Economic Note	Number: HO EN 1046
Title of regulatory proposal	Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
Lead Department/Agency	Home Office
Expected date of implementation	Autumn 2026
Origin	Domestic
Date	17/02/2026
Lead Departmental Contacts	CrimeandPolicingBillTeam@homeoffice.gov.uk
Departmental Assessment	GREEN

Rationale for intervention, objectives and intended effects

Existing laws on modern slavery and related offences are not consistently effective in dealing with child criminal exploitation (CCE), and police have highlighted practical barriers to securing prosecutions. A new standalone offence, supported by statutory guidance and civil preventative orders, aims to improve how victims are identified, strengthen early intervention to protect vulnerable children, and increase the number and quality of prosecutions against perpetrators. Overall, the intended effect is to provide a clearer, more consistent framework that recognises the specific harms of exploiting children and helps reduce the scale and impact of this abuse.

Policy options (including alternatives to regulation)

Option 0: 'Do nothing'. Police would continue to use existing legislation, such as the Modern Slavery Act 2015, inchoate offences under the Serious Crime Act (SCA) 2007 or existing civil preventative orders, to stop the criminal exploitation of children.

Option 1: Introduce a new, standalone offence of CCE, together with statutory guidance and civil preventative orders, to explicitly recognise CCE as a specific form of offending. **This is the government's preferred option.**

Costs and benefit summary

Total costs of the policy, discounted over 10 years, are estimated to be between **£18.3 million and £37.0 million, with a central estimate of £25.6 million.** This includes an annual ongoing cost of £3.3 million in the steady state, with total transition costs of £0.2 million when discounted over 10 years. It has not been possible to monetise the benefits of this policy due to insufficient data and evidence.

Risk

The risk is that due to limited available data on the prevalence of CCE and number of offenders, there is significant uncertainty in the estimated impacts.

Total Cost (£m PV)	**Transition Cost (£m Constant)**	**Cost to Business (£m PV)**	
£25.6m	**£0.2m**	**£0.0m**	
Total Benefit (£m PV)	**NPSV (£m PV)**	**BNPV (£m PV)**	**EANDCB (£m PV)**
N/A	-£25.6m	£0.0m	£0.0m
Price Base Year	**PV Base Year**	**Appraisal period (Years)**	**Transition period (Years)**
2026/27	**2026/27**	**10**	**5**

Departmental sign-off (*SCS*):	Caroline Hart	Date: 13/02/2026
Chief Economist sign-off:	Tim Laken	Date: 19/03/2026
Better Regulation Unit sign-off:	Emma Kirk	Date: 23/03/2026

Evidence Base

A. Policy objectives and intended effects

1. CCE is a form of child abuse where a child is exploited into taking part in criminal activity, often by criminal gangs. County Lines exploitation is one of the most recognised forms of CCE[1], whereby drug-dealing gangs manipulate and coerce children into drug running across the country, often exposing them to violence, threats and intimidation. It has a devastating impact on victims, subjecting them to a range of harms.

2. Depending on the facts of a particular case, there is existing legislation that may be used to prosecute CCE, such as section 1 (slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour) and section 2 (human trafficking) offences under the Modern Slavery Act 2015[2] (MSA 2015) and inchoate offences of encouraging or assisting crime in sections 44 to 46 of the Serious Crime Act 2007[3] (SCA 2007). Engagement with police identified some evidential challenges that they experience with applying existing legislation that can present obstacles to obtaining successful prosecutions against CCE. These relate to the fact that existing legislation does not address child criminal exploitation (that is, using children, intending that they commit criminality) as a specific form of offending. There is also a significant gap between the number of children known to social services with an assessment factor of being at risk of CCE[4], compared to the number of prosecutions against perpetrators under the MSA 2015 and inchoate offences under the SCA 2007. This supports the need for a specific offence to increase awareness of CCE, recognise the harm caused to the child, provide a strong deterrent and increase overall prosecutions and convictions for this activity.

3. The purpose of this policy is to introduce a standalone offence for CCE accompanied by statutory guidance and specific civil preventative orders which, as a package, will increase prosecutions against those perpetrating CCE, improve identification of victims and increase earlier intervention to help prevent offending and protect victims. The standalone CCE offence will criminalise the exploitation of a child by an adult for the purpose of using them in criminality and will be made out irrespective of whether the child goes on to commit the criminality. This legislation will apply across the UK.

4. It is possible that a standalone CCE offence and accompanying orders could also act as a deterrent to criminals. Engagement with police forces has suggested that criminals act in ways that aim to avoid them being labelled as child exploiters or human traffickers. Enhancing law enforcement's ability to charge individuals with such offences, coupled with increased penalties may reduce the likelihood of the recruitment of children.

B. Policy options considered, including alternatives to regulation

Option 0: Do-nothing

5. Under the 'Do-nothing' approach, the Home Office would make no legislative change, and (as now) depending on the facts of a particular case, CCE cases are likely to fall under the existing legislative framework of Modern Slavery and human trafficking under the MSA 2015 and be

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1 Exploited and Criminalised; Barnardo's https://www.barnardos.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-10/Exploited%20and%20Criminalised%20report.pdf
2 Modern Slavery Act 2015: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/30/contents
3 Serious Crime Act 2007: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/27/contents
4 Children in Need data 2025 (table C3): Create your own tables on children in need - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/children-in-need

prosecutable under sections 44 to 46 of the SCA 2007 (inchoate offences). Challenges with obtaining successful prosecutions against CCE would persist and there would be no specific offence that recognises the particular harm involved in exploiting a child (rather than an adult) and no associated increase in awareness of CCE and subsequent improvement in the response to victims and perpetrators.

Option 1: introduce a standalone offence of CCE to explicitly recognise CCE as a specific form of criminality and to introduce CCE civil preventative orders designed to increase earlier intervention and stop offending or reoffending, together with statutory guidance

6. Introducing a specific standalone offence, together with civil orders and statutory guidance, would support increased prosecutions against child exploiters by increasing awareness and improving identification of victims and perpetrators. The orders will also better allow early intervention to protect vulnerable children, leading to benefits for those children at risk of CCE. **This is the government's preferred option.**

Non-regulatory options

7. Non-regulatory options were not considered as the government's manifesto committed to introducing a new offence of child criminal exploitation.

C. Past evaluations and rationale for government intervention

8. The rationale for government intervention is that depending on the facts of a particular case, while local police forces currently have the power to address the criminal exploitation of children using various existing offences and civil orders, such as under the MSA 2015, a bespoke framework would provide a more consistent and effective response, and seek to mitigate the existing evidential challenges under current legislation. Police forces and safeguarding bodies have asked for a specific offence of CCE, as this would send a strong signal about the harms of CCE and would deter criminals from including children in their criminal activities. The new offence will support a more consistent response by police and support services to victims and perpetrators across the UK. Additionally, the offence will provide reliable national Criminal Justice System (CJS) statistics that will allow for a better understanding of the scale of the issue.

   Criminal groups exploit children into criminal activity for their own benefit, with little or no regard to the harms caused to their victims, or the wider costs to society this entails. CCE is used in a range of crime types including dealing/transporting drugs or weapons (for instance for County Lines gangs), cannabis cultivation, theft and acquisitive crime, fraud, and serious violence. Criminally exploited children often experience multiple forms of abuse including violence and threats, emotional and sexual abuse, and debt bondage. The harm caused to victims can be particularly damaging including serious physical harm, long-term trauma, and entrapment in a cycle of criminalisation. This means there is a strong rationale for reducing CCE. This intervention will support the government's Safer Streets Mission[5] by reducing the risk of children being drawn into violent crime by gangs.

D. Appraisal

[5] Safer Streets - GOV.UK: https://www.gov.uk/missions/safer-streets

General assumptions and data

9. The impacts of the preferred option (Option 1) are relative to the counterfactual 'Do-nothing' (Option 0) baseline. This Economic Note (EN) quantifies the impact expected from the introduction of this legislation. The main costs estimated fall under the following categories: ongoing prison costs, probation costs, legal aid costs, and orders setup and appeal costs. Costs presented are in 2026/27 prices and have been discounted over a 10-year appraisal period. The appraisal period begins in 2026/27, and the policy is assumed to come into force in Q3 of 2027/28 and take until 2029/30 to reach full effectiveness.

10. There is an additional delay of one year assumed between the offence being committed and the completion of the court case due to the current delays in the CJS[6]. The data shows that the median duration from offence to completion for defendants dealt with at the Crown Court is 350 days. Figures 1 and 2 below summarise how the impacts of this legislation are incurred over time.

Figure 1: Demonstration of delayed CJS impact

2026/27	2027/28	2028/29 to 2029/30	2030/31 Onwards
Beginning of the Crime and Policing Bill's appraisal period. Estimated implementation of CCE legislation Autumnn 2026, there is no CJS impact in Year 1.	Following implementation, costs begin to be incurred in the middle of Year 2. One year of delays is assumed for all CJS impacts. This means no additional prison places are required in Year 2.	CCE policy increases in effectiveness, with an assumed 75 per cent effectiveness in Year 3 and 100 per cent effectiveness in Year 4. The first offenders from Year 2 are prosecuted and sentenced to custody in Year 3 following the CJS delays.	The steady state of charges and convictions for CCE is reached. Probation begins for the first batch of prisoners sentenced in Year 3, who are assumed to serve an average of 2 years in custody and released on licence at the start of Year 5.

Figure 2: Demonstration of delayed cost impact

2026/27	2027/28	2028/29 to 2029/30	2030/31 Onwards
Beginning of the Crime and Policing Bill's appraisal period. Familiarisation costs are incurred in Year 1, as individuals and organisations familiarise themselves with the legislation in preparation for implementation in Year 2.	CCE policy is implemented in the middle of Year 2. Due to the one year of delays to CJS impacts, no CJS costs are incurred in Year 2.	The first offenders are prosecuted and sentenced to custody in Year 3. This means that partial CJS costs for prison places, courts, legal aid and orders are incurred and increase from Year 3 to Year 4.	The steady state of charges and convictions for CCE is reached in Year 5. Probation costs are also incurred from Year 5 onwards and increase in Year 6. This means that Year 6 onwards represents the steady state for annual ongoing costs.

[6] Criminal Court Statistics; Q2 2025/26. Sourced here: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2025/criminal-court-statistics-quarterly-july-to-september-2025#timeliness

11. Under the 'Do-nothing' approach the Home Office would make no legislative change, and police would continue to use existing legislation such as section 1 (slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour) and section 2 (human trafficking) offences under the MSA 2015, and inchoate offences of encouraging or assisting crime in sections 44-46 of the SCA 2007[7], or existing civil preventative orders to stop the criminal exploitation of children. Therefore, in the baseline, existing prison places are based on two sets of proxy offences: offences under the MSA 2015, and inchoate offences under SCA 2007.

12. The estimates of additional prison places assume CCE offenders are already convicted for other related offences. The new CCE offence is not assumed to identify a new cohort of offenders, instead additional costs are based on additional time served for the CCE offence. This is estimated using the difference between the sentence lengths for Modern Slavery and Class A Drug Trafficking offences, which offenders would otherwise be serving. This difference provides the additional sentence length attributable to the CCE offence. It is then multiplied by the 33 percent time served under the new system proposed by the Sentencing Bill 2025[8] to estimate the additional time served, which is estimated at 0.5 years in the central estimate.

13. There are limited available data to assess the prevalence of CCE. To mitigate the uncertainty, three data sources have been used to estimate a range of impacts. These scenarios are compared to the baseline to estimate the overall impact of this policy. All three of these scenarios assume a 6 percent charge rate, 50 percent conviction rate, 58 percent prosecution rate and 71 percent custodial rate (the likelihood of receiving an extended period of custody), and that for all convictions, 33 percent of the sentence will be served in prison[9]:

    - **Children in Need (CiN) data** - the CiN prevalence data allows us to use a victim-based approach to estimating volumes of offenders, which can then be compared to existing outcomes data. Charge, prosecution and sentencing rates are applied to this prevalence data to estimate a number of offenders which then is used to produce a figure for annual sentences.
    - **Criminal Justice System (CJS) data** – this uses existing CJS data for inchoate offences and Modern Slavery to obtain the average annual number of prosecutions. Working backwards from these prosecutions by applying the prosecution and charge rates for Modern Slavery gives the number of Modern Slavery offenders. Charge, prosecution and sentencing rates are applied to give an estimate for annual sentences.
    - **Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) data** – this approach uses data on individuals who were proceeded against each year in cases linked to Modern Slavery. Using an estimated ratio of child victims (developed from National County Lines Coordination Centre (NCLCC) data) produces a number for offenders proceeded against for CCE. Applying a sentencing custodial rate (based on the average of Modern Slavery and Coercive and Controlling Behaviour), gives the annual custodial sentences.

14. An average of these three approaches is taken to produce a low, central and high estimate of the number of individuals sent to prison each year for CCE. The baseline is subtracted from the estimates to estimate the overall impact of implementing the legislation. Multiplying the additional number of individuals sent to prison each year by the additional time served gives an overall estimate of additional annual prison places required, these are shown in Table 1 below:

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7 Serious Crime Act 2007: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/27/contents

8 Sentencing Bill: progression measures factsheet - GOV.UK: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sentencing-bill-2025/sentencing-bill-progression-measures-factsheet

9 These assumptions are based off CJS statistics for comparable offences to CCE, including Modern Slavery, inchoate offence under the SCA 2007, and Coercive and Controlling Behaviour. These statistics are sourced from: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/criminal-justice-system-statistics-quarterly-june-2024

Table 1: Prison Place Summary

Sent to prison	Low	Central	High
CJS approach	64	97	130
CPS approach	73	113	166
CiN approach	104	111	116
Chosen range (average of approaches)	80	107	137
Baseline sent to prison	20	33	46
Additional custody	60	74	92
Additional time served	0.5	0.5	0.6
Additional prison places	**28**	**38**	**51**

Note: due to rounding some estimates may not sum correctly. This represents the additional prison places required from the introduction of the offence, not including places required for breaches of orders.

15. Due to current data limitations, replicating the approaches outlined above for Scotland and Northern Ireland is not possible. The CJS and CPS methodologies rely on data for England and Wales, while the CiN approach uses England-only data. To estimate impacts for the Devolved Nations, inputs have been upscaled using a population-based upscaling factor[10] to produce representative cost estimates. This method implicitly assumes that the modelling assumptions applied to England and Wales are also valid for Scotland and Northern Ireland. Table 1 above presents outputs accounting for the Devolved Nations.

16. These estimates are used to calculate the costs associated with additional prison places, court trials, legal aid, and probation services. They also underpin the assessment of prison place costs arising from breaches of orders. To do this, data from the CPS, CJS, and Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders are used to derive an order-to-prosecution ratio. This ratio is then applied to the prosecution estimates to produce an annual estimate of the number of breaches. Based on this approach, in the **central estimate breaches of orders** will result in the need **for two additional prison places**, with eight places in the upper estimate.

17. The **overall estimate for additional annual prison places** (including Scotland and Northern Ireland) is between 28 and 59, with **a central estimate of 40** (38 places for the offence and 2 for breaches of orders).

COSTS

Set-up costs: Familiarisation Costs

18. Individuals and organisations will be required to become familiar with the new legislation. The Secretary of State in practice, the Home Secretary will have a power to issue statutory guidance; if issued, there would be a duty on certain people to have due regard to such statutory guidance, such as the police and other applicant bodies. Legal professionals will also need to familiarise themselves with the legislation, and managers in support sector organisations working with vulnerable and exploited individuals may also read the legislation.

19. Total familiarisation costs associated with this legislative change are estimated to be between **£0.03 million and £0.4 million, with a central estimate of £0.2 million**.

[10] Raw data used to produce the population based upscaling factor - Estimates of the population for the UK, England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland - Office for National Statistics: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland

Ongoing costs: Prison Costs

20. The analysis estimates that in total between 28 to 59 additional prison places will be required per year as a result of the new offence and orders, with a central estimate of 40 additional places needed. This results in an ongoing annual cost of around **£0.6 million initially, rising to between £1.6 million and £2.0 million in steady state.** Over the 10-year appraisal period, this leads to a total discounted cost of between **£10.4 million and £22.2 million, with a central estimate of £14.9 million.** These costs are inclusive of the required prison places for both the new offence and the related civil orders.

Ongoing costs: Probation costs

21. The additional probation time for offenders is estimated using the difference between the sentence lengths for Modern Slavery and Class A Drug Trafficking offences, which offenders would otherwise be serving. Assuming 33 percent of the sentence, equivalent to 0.5 years, will be served in custody, the entirety of the remaining 67 percent is served on probation, that is, there is no proven re-offending or breach of probation.

22. The associated probation cost is calculated by multiplying the number of offenders sentenced to custody for a CCE offence by the additional probation time and then applying Ministry of Justice (MoJ) unit costs. The modelling accounts for a delayed impact, based on the average sentence length of 2.4 years for both the baseline and new CCE offence, resulting in an annual ongoing cost ranging between £100,000 to around £370,000 across the appraisal period in the central estimate. Over the 10-year appraisal period, this leads to a total discounted cost of between **£1.5 million and £3.1 million, with a central estimate of £2.1 million.**

Ongoing costs: Court and Legal Aid Costs

23. All additional CCE offenders are assumed to be convicted for another offence related to their CCE-linked offending. This means that in the absence of this new offence, these individuals would nonetheless be put on trial and incur court costs. There are **assumed to be no additional court costs** for the new CCE offence.

24. However, as offences for breaching the new CCE orders are assumed to be additional, breaches of these orders will incur additional court costs. Based on the **estimate of two breaches per year in the central scenario**, with an upper bound of 9 breaches, annual court costs are estimated to be negligible, with an upper-bound estimate of **£0.01 million** per year in steady state.

25. While individuals being tried for CCE are already being tried for another offence and would be in receipt of legal aid, there is an assumed increase in the average legal aid cost, given the potential complexity of this offence. Legal aid costs are estimated using the difference between the legal aid costs for Class A drugs supply and the unit cost for Modern Slavery, giving an annual costs **ranging between £0.9 million and £1.1 million across the appraisal period in the central estimate.**

26. Over the 10-year appraisal period, discounted court and legal aid costs are estimated to be between **£6.3 million and £10.0 million, with a central estimate of £7.8 million.**

Ongoing costs: Orders Costs

27. The costs associated with breaches of the new orders are included in the CJS costs outlined above. There will be additional costs associated with the setting up of new orders and for appeals against the orders. The assumed unit costs for CCE orders are based on those used in the Modern Slavery impact assessment[11] for Slavery and Trafficking Orders.

28. Based on the 200 (161 to 251) annual prosecutions that may lead to an order and an estimated order application rate of 8% to 35%, there will be between 13 to 88 CCE orders granted each

[11] The unit costs used for the CCE orders were based on the MS IA, sourced here: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7dfe3740f0b62302688791/MSB_IA.pdf

year, with a central estimate of 43. This gives an annual cost of between **£0.1 million and £1.3 million, with a central estimate of £0.6 million.**

Non-monetised costs: Special Measures

29. Individuals involved in certain cases are eligible to receive special measures if they are perceived to be vulnerable or at risk when testifying. These special measures will apply to victims in proceedings for the new CCE offence and orders, given that all the victims and a large proportion of witnesses will be children, and we are extending automaticity of special measures to victims in CCE proceedings. However, children are automatically eligible for special measures under the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act[12], and would already be in receipt of special measures in the baseline scenario. Following discussion with the MoJ, the Home Office agreed that the proposed offence would have a negligible impact on the costs of implementing special measures, so have not been monetised.

Non-monetised costs: Monitoring of orders

30. The new CCE orders may require some additional resourcing from police to monitor those subjects to orders. These costs have not been quantified due to the lack of data on existing orders, as these costs are resourced through wider police budgets.

Total costs

31. Table 2 below shows the breakdown of the costs of this policy, which, when discounted over 10 years, are estimated to be between **£18.3 million and £37.0 million, with a central estimate of £25.6 million.**

Table 2: Total costs across the appraisal period

10-year costs (£m; 2026/27 prices)	Low	Central	High
Familiarisation	0.03	0.17	0.44
Total transition	**0.03**	**0.17**	**0.44**
Prison ongoing	10.39	14.90	22.19
Probation Costs	1.47	2.11	3.14
Court and legal aid	6.28	7.82	9.97
Orders	0.15	0.56	1.27
Total ongoing	**18.29**	**25.39**	**36.57**
Total costs	**18.32**	**25.56**	**37.01**

Note: due to rounding some estimates may not sum correctly.

Benefits

Monetised Benefits

32. There were no identified monetised benefits for Option 1 due to the absence of available evidence.

Non-Monetised Benefits

Deterrence and early intervention

33. The proposed CCE offence and associated orders may create a deterrent effect for potential offenders. Engagement with police forces revealed that offenders in County Lines cases are often willing to accept a guilty plea for drug charges, to avoid a charge for offences related to exploitation, such as Modern Slavery charges. The creation of a specific offence and related

[12] Children are automatically eligible for special measures, as per the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 (legislation.gov.uk): https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1999/23/contents

orders for CCE may have a deterrent effect on some potential offenders who may be unwilling to be labelled as involved in child exploitation.

34. The new civil preventative orders may be able to prevent CCE conduct before it occurs or to prevent it from reoccurring. Civil preventative tools will allow the police to intervene earlier, stopping CCE conduct earlier, changing the behaviour and conduct of potential offenders and helping to protect child victims. There is no evidence available to quantify the magnitude of these effects.

Incapacitation

35. Under Option 1, it is assumed that some offenders will serve longer sentences as a result of being convicted for CCE. While incapacitation does not prevent all offending, as some offenders may continue limited criminal activity while in custody (for example, through the use of mobile phones), it is likely to reduce and, in some cases, stop offending during the period of incapacitation. This generates a benefit in the form of avoided crime from longer sentencing. However, there is insufficient evidence to quantify this benefit.

Social benefits

36. CCE is a form of child abuse which has harmful short-term and long-term effects on victims, on local communities, and on wider society. Any reduction in CCE offending through deterrence or incapacitation effects will likely have significant wider social benefits. However, there is insufficient evidence to quantify these benefits.

Data quality

37. The creation of a specific offence of CCE will lead to the collection of data on offences and CJS outcomes for CCE. This will improve the limited evidence base that exists for CCE and will lead to improved analysis in the future to better inform policy development.

38. The specific CCE offence and related orders will also allow for better identification and monitoring of CCE offenders. This allows police to better identify perpetrators, reducing the risk of them carrying out similar offences in the future.

Proceeds of crime

39. CCE will be added to the list of "criminal lifestyle offences" in Schedule 2 and Part 2 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA 2002)[13], meaning that an individual that commits a CCE offence meets the criteria of having a criminal lifestyle. The presumption is that all of their assets and expenditure in the past six years are criminally gained and factored into the amount liable to pay under the confiscation order, unless the defendant can prove that the assets are owned legitimately and legally. The income from this has not been monetised as the assumption is the income the criminal activity enabled by the CCE offence (for example, selling drugs) will already be subject to POCA 2002.

NPSV, BNPV and EANDCB

40. It has not been possible to estimate a complete Net Present Social Value (NPSV), Business Net Present Value (BNPV) due to the lack of monetised benefits.

41. Instead, a breakeven analysis was conducted to estimate the number of offences that would need to be prevented for the policy to offset its estimated costs. This was based on the unit economic and social cost of labour exploitation from The Economic and Social Costs of Modern Slavery[14], uprated to 2026/27 prices, giving a unit cost of £425,800. This estimate reflects the social and economic cost of exploitation and does not represent a direct financial cost to government. The total estimated 10-year cost of the CCE offence (£25.6 million in the

[13] Proceeds of Crime Act 2002: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/29/schedule/2
[14] Economic and Social costs of Modern Slavery: The economic and social costs of modern slavery

central estimate) was divided by this unit cost to estimate the number of CCE cases that would need to be prevented for the policy to break even over the appraisal period. This gives an estimate 61 CCE cases would need to be prevented in the central scenario to break even over the appraisal period. For context, published CiN data reported 16,250 cases of children at risk of CCE in England in 2025.

42. This means that the policy could demonstrate a positive social impact if it **prevents at least seven CCE offences per year.** This prevention could arise through the deterrence and incapacitation effects discussed in the non-monetised benefits section. Given the estimated number of victims are estimated to be in the tens of thousands, **it is likely that Option 1 will lead to a net positive social value**.

43. There is no expected cost to business of this measure.

E. Wider impacts

44. The new CCE offence is not expected to have a business impact; there will be no material impact on smaller businesses, trade, or investment within the UK.

45. Similarly, there are no anticipated impacts on the environment or on wealth distribution as a result of this policy.

46. There may be varying impacts for different geographical areas of the UK. County Lines gangs are known to predominantly operate from London, Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester[15], meaning that these areas are more likely to experience higher levels of potential impacts. However, CCE is present across the country and will not be limited to these areas.

47. Although the proposed offence does not target specific individuals beyond those involved in CCE, there may also be disproportionate impacts of this policy on certain ethnicities. According to the 2025 CiN data[16], children from ethnic minorities and Black children are over-represented in the cohort of vulnerable children, making up 33 per cent and 10 per cent of the cohort, respectively. Similarly, County Lines data[17] show that individuals of Black ethnicity that are linked to County Lines (as both offenders and victims) are over-represented in all regions of the UK.

F. Sensitivity

48. This measure does not require a full impact assessment as the equivalent annual direct costs to the public sector are less than +/-£20 million per year and there are no direct impacts to businesses or households expected to result from the proposed changes.

[15] These are the 4 exporter areas for county lines where we see heightened activity. County Lines Strategic Threat Risk Assessment FY 2024 to 2025, sourced here: https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/publications/publications-log/national-crime-coordination-committee/2025/county-lines-strategic-threat-risk-assessment-fy-2024-25.pdf

[16] 2025 CiN data (Table A4) shows that ethnic minorities are disproportionately involved in CCE, 9.7 per cent of the vulnerable children were black. Sourced here: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/data-tables/children-in-need

[17] Page 23 for ethnicity breakdown of County Lines involvement. Sourced here: https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/publications/publications-log/national-crime-coordination-committee/2025/county-lines-strategic-threat-risk-assessment-fy-2024-25.pdf#page=23

G. Risks

Analytical risk 1: data quality

49. There is limited data available on the prevalence of CCE and number of offenders, leading to significant uncertainty in the estimated impacts. For example, the prevalence estimates from CiN include all children at risk of CCE, not just those who have been victims, potentially over-estimating the volumes of victims. On the other hand, the CiN data will be an under-estimate of the true prevalence as they exclude children not known to social services.

50. To mitigate this risk, the analysis is developed using three different methods based on different data sources. These three methods produce overlapping estimates of the volumes of additional offenders and prison places, which mitigates some of this risk and increases the confidence in the analysis.

51. The analysis underpinning the three methods uses a range of input values for key assumptions. Wider ranges are applied where uncertainty is greater, such as inputs based on internal management data, while narrower ranges are used where inputs are supported by more reliable sources, including published data.

Analytical risk 2: unmonetised costs and benefits

52. The absence of high of quality evidence on the prevalence of CCE prevented analysts from monetising potential benefits that may arise from a reduction in CCE offending due to this policy. The extent to which the policy may reduce prevalence is also unknown and unsupported by evidence.

53. Additionally, the potential increase in police resource required to monitor orders, and any additional demand for support and safeguarding services remain uncertain and have not been costed in the analysis.

Policy risk 1: uncertainty around the implementation data

54. As this policy is part of the wider Crime and Policing Bill, dates for Royal Assent and implementation are uncertain and subject to wider considerations. The analysis assumes that the policy will come into force in FY 2026/27, with reduced impacts in the first year of the offence. The ongoing steady state for impacts is assumed to commence from 2030/31 onwards.

Policy risk 2: effective use of the offence

55. Stakeholder feedback from police forces has identified difficulties with obtaining charges and convictions under existing Modern Slavery offences. If these difficulties persist, sensitivity analysis conducted by using the existing charge rate for Modern Slavery suggests that there would be no additional convictions from the new offence, thereby limiting its impact. However, the new offence has been designed specifically to address evidential challenges posed by existing legislation. In addition, statutory guidance on the new offence is being developed to mitigate this risk, increasing the likelihood of additional charges and convictions, increasing the benefits of the new offence.

Annex

Mandatory specific impact test - Statutory Equalities Duties	Complete
The public sector equality duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations in the course of developing policies and delivering services. The introduction of these CCE measures will have the greatest impact on adults (over the age of 18 years) as the primary objective of the new standalone offence to criminalise any adult who uses a child for the purpose of involving them in criminal activity. In undertaking an equalities impact assessment, the Home Office have identified that these measures will have a direct impact in relation to age given that we are limiting culpability to adults (over 18s). The government considers that this is a proportionate means of achieving the legitimate aim of protecting children aged under 18 years from gangs that lure children and young people into crime. These measures may also have an indirect impact on disability, which is an important vulnerability factor; race, as individuals of Black ethnicity are overrepresented as both victims and perpetrators of CCE; and sex, as males are more likely to be involved in CCE as both victims and perpetrators. Such indirect impact, if arising, is expected to be objectively justified. On the available evidence, the EIA concluded that this demonstrates compliance, where relevant with section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and that due regard has been made to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and encourage good relations. Overall, the government considers that these measures are proportionate. Improving the response to CCE will have a positive impact on all communities. **The SRO has agreed these findings.**	**Yes**