approximately 4,000 vulnerable children accessed the service from February 2017 to September 2022: 76% were male and 23% were female. Most experienced Criminal Exploitation as the primary exploitation type but children often experienced multiple types of exploitation.
- Evaluations of the service have been overwhelmingly positive: ICTGs are perceived to have a positive effect on children, improve trust with professionals and empower victims to support prosecutions.
- Through the delivery of the ICTG service, emerging child trafficking features and trends have been brought to our attention. For example:
 - Around 20% of children referred to the service are reported as having a disability and / or learning difficulties. Frontline workers have also observed possible undiagnosed disability and neurodiversity in exploited children. This indicates an area of vulnerability which traffickers can target.

- ICTGs report seeing an emerging criminal exploitation trend where children are trafficked out of the country to engage in criminality because they have a clean passport and travel documents, meaning they can leave and re-enter the country without detection.
- We continue to work with Barnardo's to better understand these trends and how we can adapt the service, where appropriate, to respond to them alongside other emerging themes.
- The UK Government remains committed to delivering a fully national ICTG service and intend to deliver it across all of England and Wales from 2025. We welcome collaboration from other Member States facing similar issues.

END

