



**Can we make a difference here?:
A discourse analysis of professionals talking about children
who are exploited through County Lines in the UK.**

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Dedication

In loving memory of my Mum,

Janice Pritchard

1960 - 2021

Thank you Mum for your unconditional love and for showing me how to love generously, chase after justice, and hold on to hope.

Summary

This thesis will be presented in three sections. It includes a major literature review, an empirical report, and a major research reflective account.

Part One: Major literature review

Part one of this thesis provides a detailed literature review of the exploitation of children through County Lines. This section begins with an overview of the historical and legislative context, the key descriptions and definitions, and the different theoretical perspectives surrounding child exploitation. The critical review of the literature is then presented, along with details of the literature search. The role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) is then considered in relation to child exploitation to understand this topic through the lens of educational psychology. This section then concludes with a summary of the research rationale and research questions.

Part Two: Empirical Report

Part two of this thesis presents an empirical study about how professionals talk about children who are exploited through County Lines. The empirical report begins with a summary of the relevant literature and a comprehensive outline of the discursive psychology methodology and research procedure. The findings of the study are then presented and discussed in detail. The empirical report then concludes with a summary of the strengths and limitations of the study, possible implications, and areas for future research.

Part Three: Major Research Reflective Account

Part three of the thesis provides a critical appraisal of the research process. The first section of the reflective account outlines the researcher's motivations for the study and then critically reflects on the key methodological decisions. The second section of the reflective account considers the contribution this study has made to the broader knowledge base of child exploitation and then outlines the plans for disseminating the findings of this study.

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Abbreviations

CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CE	Child Exploitation
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CCE	Child Criminal Exploitation
ECF	Extreme Case Formulation
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
ERA Cycle	Experience Reflection Action Cycle
OCGs	Organised Crime Groups
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
YCS	Youth Custody Service

Other Language Considerations

This study is a language-based enquiry, and it is interested in how meaning is constructed in the social world (Wiggins, 2017). To do this, the study adopts a discursive psychology methodology which believes that discourse is 'action-orientated' (Wiggins, 2017) and suggests that all talk 'states things' and 'does things' (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 17). Therefore, careful consideration has been given to the language used in this study. Consequently, the following two decisions have been made.

Firstly, the study adopts the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child's (UNCRC) definition of a child which states that anyone under the age of 18 is a child (UNCRC, 1989). Therefore, this study will refer to individuals under 18 as 'children' rather than 'children and young people'. Please note, some of the definitions recommended by the Home Office do use the phrase 'young people', but this will not be repeated by the researcher in general discussions.

Secondly, this study will not use abbreviations when describing children or their lived experiences. For example, the researcher will write 'child criminal exploitation' rather than using the abbreviation 'CCE'. This is to promote the 'child first principle' (Case & Browning, 2021) and to ensure that the language used in this study does not distort the readers' perception or inadvertently reduce or minimise the lived experiences of children.

Further reflections on the language used in this study can be found in Part Three of this report.

Key Definitions

Child exploitation Child exploitation is when someone uses a child for financial gain, sexual gratification, labour or personal advantage. Using cruel and violent treatment to force a child to take part in criminal or sexual activities often leads to physical and emotional harm to the child, to the detriment of their physical and mental health, education, and moral or social development (Safeguarding Network, 2022).

Child sexual exploitation Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology (Department for Education, 2017).

Child criminal exploitation Child criminal exploitation is common in county lines and occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology (Home Office, 2020).

County lines County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons. County lines activity and the associated violence, drug dealing and exploitation has a devastating impact on young people, vulnerable adults and local communities (Home Office, 2020).



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Part One: Major Research Literature Review

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Major Research Literature Review

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the literature review

Child criminal exploitation, also known as 'CCE', is a form of abuse where individuals and groups groom and exploit children for criminal purposes (Home Office, 2019). One of the most recognised forms of child criminal exploitation in the United Kingdom (UK) is children being coerced into transporting and selling drugs through a drug supply model known as County Lines (Coomber & Moyle, 2018; Spicer, 2019; Windle et al., 2020). Whilst professionals have become more aware of this form of child exploitation (The Children's Society, 2023b), there are still concerns that some children who have been exploited through County Lines are still not being recognised as victims (Edwards, 2023; Maxwell & Wallace, 2021; Maxwell et al., 2019). To consider some of the tensions and complexities surrounding this issue, the literature review will explore some of the ways professionals are constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines. To do this, the literature review will be presented in five sections. Part A of the literature review will begin by 'setting the scene' and contextualising the topics of child exploitation and County Lines. Part B will explore the theoretical landscape surrounding the exploitation of children through County Lines. Part C will then critically review the current literature on the exploitation of children through County Lines. Part D will then reflect on the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP) in relation to County Lines. Part E will then present an overview of the key discussions, the research rationale and the research questions of the study.

1.2 Researcher positionality

Bourke (2014) believed that researchers are key instruments in the research process and stated that the researcher's personal characteristics and background may influence the direction of the study. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge who the researcher is and consider how they may impact the research process. For this current study, the researcher identifies as an 'insider researcher' due to previously working in gang intervention services and having first-hand experience in supporting children who have been exploited through County Lines. Whilst Part Three of this thesis explores some of the strengths and implications of being an insider researcher, it is important to recognise at this stage the potential for researcher bias and consider ways to strengthen the trustworthiness of the literature review process. Therefore, whilst the critical literature

review has adopted a narrative review approach, the review process will incorporate elements of a systematic literature review when selecting studies for review. This is to mitigate the potential for researcher bias and to offer additional transparency.

2. Part A: Setting the scene

2.1 Setting the scene

The following section will outline the historical and legislative context of child exploitation, discuss prominent descriptions and features of County Lines, and highlight three key emerging themes. It is important to note that in this section the review will draw on the relevant grey literature surrounding County Lines to broaden the scope of the information available and to gain insight into recent developments (Mahood et al., 2013). The grey literature within this section will include government legislation, unpublished research, charity reports, and online blogs. These documents were identified by searching relevant journals and websites and using the snowballing technique (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It should be acknowledged that there are limitations associated with grey literature, such as the literature potentially not being as robust as peer-reviewed research and the literature search process not being as replicable or transparent as a systematic literature search (Mahood et al., 2013). Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of different data sources and consider the trustworthiness of the information when reviewing the literature.

2.1.1 *Historical context of child exploitation*

Child exploitation is characterised by individuals and groups abusing their power to coerce, manipulate, deceive, and control a child for their own needs (Home Office, 2023b). Child exploitation is not a new phenomenon, and depictions of child exploitation can even be seen in Charles Dickens's 1838 novel 'Oliver Twist' (Dickens, 2012; The Children's Society 2021). The Children's Society (2021) stated that over the years, the methods deployed by abusers have remained the same. In particular, they stated that adults exploiting children will "target a child, trick them into trusting them, and then abuse their power for their own needs" (The Children's Society, 2021, section 1, para. 4). Franklin et al. (2018) agreed and suggested that the historical context of child exploitation can help professionals to make sense of how children who have been exploited are being understood today.

One of the most influential factors that has shaped policy and professional practice has been the shift in attitudes towards victims of child sexual exploitation (Allen & Bond, 2021; The Children's Society, 2021). Today, child sexual exploitation is understood as a form of sexual abuse where a child is manipulated, coerced, or deceived into sexual activity (Home Office, 2019). However, children subjected to sexual exploitation were historically regarded as 'child prostitutes' (Department of Health, 2000). Campaigners repeatedly challenged the term 'child prostitute', and a report by The Children's Society in 1995 titled 'The game's up: redefining child prostitution' asked why children who are sexually abused in the community are being seen as criminals whilst children who are sexually abused in a home setting are being seen as victims (Lee & O'Brien, 1995). Despite efforts, perceptions of child sexual exploitation did not begin to change until the emergence of several high-profile scandals in the late 2000's (Allen & Bond, 2021). The surfacing of these scandals led to a series of governmental inquiries and serious case reviews that highlighted the prevalence and extent of child sexual exploitation in the UK (Berelowitz et al., 2013; Franklin, et al., 2018; Hallett, 2017). The findings of these inquiries also provoked professionals to critically reflect on how they were defining this form of abuse, and after many years, a report by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in 2009 introduced the term 'child sexual exploitation' (DCSF, 2009).

This shift prompted professionals to consider other forms of child exploitation such as child criminal exploitation, also known as 'CCE' (Home Office, 2020). Child criminal exploitation can be described as an individual or group using an imbalance of power to manipulate, coerce, or deceive a child into committing criminal offences such as theft, working on a cannabis farms, or hiding or delivering weapons, money, or drugs (Home Office, 2023b). Through considering the complexities of child criminal exploitation, professionals began to notice similarities between sexual and criminal exploitation (Barnardos, 2021). This was captured in an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) briefing report which stated:

Patterns of grooming of children for criminal exploitation are very similar to those of sexual exploitation. In the past, child sexual exploitation was often perceived amongst professionals as the victim's fault, or due to their risky behaviour. We believe that in some areas of the UK a similar culture currently exists around criminal exploitation by gangs. It is important that professionals start seeing young people who are involved in gangs as potential victims of exploitation or trafficking. (APPG, 2017, p. 2)

Despite an increase in awareness of child criminal exploitation, reports suggest that children who have been exploited through County Lines are still not consistently being recognised as victims (Action for Children, 2024; Barnardos, 2021)

2.1.2 Legislative context of child exploitation

Legislative progress for victims of child exploitation has sometimes appeared to trail behind changes in professional practice. For example, the term ‘child sexual exploitation’ has been in circulation since 2009 (DCSF, 2009). However, legislation was still referring to victims of child sexual exploitation as ‘child prostitutes’ until 2015 (Home Office, 2015). This change in legislation coincided with the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act (2015), which has been described as one of most influential legislative changes for child exploitation victims (Barnardos, 2021; Her Majesty’s [HM] Government, 2015). The Modern Slavery Act (2015) is a law to prevent and fight against slavery, human trafficking, and different forms of exploitation (HM Government, 2015). The purpose of the Modern Slavery Act (2015) is to take action against those exploiting others and to offer protection to victims, such as victims of child exploitation (HM Government, 2015; The Children’s Society, 2022). In particular, section 45 of the Modern Slavery Act (2015) provides a statutory defence to victims of child exploitation who are ‘compelled’ to commit criminal offences as a direct consequence of being exploited (HM Government, 2015). The section 45 defence means that children who have committed offences as a result of being exploited can legally be seen as victims as long as they meet the set criteria and the offences that they are associated with are not exempt from the statutory defence, such as murder (HM Government, 2015).

The Modern Slavery Act (2015) was used for the first time in 2018 to successfully convict a Birmingham drug dealer for trafficking and exploiting two 15 year old boys and one 14 year old girl through County Lines (Maxwell et al., 2019). Police officers who worked on the case stated that the three children were found 100 miles away from their hometown in a cold and dirty flat that was being occupied by adult heroin users (Stone, 2018). The children were described as being tired and hungry, and in possession of illegal money, drugs and hunting knives (Stone, 2018). A senior officer commenting on the case stated:

They [the children] were not making money – they were having their childhood stolen from them by [name of abuser] who considered them expendable workhorses. That’s the reality for children lured into this world through false promises. (Cited in Gayle, 2018)

Alongside the Modern Slavery Act (2015), the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) framework also helps to identify victims of child exploitation and ensure that they are receiving appropriate support (Barnardos, 2021; Home Office, 2023a). Statistics show that referrals to the NRM have been steadily increasing since the introduction of the framework in 2009, which indicates that more victims of child exploitation are being identified and supported (Maxwell et al., 2019). Despite the success stories, some victims of child criminal exploitation are still falling through the gaps due to key system issues (Barnardos, 2021; The Children's Society, 2021). In particular, there are concerns that section 45 of the Modern Slavery Act is not being used consistently by all professionals (Maxwell et al., 2019). It has also been argued that it can be harder to legally protect certain groups of children, such as older children with previous convictions who are hesitant to name the people exploiting them (HM Government, 2015; Maxwell et al., 2019). In addition to this, Espeute and Lanskey (2023) highlighted the subjective nature of the NRM decision-making process and stated that a police officers' perception of a child's vulnerability ultimately decides whether a child is seen as a victim. Consequently, campaigners have called for a statutory definition of criminal exploitation to be added to the Modern Slavery Act to clearly define the nature of child criminal exploitation and firmly establish affected children as victims (Barnardos, 2021; The Children's Society, 2021).

2.2 County Lines

Over recent years, researchers from across the academic disciplines have investigated child sexual exploitation (Allen & Bond, 2021). However, less attention has been given to the exploitation of children through County Lines. Therefore, the following section will explore the complexities surrounding County Lines.

2.2.1 *The emergence of County Lines*

County Lines is a policing term used to describe a drug supply model used by gangs and organised criminal networks and individuals that exports illegal drugs from urban areas to coastal and rural communities in the UK (HM Government, 2018; Wroe, 2021a). Research suggests that the County Lines model often has a hierarchical structure and perpetrators higher up the chain are known to exploit children and vulnerable adults to carry, store and sell illegal drugs to help maximise profits (Coomber & Moyle, 2018; Spicer, 2019; Windle et al., 2020). Barlow et al. (2022) stated that County Lines is not a new phenomenon and previous news reports and biographies of ex-gang members

indicate that County Lines drug dealing has been in operation in the UK for several years (Chyna, 2012; White, 2021).

However, reports suggest that County Lines drug dealing in the UK has rapidly increased in recent years due to a range of social and economic factors (Bonning & Cleaver, 2021; Moyle, 2019; Pitts, 2021). Today, it is thought that there could be around 2000 County Lines in the UK with each single County Line generating a potential earning of £800,000 per year (HM Government, 2018; Pitts, 2021). Although, due to the lack of statistical evidence, the actual number of County Lines in the UK could be higher and the number of children who have been criminally exploited through County Lines is still unknown (Children's Commissioner, 2021; Edwards, 2023; Pitts, 2021). The emergence of County Lines has also led to a surge of emotive news stories. In particular, County Lines has been described as the next big 'grooming scandal' (Islington Gazette, 2017; Maxwell et al., 2019) and the National Crime Agency (NCA) described it as a 'national threat' (NCA, 2018). A researcher from the Safer Young Lives Research Centre has addressed the growing levels of panic surrounding County Lines and stated:

In responding to child harm via 'county lines', a moment of pause and reflection is required. Critical challenge must be brought to the wave of urgency that comes about when a 'new' and seemingly 'out of control' form of child harm is thrust into the spotlight. (Wroe, 2021b)

This call for critical challenge suggests that there is a need to 'get curious' about how professionals are making sense of County Lines and how professionals are responding to this 'threat' that is seemingly out of control (NCA, 2018; Wroe, 2021b).

2.2.2 Definitions and terminology used to describe County Lines

The Home Office Serious Violence Strategy (2018) described County Lines as "a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of deal line" (HM Government, 2018). Whilst professionals have carefully constructed definitions such as this to describe County Lines, it should be noted that children may define County Lines using different terminology. However, The Children's Society (2022) have suggested that the terminology used by children can sometimes negatively influence professional's perceptions. Therefore, it is important to consider the different ways children are talking about County Lines activities. For

example, the language used by children to describe prominent features of County Lines seems to draw on a range of street slang and terminology (Catch-22, 2021). Eble (1996) defined slang as “an ever-changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness within a group or with a trend or fashion in society at large” (cited in Guzman, 2017, p.36). To better understand the slang being used to describe County Lines, professionals have come alongside children to create ‘slang dictionaries’ (The Children’s Society, 2020). Examples of commonly used slang and terminology to describe County Lines can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1 : Examples of slang being used to describe County Lines (Catch-22, 2021; National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), 2023a; Parents Against Child Exploitation (PACE), 2023; The Children’s Society, 2020)

Terminology	Meaning
OT	‘Out trapping/ Out there’ meaning going to sell drugs.
Going country/ cunch	Going to a faraway location to sell drugs.
Deal line / trap line	A dedication phone to make calls and texts to sell drugs.
Bottling / Plugging	Inserting something such as drugs into a vagina or rectum.
Money mule	Somebody who transfers illegal money for someone else.
Pusher / Runner / Shotter	Somebody who sells drugs.
Clean skins	Somebody with a ‘clean’ criminal record, often young children.
Trapping / Shotting	Selling drugs.
Trap House / Bando	A building or an area where drugs are sold from.
Cuckooing	Taking over a vulnerable person’s home to sell drugs.

**Please note, slang used by children will often differ as slang is constantly evolving and is often specific to a geographical region (Catch-22, 2021; Guzman, 2017).*

Guzman (2017) argued that language such as the slang in the table, can be used to perform a range of social functions. Tony Thorne, the previous Director of Slang and New Language Archive at King’s College London agreed and stated:

Most academics and teachers in the UK pay slang little attention: it is, after all, the language of outsiders, of rebellion, of bad behaviour and mockery. But I find colourful, unorthodox language like slang inherently interesting: it creatively exploits English in a way that both renews the language and gives a voice to marginal, misunderstood communities (Thorne, 2019)

However, there are concerns that the slang being used by children to describe County Lines may negatively influence professional's perceptions (The Children's Society, 2022). For example, Appiah et al. (2021) argued that phrases like 'going country' may reinforce the narrative that affected children are freely choosing to engage in County Lines. There are also concerns that phrases like 'bottling' may minimise the abusive nature of exploitation and conceal the reality of what is actually happening to children (The Children's Society, 2022). Consequently, it has been argued that the language used to describe the exploitation of children through County Lines could determine whether a child is seen as a victim or as an offender (The Children's Society, 2021).

2.2.3 Descriptions of County Lines from the grey literature

Edwards (2023) stated that the hidden and secretive nature of exploitation is preventing some professionals from fully understanding what is happening to children who are exploited through County Lines. Consequently, there are concerns that some professionals may be losing sight of the abuse and harm that children who are exploited through County Lines are subjected to (Edwards, 2023; Maxwell et al., 2019). This gap in understanding has resulted in a surge of reports and online blogs from charities, statutory organisations, and researchers to help raise awareness (Action for Children 2024; Barnardos, 2021; Catch-22, 2021; Edwards, 2023; Home Office, 2019, 2023b; NCA, 2018; The Children's Society, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022). A summary of some of the prominent features of County Lines that have been listed in these reports has been collated in Table 2. It should be noted that understanding around County Lines is constantly evolving (Edwards, 2023). Therefore, the information in Table 2 should be seen as a 'snapshot' of how the grey literature is currently constructing County Lines and those affected by it.

Table 2 : Prominent features of County Lines.

Features	Key information	Critical reflections
Selling drugs	County Lines involves individuals and groups selling a range of illegal drugs such as cannabis, prescribed medication, ecstasy, ketamine, spice, MDMA, cocaine, and heroin (Maxwell & Wallace, 2021; NCA, 2018). In many cases, children who are exploited through County Lines are coerced into transporting and selling these drugs (Maxwell & Wallace, 2021).	Depictions of children selling drugs may position children as being ‘drug dealers’ and may reinforce the narrative that children who are exploited through County Lines are complicit in their own abuse (Edwards, 2023; Maxwell & Wallace, 2021).
The association with gangs and organised crime groups	The NCA (2018) stated that the County Lines drug model is used by gangs and organised crime groups. The term gang has been largely contested in the literature and there are concerns that existing narratives surrounding gangs often demonise the black community (Alexander, 2008; Pitts, 2021). For the purpose of this literature review, the term gang will be used to describe groups of three or more people who have shared characteristics and whose involvement in crime and violence is integral to their group identity (Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), 2021; NSPCC, 2023b). Organised crime groups are generally regarded as being more structured than gangs and they are known to “plan, coordinate and carry out serious crime on a continuing basis” for financial gain (CPS, 2021). In addition to this, Maxwell and Wallace (2021) have also suggested that the model of	Professional’s perceptions of children who are exploited through County Lines may be negatively influenced by unconscious and conscious biases towards gangs, organised crime networks and other types of groups such as ‘crime families’ (CPS, 2021; Maxwell & Wallace, 2021).

	County Lines is changing, and they stated that the County Lines model is being used by individuals and other types of groups such as family groups involved in crime.	
Targeting children	<p>Whilst it has been reiterated that all children regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, or background are at risk of exploitation, there are still certain children who are perceived as being more vulnerable to child criminal exploitation (Action for Children 2024; Edwards, 2023; The Children’s Society, 2019; Home Office, 2020). For example, the grey literature has suggested that boys from inner cities who are aged between 14 and 17 are more likely to be targeted for child criminal exploitation (Maxwell & Wallace, 2021; The Children’s Society, 2019). It has also been suggested that vulnerable children who have fewer protective factors are often targeted for criminal exploitation (Action for Children 2024; Edwards, 2023; The Children’s Society, 2019). This can include children in care, children with learning difficulties, children who have been excluded from school, and children who have grown up in financial hardship (Action for Children 2024; Edwards, 2023; The Children’s Society, 2019). In addition to this, some professionals have stated that they have noticed a new trend of children who are less likely to be detected by authorities being targeted for child criminal exploitation (Maxwell & Wallace, 2021; The Children’s Society, 2019). These include children from affluent backgrounds, children from rural communities, younger children including primary school aged children, and children with no previous criminal records who are often referred to as ‘clean skins’ (Home Office, 2020; Maxwell & Wallace, 2021; PACE, 2023; The Children’s Society, 2019). The Home Office (2020) have also stated that white British children may be targeted for County Lines as they are less likely to be detected by the police. This view supports the statistics on police stop and searches which suggests that white children are less likely to be searched</p>	<p>Edwards (2023) has stated that there is currently not enough evidence to substantiate claims about who is being targeted for child criminal exploitation due to the lack statistical data. There are also concerns that current discourses have potentially been influenced by victim blaming attitudes, and stereotypical beliefs (Edwards, 2023; The Children’s Society, 2019). This has led to concerns that some children who are being exploited may be being missed as they do not ‘fit’ the stereotypical profile of a</p>

	<p>by the police than black children (Home Office, 2023c). The broader literature on gangs and criminal exploitation also shows that black children as well as children from asian, minority ethnic, and dual-heritage backgrounds are overrepresented in statistics about gangs and exploitation and are generally more likely to be ‘demonised’ and ‘hypercriminalised’ due to issues such as racism and adultification (Action for Children 2024; Alexander, 2008; Pitts, 2021; Williams & Clarke, 2018; Wroe, 2021b).</p>	<p>victim (Edwards, 2023; The Children’s Society, 2019).</p>
<p>Grooming and the concept of exchange</p>	<p>The process of grooming has been described as a highly planned process which often involves an individual or a group building a seemingly close and trusting relationship with a child in order to coerce, manipulate, abuse, and exploit them (Catch-22, 2023; NSPCC, 2023c). It has also been noted that the process of grooming can take place face-to-face or through social media (Catch-22, 2023; The Children’s Society, 2019).</p> <p>As part of the grooming process, children are often told that County Lines is an easy and quick way to make money (Maxwell & Wallace, 2021). The Home Office (2020) describe this as an example of exchange where children who are exploited through County Lines are promised or given something that they want or need in return for ‘working’ on the County Line. The grey literature has also provided examples of children being offered tangible rewards such as money, expensive clothes and trainers, and cannabis, and intangible rewards such as perceived friendship, protection, and status in exchange for ‘working’ (The Children’s Society, 2018; Home Office, 2020; Maxwell & Wallace, 2021; Pitts, 2021).</p>	<p>The concept of exchange is often associated with child sexual exploitation, and it has been deemed by some as ‘offensive’ as it implies that victims of exploitation are benefiting and are in some way complicit in their own abuse (Beckett et al., 2017; Eaton & Holmes, 2017; Edwards, 2023). It has been suggested that the concept of exchange could be better understood as a method of grooming used by abusers to control the victim and conceal the abusive</p>

		nature of exploitation (Beckett et al., 2017; Eaton & Holmes, 2017).
The assertion of power	<p>A prominent feature of child exploitation is abusers using their power, such as their physical strength, status, or finances, to control children (Home Office, 2020; Ministry of Justice, 2019). It has been suggested that children who are exploited through County Lines are often controlled through threats, emotional abuse, imprisonment, violence, and sexual abuse (Ministry of Justice, 2019; The Children’s Society, 2019). One of the most recognised forms of control associated with County Lines is ‘debt bondage’, where children are pressured to work for free to pay off their debt. (Maxwell & Wallace, 2021; Pitts, 2021). It has been suggested that a child can find themselves in debt if they have had drugs or illegal money stolen from them by a rival gang or if they have had drugs or illegal money confiscated from them by the police (Maxwell & Wallace, 2021; Pitts, 2021).)</p> <p>It has also been reported that some abusers who exploit children through County Lines will set up a robbery so that a child falls into debt bondage and will work for free to pay back the debt (The Children’s Society, 2018)</p>	It is important for professionals to recognise the unequal power dynamic between a child and those exploiting them (Home Office, 2020). For example, some children may appear to be compliant, but they may actually be extremely fearful and following orders to keep themselves and others safe (Home Office, 2020).
Significant harm	It has been widely reported in the grey literature that children who are exploited through County Lines are exposed to a wide range of abuse and harm (The Children’s Society, 2019). It has also been noted that the significant level of harm that these children are exposed to can result in lifelong trauma (Edwards, 2023; Pitts, 2021). Some of the ways children are exposed to harm through County Lines have been listed below (Edwards, 2023; Maxwell & Wallace, 2021; The Children’s Society, 2019).	It has been argued that the lived experiences of victims of child exploitation do not fit neatly into one category of child exploitation (National Working Group, 2022). This

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children frequently going missing. - Children being isolated from family and friends. - Children going missing from education. - Children being subjected to neglect such as being malnourished and being forced to live in unclean and dangerous environments. - Children being sleep deprived due to 'working' for long hours and being kept awake through the night. - Children being subjected to emotional abuse. - Children having threats of harm made towards them and their loved ones. - Children being in debt bondage. - Children being robbed. - Children being kidnapped. - Children being forced to carry drugs within their body. This could include children being forced to store drugs in their vagina or rectum or children storing wrapped drugs in their mouths. - Children being sexually abused. This may include being sexually assaulted or raped. - Children being physically abused. This may include beatings or serious acts of violence involving knives and firearms that could result in serious injury or death. 	<p>means that children who are exploited through County Lines may have been exposed to a range of different harms (NWG, 2022). Consequently, The Children's Society (2019) suggested that professionals need to be mindful of the holistic needs of children.</p>
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2.3 Emerging themes from the grey literature

In addition to the issues raised, there are a number of emerging themes from the grey literature. These include concerns about the correlation between school exclusions and child exploitation, and concerns about how professionals are seeing and talking about children who have been exploited through County Lines. These key themes will now be discussed in more detail.

2.3.1 *Concerns about school exclusions*

Timpson's (2019) review put a spotlight on school exclusions in England and highlighted the correlation between school exclusions and poor outcomes for children. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the rate of permanent exclusions in schools has remained high and there has been a significant growth in the number of fixed term exclusions (Department for Education [DfE], 2023). This is concerning as research suggests that children who have been excluded are more at risk of child exploitation due to being isolated in the community (Edwards, 2023; Maxwell & Wallace, 2021; Ming, 2023; Timpson, 2019; Wall, 2023). In addition to this, there are specific concerns that children who are excluded from school and are being exploited through County Lines are at a higher risk of youth violence. This was illustrated in the findings of a Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (2020) that reviewed the cases of 21 children who had been criminally exploited and had died or had been seriously harmed as a result of associated violence. The review found that 80% of these children had been permanently excluded from school and were out of education and isolated in the community (Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, 2020). This finding suggests that keeping children in school is essential for keeping children safe from harm (Action for Children, 2024; Edwards, 2023; Timpson, 2019). Anne Longfield CBE, the former Children's Commissioner for England, agreed and stated that vulnerable children need a 'ring of protection' around them (cited in Wall, 2023). Timpson (2019) argued that the best way to achieve this is for children to stay in school and for schools to create a calm, positive, nurturing, and safe environment where children can thrive.

2.3.2 *Concerns about how professionals see affected children*

Over the last ten years, legislative policy has moved away from the criminalisation of children who have been exploited (Home Office, 2020; Marshall, 2023a). However, some children who have been subjected to exploitation are still being seen as offenders

(Edwards, 2023; Maxwell & Wallace's, 2021). The grey literature suggests that this may be because some children who are exploited may present as being complicit in their abuse (Edwards, 2023; Home Office, 2020). In addition to this, Maxwell and Wallace (2021) stated that some professionals have developed stereotypical notions about who is a victim of child criminal exploitation. For example, Maxwell and Wallace (2021) suggested that some professionals are more likely to associate criminal exploitation with boys and sexual exploitation with girls (Maxwell & Wallace, 2021). Consequently, this has led to some children being missed as they are not presenting as stereotypical victims (Edwards, 2023; Maxwell & Wallace's, 2021).

2.3.3 Concerns about how professionals talk about affected children

Leading charities in the UK have raised concerns about how some professionals are talking about children who have been exploited (Appiah et al., 2021; The Children's Society, 2022). Firstly, concerns have been raised about some of the dominant 'problem saturated' narratives surrounding children who have been exploited through County Lines, and how some children maybe internalising some of these negative messages (Appiah et al., 2021; Looyeh et al., 2012; McLean & Syed, 2015). Secondly, there are concerns that some of the language used by professionals could be seen as victim-blaming and shifting the blame onto children (The Children's Society, 2022). Thirdly, The Children's Society (2022) have raised particular concerns about particularly 'dehumanising' terminology such as 'money mules'. Fourthly, there have also been concerns about the 'adultification' of some children through using terms such as 'mature' and 'streetwise' which may lead professionals to see a child as being more of an adult than they actually are (The Children's Society, 2022). In particular, Davis and Marsh's (2020) study highlighted that black children are more likely to be perceived as being more adult-like. Davis and Marsh's (2020) stated these attitudes and biases could negatively influence key safeguarding decisions. Consequently, charities have stated that attention needs to be given to some of the terminology, words and jargon used by professionals (Appiah et al., 2021; The Children's Society, 2022). This call for change has led to the publication of several 'appropriate language' guides to help professionals consider the language that they are using when talking about children who have been exploited (Appiah et al., 2021; The Children's Society, 2022). Appiah et al. (2021) stated that the guides should be seen as a helpful reflection tool rather than a strict and prescriptive rule book on language (Appiah et al., 2021). Examples of some of the language discussed in the 'appropriate language' guides have been presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Examples of the language discussed in the ‘appropriate language’ guides (Appiah et al., 2021; The Children’s Society, 2022)

Examples	Concerns	Alternative language suggestions
The child is putting themselves at risk.	It may imply that a child is freely choosing to engage in a risky lifestyle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is believed that the child is being groomed. - There are concerns regarding the influence of others.
The child is drug running.	It may imply a child is complicit in their own abuse and it conceals the abusive and harmful nature of child exploitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The child is being criminally exploited and is a victim of human trafficking. - The child is being exploited for the purposes of distributing drugs.
The child is prostituting themselves.	It may imply a child is engaging in consensual sexual activity and is responsible in some way for their own abuse.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The child is a victim of sexual exploitation and has been raped. - The perpetrator(s) organised for the child to be raped.
The child is associating with gang members.	It may imply a child is willingly in contact with certain individuals and it conceals the coercive and manipulative nature of grooming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The child believes that they are friends with this individual, but there are concerns regarding an imbalance of power. - The child is being groomed, controlled, and exploited.
The child is in a relationship.	It may imply that a child is in a consensual relationship with their perpetrator, and it conceals the abusive and harmful nature of exploitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The child is being manipulated by the perpetrator to believe that they are in a relationship. - The child is being groomed, controlled, and exploited by the perpetrator.

Furthermore, The Children's Society (2022) stated that some of the ways professionals talk about child exploitation is no longer acceptable. In particular, there are concerns that some of the terminology used by professionals implies that a child is in some way complicit in their own abuse (Appiah et al., 2021; Looyeh et al., 2012). Appiah et al. (2021) agreed and stated that:

Language is therefore inseparable from social meanings that are developed in communities and shaped by inequalities embedded in these communities. Labels and terms used to describe young people form ideas and blueprints of how they are to be seen and judged or in effect which lens is chosen to scrutinise the young person's past and present behaviour. (Appiah et al., 2021, p.8)

This reflects the sentiments of Potter and Wetherell (1987) who stated that all talk 'states things' and 'does things'. Therefore, there is a need to deconstruct some of the ways that professionals are seeing and talking about children who have been exploited through County Lines (Appiah et al., 2021; The Children's Society, 2022). In addition to this, The Children's Society (2022) also stated that the problematic language used by some professionals may be symptomatic of compassion fatigue. Therefore, it may also be helpful to consider practitioner's wellbeing when exploring how professionals are seeing and talking about children who have been exploited through County Lines.

2.4 Overview of Part A

Part A of the review has explored the historical and legislative context of child exploitation and has noted how major child sexual exploitation scandals has shaped how professionals understand and respond to child criminal exploitation today. It has also highlighted the hidden nature of County Lines and how this may be influencing how professionals are making sense of County Lines. In addition to this, the grey literature has captured concerns about the correlation of school exclusions and child exploitation and has presented some of the potentially problematic ways professionals are seeing and talking about children who have been exploited through County Lines.

3. Part B: Theoretical landscape

3.1 Introduction to the theoretical landscape

There will now be an exploration of the theoretical landscape that surrounds the exploitation of children through County Lines. Whilst it is beyond the scope of the literature review to discuss all relating theories, psychological perspectives relating to four prominent narratives in the literature will now be discussed.

3.2 Narratives relating to self-determination

It could be argued that professionals sometimes draw upon theoretical perspectives about gangs to make sense of child exploitation. This at times can lead to broad assumptions being made about children who have been exploited through County Lines. For example, research studies investigating street gangs have repeatedly asked the question 'why do children join gangs?' (Alleyne & Wood, 2013; Sullivan, 2006). To answer this question, the self-determination theory has been suggested as a helpful way of understanding children's motivations for joining gangs (Wu et al., 2022). The theory proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985) suggests that children in gangs are more self-determined when their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness are met (Van den Broeck et al., 2016). The self-determination theory also proposes that children in gangs are more self-determined when they are intrinsically motivated (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

It could be said that these ideas have influenced how some professionals are constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines. For example, school intervention programmes that are designed to deter children away from County Lines often assume that children have autonomy and are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated (Buck, 2021; Wroe, 2021a). Consequently, many school intervention programmes are designed to challenge children's poor life choices and risky behaviours (Buck, 2021; Wroe, 2021b). However, it has been argued that children who are being exploited have limited control over their life and are being manipulated, controlled, coerced, and deceived (Home Office, 2020). Appiah et al. (2021) also argued that the notion that some children who are exploited through County Lines are self-determined may perpetuate the idea that some children are complicit in their own abuse.

3.3 Narratives relating to unmet needs

Some children who have been exploited through County Lines have been described as having unmet needs (Marshall, 2023a). This viewpoint reflects the notion of exchange that suggests that some children may engage in criminal activity in order to get their needs met (Edwards, 2023; Home Office, 2020). Maxwell and Wallace (2021) further stated that those exploiting children through County Lines may take advantage of a child's unmet needs and lack of capital to lure them into the cycle of exploitation. Bourdieu theorised that children can have varying levels and forms of capital such as economical capital (financial and material resources), cultural capital (knowledge and cultural dispositions) social capital (family, friends, relationships and networks), and symbolic capital (reputation, respect, and status) (Bourdieu, 1967; 1986, 2000). Maxwell and Wallace (2021) suggested that children who have a lack of social and financial capital may especially be drawn into exploitation.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1943; 1954) can also help professionals to consider a child's practical, physical, and psychological needs. In particular, Maslow (1943; 1954) postulates that children have five core needs; psychological, safety, love and belonging, self-esteem and self-actualisation. Maslow's theory also states that there is a hierarchical nature to human needs and suggests that a child's basic needs need to be met before any higher-level needs can be achieved (Maslow, 1943; 1954). Whilst Maslow's theory is widely accepted in the children's workforce, some concerns have been raised about the validity of this theory (King-Hill, 2015). In particular, it has been argued that the theory is too simplistic and follows a 'one size fits all' approach that does not allow for individual differences (Cianci & Gambrel, 2003; King-Hill, 2015). Therefore, whilst Maslow's hierarchy of needs is helpful in acknowledging the holistic nature of a child's needs, it may not accurately reflect the specific needs of child who has been exploited through County Lines.

3. 4 Narratives relating to trauma

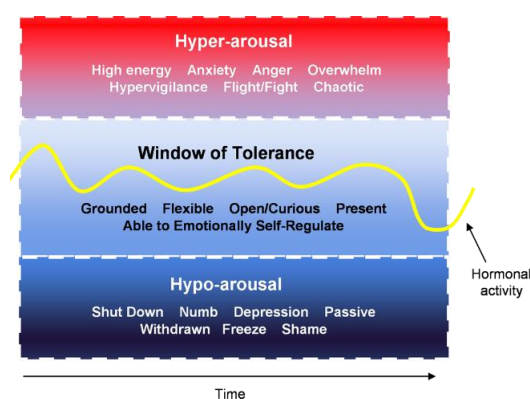
Another prominent discourse in the literature is that children who have been exploited through County Lines have often been exposed to trauma (Maxwell & Wallace, 2021). A report from the Children's Commissioner for England (2019) supported this view and suggested that children who been exposed to gang violence and criminal exploitation are 77% more likely to develop mental health issues, 95% more likely to develop emotional needs, and twice as likely to self-harm. The prevalence of trauma amongst children who have been exposed to gang violence and exploitation has also been widely talked about in a sub-genre of rap known as 'Drill' (Hall et al., 2023). One particular study

that explored music therapists' experiences of 'Drill' music found that artists were using music to communicate some of their pain and sadness about gang violence and exploitation (Hall et al., 2023). For example, a British rapper known as Dave stated in their track titled 'My 19th Birthday':

So many man my age have got PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]
and I don't think that it's hit them,
If you envision, the way that we're livin'
The things that we had seen, situations that we'd been in,
You would understand why I don't wanna talk
about my life in every song I've ever written,
I really wanna help, but it's out of my control and jurisdiction
'Cause a lot of road yutes [children associated with gangs]
have got a sickness, mentally.
(Genius, 2017)

The term trauma originates from the Greek word 'τραύμα' which means wound, and it is often used to describe emotional wounds (Oxford English Dictionary, 2023). Trauma is widely regarded as something that often stems from a harmful or life-threatening event or series of events (Office for Health Improvement & Disparities, 2022). Felitti et al's. (1998) study on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and Bellis et al's. (2016) subsequent study on the prevalence of ACEs amongst individuals in Wales, helped to outline some of the long-term effects of trauma, such as mental health difficulties, difficulties with learning, substances abuse issues, and suicidal ideation. Dodzro's (2021) stated that individuals who have witnessed gang-affiliated violence may also have a heightened sense of threat and present as being emotionally dysregulated. The Children's Society (2018) agreed and stated children who have been exploited through County Lines can sometimes present as being aggressive, hostile, irritable, withdrawn and fearful. (The Children's Society, 2018). In Dan Siegel's (1999) book 'The developing mind', he used the metaphor of the 'Window of Tolerance' to talk about normal and natural mind and body reactions to stress. In particular, Siegel (1999) stated that children who are within their 'optimal zone' can engage with the world around them. However, Siegel (1999) suggested that external and internal stresses may move a child outside of their window of tolerance and push them into a hypo-aroused state where a child may begin to withdraw or a hyper-aroused state where a child may become very hypervigilant and hostile. Figure 1 below helps to depict Siegel's (1999) Window of Tolerance metaphor.

Figure 1: Depiction of Siegel's (1999) Window of Tolerance (Meredith, 2020)



Psychotherapist David Taransaud, who specialises in working with older children who have experienced trauma, suggested that some children who are outside of their window of tolerance may adopt an antisocial persona to protect themselves from the world around them (Taransaud, 2011). Taransaud (2011) went on to use a metaphor of an 'evil' and 'mythical monster' to describe how some children may be perceived by society. In particular, Taransaud (2011) wrote:

Like the mythical monster, the feral adolescent is not only misunderstood but also demonised by society, branded with hurtful labels and epithets that achieve nothing except to confirm his early imprinted and long held belief that he is unwanted, unlovable, and an outcast. (Taransaud, 2011, p.10)

Taransaud (2011) went on to encourage professionals to see the deep-seated trauma that lies beneath the antisocial persona. In particular, Taransaud (2011) reminded professionals that the rage that they sometimes see in children is "not the rage of a monster, but that of a vulnerable, frightened and helpless child" (Taransaud, 2011, p.8).

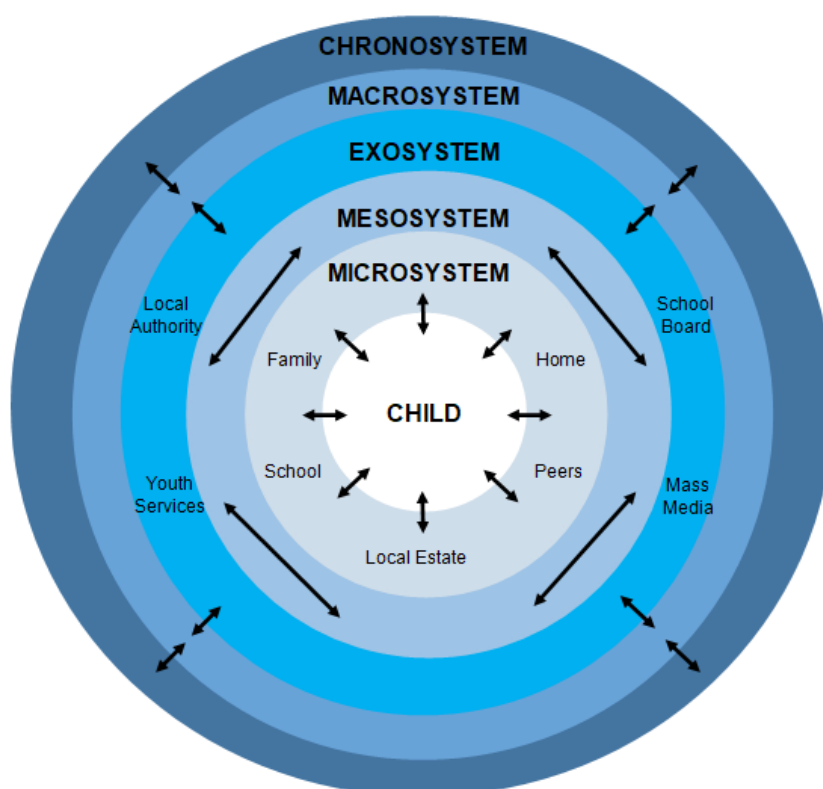
The recognition of trauma has seemingly changed how some professionals are responding to children as the focus is becoming more about 'what has happened to this child?' rather than 'what is wrong with this child?' (Harper & Cromby, 2022). This shift in thinking has also led children's workforces to embed trauma-informed approaches into their practice (Harris & Fallot, 2001). For example, in Glasgow, Nurture Groups in schools have been brought in as part of the city-wide campaign to move 'towards the nurturing city' to tackle issues such as knife crime in a new way (Crawford, 2023; March & Kearney, 2017). Glasgow's Educational Psychology Service (EPS) has also played an essential role in setting up the Nurture Groups in schools to address barriers to learning for pupils with social, emotional, and behaviour needs (Boxall, 2002; March & Kearney,

2017). Alison Crawford, Principal Educational Psychologist at Glasgow EPS, further explained that the Nurture Groups in schools have been heavily influenced by Bowlby's (1969) work on attachment, and can offer staff the opportunity to develop warm and nurturing relationships with the children, so that the children's fundamental human needs for love and belonging can be met (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Crawford, 2023). Harris and Falot (2001) agreed and stated that approaches such as Nurture Groups are essential for meeting the social and emotional needs of children who have been exposed to trauma.

3.5 Narratives relating to the wider social context

It has been argued that the exploitation of children through County Lines has come about because of a range of economic, social and cultural factors. (Bonning & Cleaver, 2021; Maxwell & Wallace, 2021). Consequently, it could be argued that professionals need to adopt a systemic perspective to see children who have been exploited through County Lines in the wider social context. For example, Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bio-ecological model in Figure 2 postulates that children are nested in a structure of complex and interconnecting systems. Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bio-ecological model, which derived from his earlier model (1979), also suggested that the reciprocal interactions between the child and their environment can act as the mechanisms for development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Figure 2: Depiction of Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bio-ecological model.



Bronfenbrenner (2005) suggests that there are five key interacting systems. Table 4 below explores how these systems may influence a child who has been exploited through County Lines.

Table 4: Descriptions of the Bronfenbrenner's (2005) proposed system layers.

System	Description	Examples
Microsystem	The environment where the child lives and the child's immediate relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment: Home and school • Relationships and interactions: friends, family, school staff, support workers, and people who are abusing them.
Mesosystem	The relationships and interactions that occur across the microsystem that impact the child.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship between social workers and parents. • The interactions that occur between different professionals.
Exosystem	The indirect influences that impact a child, such as the links between the child and their wider social settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth services, • Parent's employer, • School governors, • Extended family, • Media.
Macrosystem	The broader political, social, and cultural context that indirectly impacts the child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislation addressing trafficking and exploitation, • Societal attitudes towards child exploitation, • TV and music such as drill music that talks about County Lines.
Chronosystem	Major life events and significant changes that occur over the child's life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The death of a loved one, • Someone they know going to prison, • Changes in school, • Effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Theoretical perspectives such as Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bio-ecological model has led professionals to adopt a contextual safeguarding approach. Contextual safeguarding can be understood as an approach to respond to extra-familial harm, such as harm that takes place outside of a child's family (Lloyd & Firmin, 2020). It has been suggested that the exploitation of children through County Lines can be described an extra-familial harm as the abuse predominantly takes place out in the community (Lloyd & Firmin, 2020; Wroe, 2019). However, Lloyd and Firmin (2020) stated that extra-familial harm is not always regarded as a child protection issue. In particular, Lloyd and Firmin (2020) reported that referrals to social services for children who are exploited through County Lines often receive a 'no further action' decision from child protection panels, even for children who have been subjected to significant violence. These decisions have consequently led to debates about how 'bad' does exploitation have to be until a child is safeguarded (Lloyd & Firmin, 2020). Barlow et al. (2022) stated that the contextual safeguarding approach seeks to address these challenges and consider who is best placed to safeguard these children. In Firmin's (2020) book titled 'rewriting the rules of contextual safeguarding and child protection', she referred to the proverb 'it takes a village to raise a child' and argued that "we have to identify 'the village' that is raising our children and provide a framework and an approach that will maximise its safeguarding potential. Contextual Safeguarding is one approach to do that" (Firmin, 2020, p.5). Firmin (2020) further commented that the collective efforts of professionals across the different sectors is essential when safeguarding children from extra-familial harm.

3.6 Overview of Part B

The theoretical landscape surrounding children who have been exploited through County Lines is broad and at times conflicting, and different theoretical perspectives can influence how professionals respond to children. For example, theories that suggest that children who are exploited through County Lines are in some way complicit in their abuse may fuel victim-blaming beliefs, whilst theories that discuss a child's underlying needs may put the ownership for change back on the professionals (Buck, 2021). Furthermore, this section has demonstrated the need to reflect on psychological perspectives to understand the complexities surrounding child exploitation.

4. Part C: Critical literature review

4.1 Introduction to the critical literature review

A critical review of the literature will now be presented to explore some of the ways professionals are constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines. To do this, a narrative approach has been adopted to provide a broad review of the literature from across the different academic fields (Grant & Booth, 2009). Further comment on why a narrative approach has been chosen for this literature review will be discussed in Part Three.

The literature review will begin by discussing the process of selecting papers for review. As previously stated, this process will incorporate elements of a systematic literature review such as the 'Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses' (PRISMA) model (Moher et al., 2009). This is to reduce the potential for researcher bias, offer additional transparency, and strengthen the trustworthiness of the literature review process. The literature review will then examine the literature and outline some of the key themes emerging from the literature.

4.2 Search strategy

4.2.1 Search terms

The task of reviewing the literature began with a preliminary search of the literature to identify key search terms. This then led to the following search terms being used to identify suitable papers for the review. Please see Appendix A for further information.

("county lines" or "child criminal exploitation" or "child exploitation") and ("child" or "young person")

4.2.2 Search process

The key search terms were then entered into six prominent databases in order to explore literature from across different academic fields. The databases were APA Psycinfo, Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA), EBSCO, SCOPUS, Web of Science and Proquest Dissertations and Theses Global. In addition to these databases, articles were identified through the process of snowballing (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

This process led to 689 papers being identified. This included 100 papers from APA Psycinfo, 56 papers from ASSIA, 58 papers from EBSCO, 275 papers from SCOPUS, 159 papers from Web of Science, 39 papers from Proquest Dissertations and Theses Global, and 2 additional papers were identified through the process of snowballing. These searches were conducted between August 2022 and September 2023. These searches were then repeated in December 2023 to ensure that all relevant literature was included in the review.

4.2.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

An inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to review the suitability of the identified papers. The inclusion and exclusion criteria can be seen in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Literature search inclusion and exclusion criteria

Area	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Rationale
Study Design	The researcher was interested in peer-reviewed journals and doctoral dissertations. The researcher was also interested in empirical studies that had a qualitative methods design.	Position papers were excluded. Papers were also excluded if they solely presented quantitative data or theoretical perspectives.	The review was interested in data that provided a rich picture of the complexities surrounding County Lines. Position papers were specifically excluded due to concerns about the trustworthiness of some position papers. This will be explored further in Part Three of this thesis.
Location	Studies were included if they described the exploitation of children within the UK.	Studies were excluded if they described the exploitation of children outside of the UK.	The review focused on the exploitation of children within the UK.
Participants	Studies were included if they explored the views	Studies were excluded if no professionals with	The review is specifically interested in how professionals are

	of professionals who directly support children who have been exploited through County Lines.	appropriate experience were included in the study.	constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines.
Specific areas of interest	Studies were included if they captured examples of how some professionals were constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines.	Studies were excluded if they focused on other forms of child exploitation. Studies were also excluded if they focused on the exploitation of vulnerable adults rather than children.	The review aimed to explore how some professionals are constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines.
Publication date	Studies were included if they were published after 2015.	Studies were excluded if they were published before 2015.	The study is interested in how professionals are constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines since the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act (2015).

4.2.4 Process of elimination

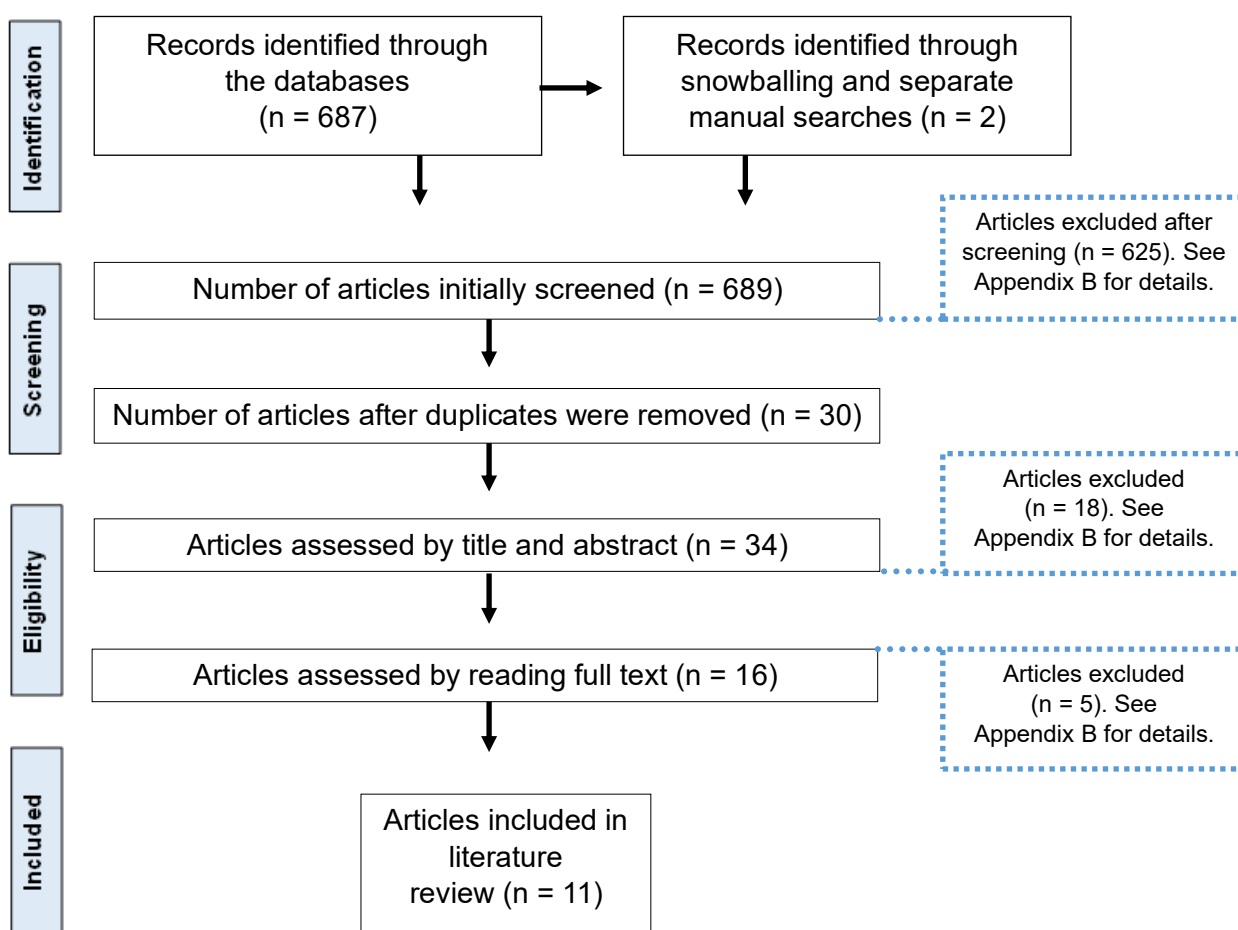
The papers were initially screened using the inclusion and exclusion criteria. This included the researcher using the filter options on the database search engines to eliminate any papers that were published outside of the UK or before 2015. The filter options were also used to eliminate any papers there were not peer-reviewed journal articles or doctoral dissertations. The titles and abstracts were then screened and any articles that did not specifically focus on criminal exploitation were eliminated. Any duplicates were then removed, and the remaining papers were assessed for eligibility

based on the full inclusion and exclusion criteria. Further information about the elimination process and an overview of the selected papers can be found in Appendix B.

4.2.5 Transparency

To offer greater transparency about the literature search process, the PRISMA model (Moher et al., 2009) is presented below in Figure 3.

Figure 3: PRISMA Model (Moher et al., 2009)



4.2.6 Reviewing the quality of the literature

The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) Qualitative Studies Checklist (2018) was then used as a tool to assess the quality of the 11 papers identified in the search. Please see Appendix C for further information.

4.3 A critical review of the literature

The following critical review of the literature aims to explore some of the ways professionals are constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines. Further information about the selected studies discussed in this review can be found in Appendix B and C.

4.3.1 *Limited, partial, and insufficient understanding*

In recent years, County Lines drug dealing has gained the attention of the media, general public, practitioners, academics and politicians (Neaverson & Lake, 2023; Spicer, 2021). Despite this interest, a prominent narrative in the literature is that there is still a lack of understanding about the exploitation of children through County Lines, with studies describing the current knowledge base as limited, partial, and insufficient (Brewster et al., 2023; Olver & Cockbain, 2021; Shaw & Greenhow, 2020). Robinson (2019) agreed and stated that this has led to distorted narratives being promoted by the media about children who have been exploited through County Lines. Researchers also argued that this lack of understanding has been further compounded by the lack of national guidance on child criminal exploitation and a general lack of information sharing amongst professionals (Neaverson & Lake, 2023; Olver & Cockbain, 2021; Shaw & Greenhow, 2020). Olver and Cockbain (2021) further stated that the definitions currently used to describe County Lines often minimise the associated violence and exploitation. In addition to this, Olver and Cockbain (2021) also noticed that the terms 'County Lines' and 'child criminal exploitation' are sometimes being used interchangeably. This may mean that professionals' understanding of children who have been criminally exploited may be being influenced by stereotypical notions about 'drug dealers'. A participant in Ditcham's (2022) study also raised this issue and stated:

"You mention CCE [child criminal exploitation] and they automatically think drug dealing, you know, he's dealing. And we see that not just professionals like social services, youth justice, we also see it with police as well. You know, they think, you know, dealing. People think CCE and county lines are the same but in all fairness, county lines and CCE are quite separate". (Ditcham, 2022, p.97)

Olver and Cockbain's (2021) study went on to conclude that the use of the term County Lines can misrepresent the experiences of children and frame their exploitation as a drug issue rather a child protection issue. Furthermore, the studies have shown that

fragmented understanding of child criminal exploitation is negatively impacting how professionals are responding to children who have been exploited through County Lines.

4.3.2 Gang talk

Throughout the literature, County Lines drug dealing is often associated with gangs (Brewster et al., 2023; Shaw 2023). More specifically, three of the articles included in this literature review specifically reference gangs in their titles (Neaverson & Lake, 2023; Robinson, 2019; Spicer, 2021). It is therefore not surprising that the literature surrounding County Lines has inherited a number of prominent narratives about gangs. Firstly, the literature surrounding County Lines suggests that children are often lured into exploitation with the promise of money, expensive gifts, and friendship, which reflects the belief that children who join gangs are extrinsically motivated (Brewster et al., 2023; Robinson, 2019). Secondly, the literature suggests that like gangs, violence is often associated with County Lines (NSPCC, 2023b). For example, Ditcham's (2022) study provides detailed descriptions of escalating levels of violence associated with County Lines activity, such as attacks involving 'Rambo Knives', baseball bats and bicycle chains. Thirdly, the literature at times uses language to describe children who are being exploited through County Lines that is more commonly associated with gang members. For example, the literature at times described children who are being exploited through County Lines as being aggressive, hostile, un-cooperative, and 'shifty' (Brewster et al., 2023; Ditcham, 2022; Robinson, 2019).

However, Spicer's (2021) study has questioned the helpfulness of 'gang talk' in relation to County Lines. In particular, Spicer's (2021) study suggested that at times County Lines is being framed as a 'gang problem' which inadvertently 'shifts blame' away from other societal issues that may be driving the drug market in the UK (Douglas, 1995). Spicer (2021) also argued that sensationalist discourses sometimes position the County Lines model as a legitimate profit-making business, which further detracts from the exploitation of children. Consequently, professionals' constructions of children who have been exploited through County Lines may have been influenced by prominent discourses about gangs. However, the literature suggests that this may not always be accurate or helpful and may negatively influence how professionals are seeing and responding to children who have been exploited through County Lines.

4.3.3 *Victim vs offender debate*

Robinson (2019) stated that whilst there have been shifts in attitudes towards children who have been exploited through County Lines, some professionals are still questioning whether these children are victims or offenders. Historically, children associated with gang related criminal activity were labelled as offenders and punitive legislations and sanctions were used to tackle gang related activity (Ditcham, 2022; Marshall, 2023b; Neaverson & Lake, 2023; Spicer, 2021). However, professionals have become increasingly concerned about punitive measures being used against children who are victims of exploitation (Neaverson & Lake, 2023). Consequently, the youth justice sector has called for professionals to move away from punitive approaches in favour of more welfare-based approaches (Marshall, 2023b; Taylor, 2016). Although, Marshall's (2023b) study found that some children are still being criminalised because of a lack of available options to safeguard vulnerable children. For example, Marshall's (2023b) study provided examples of children being given Youth Rehabilitation Orders in the hope that it would reduce their exposure to potential harm. Participants in Marshall's (2023b) study also suggested that austerity-led cuts have further reduced viable safeguarding options. However, participants in Marshall's (2023b) study stated that they felt 'uneasy' about this approach as it framed children as offenders rather than victims.

One possible way forward is for professionals to make use of section 45 of the Modern Slavery Act (2015) as it provides a statutory defence to victims of child exploitation (Ditcham, 2022; HM Government, 2015). However, Ditcham (2022) highlighted that this system relies on children who have been exploited through County Lines being identified as victim. Ditcham (2022) went on to say that the process of deciding whether a child is a victim is subjective and argued that this has led to inconsistent responses. Marshall (2023b) stated that this is because some children do not present as being a stereotypical victim as they do not 'conform to normative expectations associated with victimhood' (p. 1165). Shaw and Greenhow (2020) agreed and stated that children who are exploited through County Lines rarely fit the profile of being a 'perfect victim'. Consequently, studies have repeatedly concluded that some children who are exploited through County Lines may be perceived as not being 'worthy' of the victim status (Ditcham, 2022; Marshall, 2023b; Olver & Cockbain, 2021). Shaw (2023) agreed and stated that "the culture of criminalisation endures" (p.1).

Despite ongoing efforts to reconceptualise children who have been exploited through County Lines as victims, some studies have captured examples of children who have seemingly 'crossed a line' and become an offender (Marshall, 2023a). In particular, in

Robinson's (2019) study that investigated the criminal exploitation of children in Merseyside, they found very little evidence of children being coerced or forced into selling drugs for County Line gangs. Furthermore, Robinson (2019) stated that many of the children in the study said that they chose to sell drugs to make money. This finding contradicts the popular notion that children who are exploited through County Lines are 'devoid of agency' (Spicer, 2021, p.4). Other studies have also gathered examples of children declining help and rejecting the label of victim (Brewster et al., 2023; Ditcham, 2022; Neaverson & Lake, 2023; Marshall, 2023b; Shaw & Greenhow, 2020; Shaw, 2023). Although, studies have suggested that this may be due to a range of factors such as not wanting to be seen as being weak or vulnerable or feeling fearful (Ditcham, 2022; Marshall, 2023b; Shaw, 2023). Furthermore, it is important to consider that some children may be both a victim and an offender (Marshall, 2023b; Robinson, 2019; Shaw & Greenhow, 2020; Shaw, 2023). Marshall (2023a) agreed and stated that binary thinking is not always helpful as it creates narrow categories where children are either seen as a victim or as an offender. Bouris (2007) agreed and stated that binary thinking almost creates a 'unreachable standard' for children and creates an expectation that they have to be purely 'good' and purely 'innocent'. Furthermore, Marshall (2023a) suggested that professionals may benefit from moving away from binary thinking in order to explore the complexities of criminal exploitation and better respond to the needs of the child.

4.3.4 Notions about vulnerability and childhood

Robinson (2019) stated that children who have been exploited through County Lines are at times portrayed by the media as being vulnerable and helpless. However, Ditcham's (2022) study stated that some children who are being exploited are being missed by professionals because they do not fit the stereotypical profile of a 'vulnerable child'. Olver and Cockbain (2021) agreed and argued that professionals need to see all children as being vulnerable. Olver and Cockbain (2021) also echoed the sentiments of Bartkowiak-Théron and Asquith (2012) who stated that vulnerability should be treated as the "norm rather than the exception" (p. 48). Talk of vulnerability has also generated conversations about the concept of childhood. In particular, two studies in the literature review talked about childhood being a time when children can experience love, nurture, play, protection from harm, and freedom from responsibility (Ditcham, 2022; Marshall, 2023b). Although, Ditcham (2022) stated that criminal exploitation could threaten a child's chance to have a positive childhood. This notion of lost childhoods was also reflected in a recent report titled 'Shattered Lives, Stolen Futures' by Action for Children (2024). In particular, Chief Executive Paul Carberry stated that children who are being exploited through County

Lines are “paying with their freedom, their childhoods and their lives” (Action for Children, 2024, p. 5).

It could be argued that notions about vulnerability help to position children who are exploited through County Lines as ‘children’. This can be seen in the youth justice sector’s ‘child-first’ philosophy, which aims to reconceptualise young offenders so that children are seen as children first and offenders second (Marshall 2023b). However, Lloyd et al. (2023) stated that this does not always happen in practice. In particular, Lloyd et al.’s (2023) argued that some professionals make assumptions about the children based on the offences that they are associated with because they do not truly know the children. Lloyd et al. (2023) went on to suggest that professionals need to build positive and trusting relationships with the children as “relationships allow professionals to really know young people, beyond their perceived criminality, through to what really drives them, worries them and how they experience the world around them” (Lloyd et al., 2023, p.12). Furthermore, the literature in this review advocates for a child-centred approach so that children can be seen as children first and offenders second (Marshall, 2023b).

4.4 Overview of Part C

Part C of the literature review has explored how children who are exploited through County Lines are being constructed by professionals. In particular, it has shown how prominent narratives about gangs, victimhood, vulnerability and childhood is influencing how these children are being understood. Furthermore, this critical review has demonstrated the need for more of an in-depth exploration of how professionals are constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines.

5. Part D: Relevance to the EP profession

5.1 Introduction to relevance to the EP profession

Part D of this literature review will consider the role of the EP in relation to children who have been exploited through County Lines

5.2 Role of the EP

EPs aim to improve outcomes for children by using their psychological knowledge and insight to support a child's learning, development, resilience, and wellbeing (Association of Educational Psychologists [AEP], 2016). Over the years, research has repeatedly called for EPs to consider how they can best facilitate change (Fallon, Woods, & Rooney, 2010; Gillham, 1978; Ashton & Roberts, 2006). In particular, a journal by Ashton and Roberts (2006) asked EPs to consider what is 'valuable and unique' about the role of the EP. Consequently, EPs appear to be showing a desire to come alongside others to tackle challenges and facilitate change through helping to implement psychological research into the 'real world' (Fallon, Woods, & Rooney, 2010; Sedgwick, 2019).

5.3 Role of the EP in relation to safeguarding

One of the areas that has gained attention from the EP community in recent years is the role of the EP in relation to safeguarding. This can be seen in Allen and Bond's (2020) systematic literature review that investigated the EP's role in child protection and safeguarding. The systematic literature review collected 24 papers to examine the role of the EP within different areas of safeguarding and child protection, such as domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse, forced marriage, and self-harm. Throughout these studies, it was emphasised that the wellbeing of children is the responsibility of every EP (Allen & Bond, 2020; British Psychological Society [BPS], 2021). However, questions were raised in the research literature about the 'distinctive contribution' of the EP and how the role of the EP can be 'operationalised in practice' (Allen & Bond, 2020, p. 397). Allen and Bond's (2020) systematic literature review recommended that EPs should use their skills and knowledge to work systemically to bring about organisational change through building staff capacity and helping professionals to reflect on their values, beliefs, and attitudes (Allen & Bond, 2020; Norwich, 2005). Allen & Bond (2020) described this type of working as a shift from "thinking about doing to thinking about thinking" (p.397). As such, there appears to be an increasing need for EPs to work systemically and to use their psychological 'thinking' to tackle challenges and facilitate change.

5.4 Role of the EP in relation to child exploitation

Allen and Bond (2020; 2021) identified that educational psychology is one of the last professions to begin researching child exploitation. To begin addressing this gap in the literature, Allen and Bond (2021) conducted a study to explore the complexities surrounding child sexual exploitation and the different psychological frameworks that can guide EP practice. Within this study, it was identified that some EPs initially felt like their work relating to child sexual exploitation fell at times “outside of the educational aspect of an educational and child psychologist role” (Allen & Bond, 2021, p. 27). However, a recent report from Action for Children (2024) has raised a number of key issues that arguably fall under the ‘EP remit’, such as children who are being criminally exploited being excluded from school, and children who are being criminally exploited having unrecognised additional learning needs, and unsupported social and emotional needs. Despite this, there is currently no known research that investigates child criminal exploitation from an educational psychologist's perspective. Therefore, further research is needed to explore the role of the EP in supporting children who have been subjected to child criminal exploitation.

5.5 Overview of Part D

Part D of this literature review has identified the need for EPs to work systemically to tackle challenges and facilitate change in areas relating to safeguarding (Allen & Bond, 2020; BPS, 2021). Whilst the literature review has shown that EPs have established roles within safeguarding, no known research has been conducted into the role of the EP in relation to children who have been exploited through County Lines. Therefore, this current study needs to develop the research base on child criminal exploitation from an educational psychology perspective.

6. Part E: Conclusion of the literature review

6.1 Overview

This review set out to explore some of the ways professionals are constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines. In particular, this review has explored how prominent narratives about gangs, victimhood, vulnerability and childhood has shaped professionals' understanding about children who are exploited through County Lines. The review has also highlighted specific concerns about how professionals are seeing and talking about children who are exploited through County Lines. Furthermore, this literature review has demonstrated the need for further research to explore some of the complexities surrounding children who have been exploited through County Lines.

6.2 Rationale

This literature review has highlighted the following key issues that need further exploration:

- Firstly, current understanding of the exploitation of children through County Lines has been described as limited, partial, and insufficient (Brewster et al., 2023; Olver & Cockbain, 2021; Shaw & Greenhow, 2020). In particular, it has been highlighted that less attention has been given to child criminal exploitation in comparison to child sexual exploitation in the academic sphere. Consequently, further research is needed to understand the exploitation of children through County Lines.
- Secondly, concerns have been raised about how professionals are talking about children who are exploited through County Lines (Appiah et al., 2021; The Children's Society, 2022). A key implication of this has been a surge of reports from charities highlighting their key concerns and offering 'appropriate' language guides to professionals (Appiah et al., 2021; The Children's Society, 2022). However, very limited research has investigated how professionals are talking about children who been exploited through County Lines. Therefore, a discourse analysis investigating the topic may help to bring about out new understanding and clear implications for professionals.

- Thirdly, no known research has been conducted in this area from an educational psychology perspective even though existing literature surrounding the exploitation of children through County Lines has made reference to issues relevant to the EP community, such as school exclusion (Allen & Bond, 2020; Edwards, 2023; The Children’s Society, 2019). Furthermore, research that is conducted from an educational psychology perspective may help to identify implications for the educational psychology community.

6.3 Research questions

This current study aims to explore how professionals are talking about children who are exploited through County Lines to make sense of how these children are being constructed and to reflect on any possible implications. Therefore, this research study seeks to explore the following research questions:

- 1) How do professionals construct children who are being exploited through County Lines through their language and dialogue?
- 2) What are some of the potential implications of these constructions?

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Can we make a difference here?:

**A discourse analysis of professionals talking about children
who are exploited through County Lines in the UK.**

By Jessica Pritchard

Part Two: Empirical Report

Word Count: 8254

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Can we make a difference here?: A discourse analysis of professionals talking about children who are exploited through County Lines in the UK.

1. Abstract

Reports of the criminal exploitation of children in the United Kingdom (UK) through a drug supply model known as 'County Lines' are increasingly hitting the headlines (Maxwell et al., 2019). However, current understanding of this issue has been described as limited, partial, and insufficient in the literature (Brewster et al., 2023; Olver & Cockbain, 2021; Shaw & Greenhow, 2020), and there are specific concerns about how professionals are seeing and talking about children who have been exploited through County Lines (Appiah et al., 2021; The Children's Society, 2022). Therefore, this exploratory research study aimed to explore some of the ways professionals are constructing these children through their language and dialogue. To do this, a volunteer sample of four participants from different areas of the children's workforce took part in the study, and data was collected through an online focus group discussion that was based on Jasper's (2013) Experience Reflection Action (ERA) learning cycle. The study adopted a discursive psychology methodology, and the data were analysed by following the six stages of analysis for discursive psychology as described by Wiggins (2017). Three key analytical issues were identified in the data; 'problematic victims', 'losing hope', and 'shifting narratives'. For each analytical issue, the key social actions, co-constructions and implications were highlighted. Following a discussion of the findings, possible implications for educational psychologists as well as wider systemic change were presented. Strengths and limitations of the study and suggestions for future research were also given.

2. Summary of the literature

2.1 Introduction to the literature review

This summary aims to provide an overview of the key findings of the literature review which explored some of the ways professionals are constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines. Further information about the literature review can be found in Part 1 of this report.

2.2. Key definitions and descriptions

County Lines is a drug supply model used by gangs, organised criminal networks and individuals to export illegal drugs from urban areas to coastal and more rural communities in the UK (HM Government, 2018; Wroe, 2021). County Lines is often associated with violence and other forms of criminality (Coomber & Moyle, 2018; Spicer, 2019). County Lines is also associated with the criminal exploitation of children who are coerced into carrying, storing, and selling illegal drugs (Coomber & Moyle, 2018; Spicer, 2019; Windle et al., 2020). The hidden and secretive nature of child exploitation and the lack of academic research has meant that children who are exploited through County Lines often go undetected by professionals (Edwards, 2023; The Children's Society, 2021).

2.3 Current context

The historical and legislative context has shaped how professionals understand and respond to child criminal exploitation today (Barnardos, 2021; Franklin et al., 2018). In particular, the surfacing of high-profile child sexual exploitation scandals (Allen & Bond, 2021) and the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act (HM Government, 2015) have helped to shift attitudes and reconceptualise victims of child criminal exploitation (The Children's Society, 2021). However, studies have identified that there is still a lack of understanding about the nature of child exploitation, which has led to a surge in reports from charities, statutory organisations, and researchers to raise awareness (Barnardos, 2021; Catch-22, 2021; Edwards, 2023; Home Office, 2019, 2023; NCA, 2018; The Children's Society, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022). These reports have highlighted concerns about the correlation between school exclusion and child criminal exploitation, and concerns about how professionals are seeing and talking about children who have been exploited through County Lines (Edwards, 2023; Maxwell & Wallace's, 2021; Appiah et

al., 2021; The Children's Society, 2022). In particular, charities have suggested that some professionals are promoting 'problem-saturated' narratives and using victim-blaming and dehumanising language to describe children who have been exploited through County Lines (Appiah et al., 2021; The Children's Society, 2022).

2.4 Theoretical perspectives

To gain a better understanding of the theoretical landscape surrounding children who have been exploited through County Lines, four key psychological perspectives were explored. Firstly, Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory was discussed to reflect on concepts surrounding a child's sense of autonomy. However, it was noted that this theory may perpetuate the idea that some children are complicit in their own abuse, which may inadvertently fuel victim-blaming beliefs (Appiah et al., 2021). Secondly, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory (1943; 1954) was explored to consider whether some children engage in criminal activities to get their needs met (Edwards, 2023; Home Office, 2020; Maxwell & Wallace, 2021). Thirdly, psychological concepts and studies surrounding the concept of trauma were considered to understand the long-term impact of trauma. In particular, Felitti et al's. (1998) study on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and Bellis et al's. (2016) subsequent study on the prevalence of ACEs amongst individuals in Wales were discussed. Fourthly, Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bio-ecological model was considered to see children who have been exploited through County Lines in the wider social context. In particular, this illustrated the need for the children's workforces to adopt a contextual safeguarding approach to protect children in the cycle of exploitation (Lloyd & Firmin, 2020). Together, these psychological theories illustrated how theoretical perspectives can influence how professionals respond to children who have been exploited through County Lines. Therefore, there is a need to continue to reflect on different psychological perspectives in order to explore some of complexities and challenges surrounding exploitation.

2.5 Critical review of the literature

The narrative literature review identified four key themes that helped to explore some of the ways professionals are constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines. These themes will now be discussed in turn.

2.5.1 Limited, partial and insufficient understanding

Whilst awareness of County Lines and child exploitation has grown over recent years (Neaverson & Lake, 2023; Spicer, 2021), there is still a general lack of understanding, with studies describing the current knowledge base as limited, partial, and insufficient (Brewster et al., 2023; Olver & Cockbain, 2021; Shaw & Greenhow, 2020). There are also concerns about the definitions and descriptions being used to describe the exploitation of children through County Lines. For example, Olver and Cockbain (2021) argued that current definitions and descriptions minimise the abusive nature of exploitation. Olver and Cockbain (2021) are also concerned that the terms 'County Lines' and 'child criminal exploitation' are being used interchangeably, which may mean that professionals' constructions of children who have been criminally exploited may be influenced by stereotypical notions about 'drug dealers'. Furthermore, it could be argued that this lack of understanding could be impacting how professionals are understanding and responding to children who are being exploited through County Lines.

2.5.2 Gang talk

County Lines drug dealing is often associated with gangs (Brewster et al., 2023), and as such, the literature surrounding County Lines has inherited a number of prominent discourses about gangs. For example, the literature surrounding County Lines suggests that children who are exploited through County Lines are often lured in with the promise of money, expensive gifts and friendship, which reflects commonly held beliefs about why children join gangs (Brewster et al., 2023; Robinson, 2019). The literature also sometimes depicts children who are exploited through County Lines in a similar way to gang members. For example, the literature included in this review has at times described children who are exploited through County Lines as being aggressive, hostile, uncooperative, and 'shifty' (Brewster et al., 2023; Ditcham, 2022; Robinson, 2019). However, Spicer (2021) suggested that 'gang talk' in relation to the exploitation of children through County Lines may not always be accurate or helpful and may 'shift blame' away from other more pressing issues by simply framing it as a 'gang problem' (Douglas, 1995).

2.5.3 Victim vs offender debate

Despite shifts in attitudes towards children who have been exploited through County Lines, some professionals are still questioning whether these children are victims or offenders (Robinson, 2019). Marshall (2023b) argued that some children are still being seen as offenders because they do not present as being stereotypical victims as they do not 'conform to normative expectations associated with victimhood' (p. 1165). Other studies have also concluded that children who are exploited through County Lines rarely fit the profile of being a 'perfect victim' and, consequently, some children are not being regarded as worthy of the victim status (Ditcham, 2022; Marshall, 2023b; Olver & Cockbain, 2021; Shaw & Greenhow, 2020; Shaw, 2023). Studies have also warned against assuming that all children are purely victims, as some children may be both a victim and an offender (Marshall, 2023b; Robinson, 2019; Shaw & Greenhow, 2020; Shaw, 2023). Marshall (2023a) agreed and stated that professionals need to move away from binary thinking in order to explore some of the complexities of criminal exploitation.

2.5.4 Notions about vulnerability and childhood

Children exploited through County Lines are often portrayed as vulnerable and helpless (Robinson, 2019; Shaw & Greenhow, 2020). However, Ditcham's (2022) highlighted that some children who are being exploited are missed by professionals because they do not fit the stereotypical profile of a 'vulnerable child'. Studies also explored the concept of childhood and talked about how childhood should be a loving, nurturing, and positive time of life (Ditcham, 2022; Marshall, 2023b). Together, these notions about vulnerability and childhood help to position children who are exploited through County Lines as being first and foremost, children. This can also be seen in the youth justice sector's 'child-first' philosophy, which aims to reconceptualise young offenders so that children are seen as children first and offenders second (Marshall 2023b).

2.6 Relevance to the EP profession

The literature review identified that educational psychology is one of the last professions to join the conversation about County Lines and child exploitation (Allen & Bond, 2021). Whilst there are some concerns that work relating to child exploitation could lie 'outside of the educational aspect of an educational and child psychologist' (Allen & Bond, 2021, p. 27), previous research has identified opportunities for EPs to work systemically and to apply their psychological understanding to tackle safeguarding issues (Allen & Bond,

2020; BPS, 2021). Therefore, further research in this area is needed to drive interest from the EP community and consider how EPs could facilitate change for children who have been exploited through County Lines.

2.7 Rationale for the current study

The literature review explored some of the ways professionals are constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines. The review found that professionals' constructions of these children are often influenced by prominent narratives about gangs, victimhood, vulnerability, and childhood. In particular, the review identified three emerging issues in the literature. Firstly, there is a general lack of understanding about County Lines and child exploitation (Brewster et al., 2023; Olver & Cockbain, 2021; Shaw & Greenhow, 2020). Secondly, there are concerns about how professionals are seeing and talking about these children (Appiah et al., 2021; The Children's Society, 2022). Thirdly, there is limited research done in this area from an educational psychology perspective (Allen & Bond, 2020). Therefore, there is a need for further research to address these issues.

2.8 Research questions

This exploratory research study will investigate how professionals talk about children who are exploited through County Lines in order to explore the following research questions:

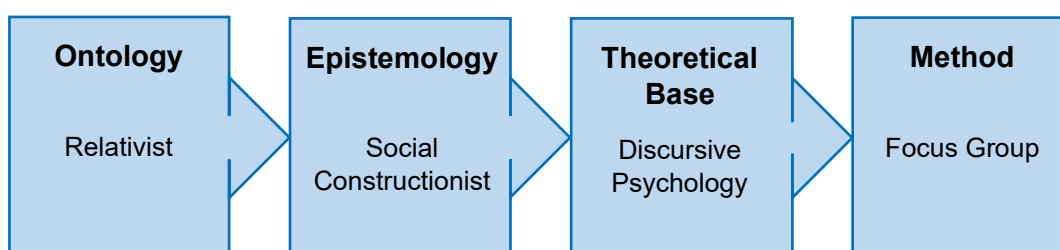
- 1) How do professionals construct children who are being exploited through County Lines through their language and dialogue?
- 2) What are some of the potential implications of these constructions?

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction to the methodology

This section will describe the chosen methodology for the study. It will begin by discussing how the chosen ontological and epistemological positions have informed the research study. Next, it will explore the chosen methodology. Then it will outline the details of the participant recruitment, the data collection and the process for data analysis. Following this, the key ethical considerations and steps taken to uphold the trustworthiness of the study will be presented. A summary of the theoretical framework for this study is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Theoretical framework of current study



3.2 Research design and paradigm

A qualitative design was chosen for this study ‘to explore the ways different versions of reality are created’ (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 25). The study adopted a relativist ontological stance, which suggests that multiple realities can co-exist (Levers, 2013). This worldview moves away from the idea that there is a single pre-social reality, and it promotes the idea that the world can be seen and experienced in different ways (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The study also follows a social constructionist epistemological stance which states that knowledge is co-constructed over time and in different contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Burr, 2003; 2015; Flick, 2018). It also promotes the notion that knowledge is ‘sustained by social processes’ which supports the idea that knowledge is constructed through social interactions (Burr, 2015). For this current study, these paradigms suggest that:

- Professionals may hold different constructs about children who are exploited through County Lines.

- No single construction of children who are exploited through County Lines can be judged as being the absolute truth.
- Professionals' constructions about children who have been exploited through County Lines may have been influenced by historical, cultural and social factors.

Further discussions about the ontological and epistemological stance of this study can be found in Part Three of this report.

3.3 Methodological Approach

3.3.1 Discourse Analysis

The study adopted a discourse analysis approach to explore 'the role of discourse in the construction of our social world' (Wiggins, 2017, p.32). This approach is specifically interested in how discourse constructs different versions of the social world, which reflects the central principles of the social constructionist stance of this study (Burr, 1995; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Due to this focus on discourse, discourse analysis differs from cognitive approaches in psychological research (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In particular, discourse analysis looks at what is happening externally by examining social interactions, whereas cognitive approaches look at what happens internally by exploring an individual's thoughts and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wiggins, 2017). This shift in focus led Braun and Clarke (2013) to describe discourse analysis as a "whole approach to psychology and knowledge" (p. 187) and they stated that discourse analysis may better be defined as an 'umbrella term' to describe a range of approaches that investigates discourse. For this study, the researcher adopted a form of discourse analysis known as discursive psychology, which will now be explored. Further reflections on the rationale for choosing discourse analysis can be found in Part Three of this report.

3.3.2 Discursive Psychology

Discursive psychology emerged in the early 90's through the work of Derek Edwards and Jonathan Potter (1992). Wiggins (2017) stated that discursive psychology aims to explore how psychological concepts are being constructed in the social world. Discursive psychology is founded on the principles that discourse is "both constructed and constructive" and "situated within a social context" (Wiggins, 2017, p. 9). Discursive psychology is also underpinned by the belief that "discourse is action-orientated"

(Wiggins, 2017, p.9), which means that social actions are being performed and psychological concepts are being co-constructed through talk (Wiggins, 2017). Potter and Wetherell (1987) emphasised this by saying “all utterances state things and do things,” (p. 17). Discursive psychology also explores the discursive devices used within talk to explore the different social actions at play (Wiggins, 2017). Discursive devices can be understood as recognisable ways of talking and making arguments (Goodman, 2017; Wiggins, 2017), and will be discussed later.

3.3.3 Rationale Summary

The researcher adopted a discursive psychology approach for this study for the following reasons:

- Discursive psychology reflects this study's ontological and epistemological stance and promotes the idea that psychological constructs develop over time (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Burr, 2003; Wiggins, 2017).
- Discursive psychology believes that discourse is ‘action-orientated’ and encourages researchers to explore what is being accomplished through the interactions of the focus group.
- The analytical steps of discursive psychology would enable the researcher to explore some of the co-constructions being generated in the focus group.

The strengths and limitations of discursive psychology and a rationale for why discursive psychology was selected over other forms of discourse analysis can be found in Part Three of this report.

3.4 Methods

3.4.1 Data Collection

The data were collected through an online focus group. This approach enabled the participants to take part in a group conversation where they could react and respond to what was being said (Oates, 2011). A semi-structured discussion schedule (Appendix D) based on Jasper's (2013) Experience Reflection Action (ERA) cycle was used to help stimulate the group conversation. In particular, it was hoped that the design of the semi-structured discussion schedule (Appendix D) would help to facilitate a reflective

discussion. The strengths and limitations of focus groups and the ERA cycle will be discussed in Part Three.

3.4.2 Recruitment and inclusion and exclusion criteria

The researcher wanted to recruit professionals from a range of different backgrounds rather than just EPs to replicate the type of professionals that regularly attend round table discussions and multi-agency meetings about the exploitation of children through County Lines. To recruit participants, the researcher made initial phone calls to organisations across England and Wales who were likely to meet the inclusion criteria outlined in Table 6. For these phone calls, the researcher followed a semi-structured script (Appendix E).

Table 6: Participant inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A professional that directly works with children. This can be understood as individuals under the age of 18. • A professional who supports children in England or Wales. • A professional that works directly with one or more of the following groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children who are being exploited through County Lines. • Children who have been exploited through County Lines. • Children who are perceived as being ‘at risk’ of County Lines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A professional who does not work directly with children. • A professional who supports children outside of England or Wales. • A professional who supports children where there are no concerns of child exploitation through County Lines.

Rationale

This study was interested in hearing from:

- Professionals who specifically work with children rather than adults.
- Professionals who work within England and Wales so that they follow the same statutory guidelines.
- Professionals with relevant work experiences so that they could make meaningful contributions to the focus group conversation.

After the initial phone calls, services and organisations interested in the study were sent further information, including the gatekeeper letter (Appendix F) and the participant information sheet (Appendix G). Following this, seven professionals from different organisations contacted the researcher via email to volunteer for the study. The professionals were then asked to read and sign the consent form (Appendix H) before the focus group. This form sought consent from the professionals and asked for relevant information, such as their job role and work experience. Despite seven professionals volunteering for the study, only four participated in the focus group due to ill health and other work commitments. The study initially hoped to recruit between six and ten participants to create enough breadth in the conversations (Oates, 2011). However, the researcher decided the four participants provided enough conversation for analysis. The researcher felt this was due to the participant's willingness to engage in the conversation and the participant's experience of working in this field. Further reflections on the focus group will be discussed in Part Three.

3.4.3 Participants

The study used a volunteer sample of four participants from diverse backgrounds. For example, the participants worked in different cities, coastal towns, and rural villages from across England and Wales. The four participants also all worked in different areas of the children's workforce, including education, youth justice, youth work and social care. It should be noted that no EPs volunteered for this study. However, wider advertising of this study within the EP community may have resulted in EPs volunteering for this study, but the researcher did not want to show preference to one specific professional group.

To gain a greater understanding of the participants, the consent form (Appendix H) collected information on the participant's job role and work experience. However, more specific information about the participant's characteristics, such as their sex, age, and

ethnicity was not collected to uphold the participant's anonymity. To further ensure the participant's anonymity, the participants were given letters as their unique identifier, such as 'Participant A'. Key decision-making regarding the anonymity of participants will be discussed further in Part Three. A summary of the participants can be seen below in Table 7.

Table 7: Key information on the participants.

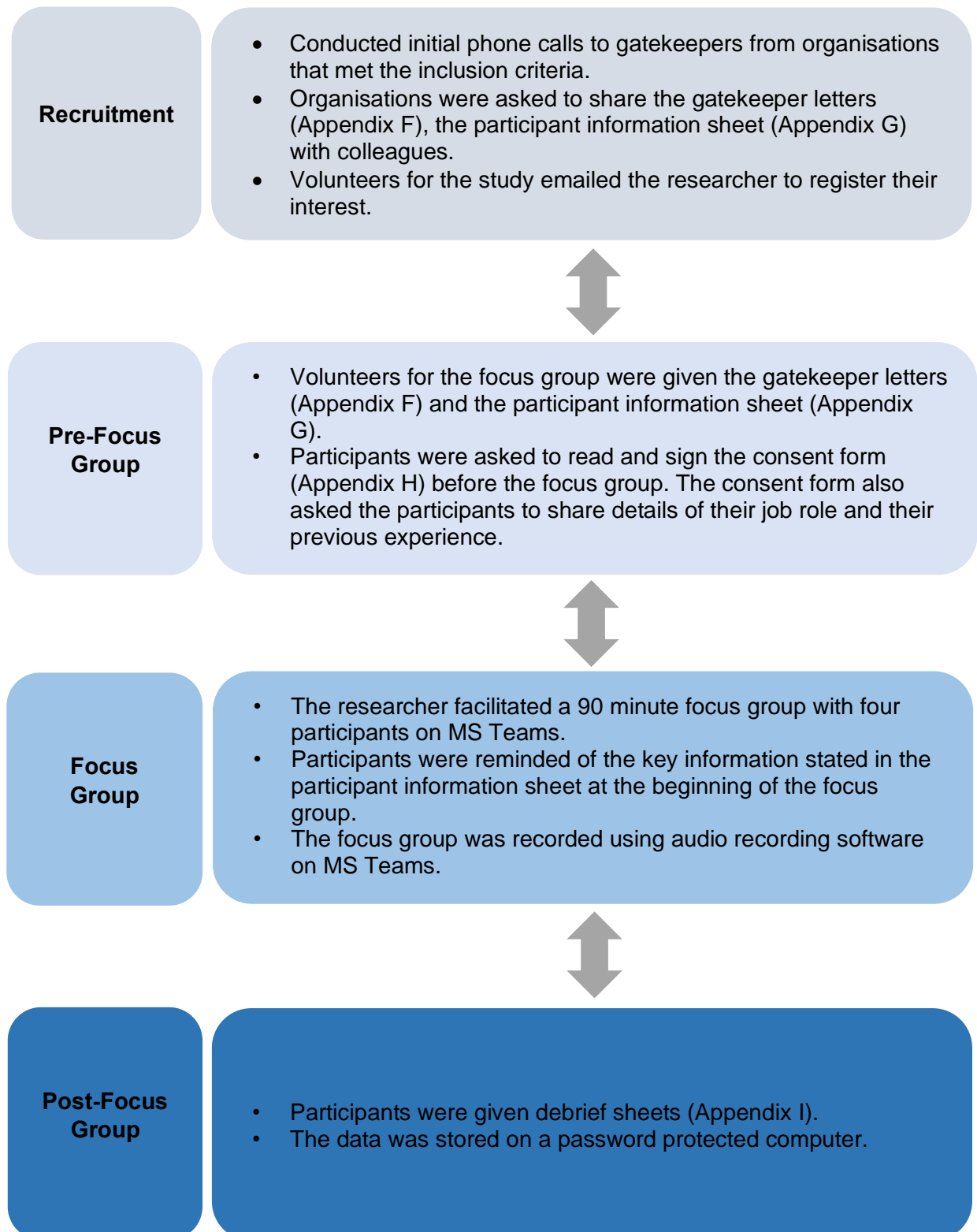
Unique Identifier	Professional Background	Job Role	Experience (approximate)
Participant A	Education	Deputy and designated safeguarding lead (DSL) at an alternative provision for pupils aged between 11 and 16 years old.	10 years
Participant B	Youth Justice Service	Youth justice service manager, qualified social worker, and regional lead specialist for CCE.	20 years
Participant C	Youth Intervention Service	Detached youth worker at a project tackling CCE and serious youth violence.	25 years
Participant D	Secure Children's Homes	Safeguarding and behaviour management officer at a secure children's home.	10 years

Whilst the participants did not know each other before the focus group, they engaged meaningfully in a rich conversation about the exploitation of children through County Lines. This was evident in the fact that the researcher had to draw conversations to an end due to time boundaries. On reflection, the diversity of the participants in terms of their job role and geographical location, and their level of experience of working in this field added to the richness of the data collected.

3.4.4 Procedure

The figure below presents the key stages of the research process.

Figure 5: Research Procedure



3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Transcription Process

The researcher began by producing an orthographic transcript which is a written document where the words were written verbatim (Wiggins, 2017). The researcher then created a Jefferson transcript (2004), which included symbols to highlight the phonetic features of the group conversation (Wiggins, 2017). A copy of the Jefferson transcript system and a full copy of the Jefferson transcript can be seen in Appendix J.

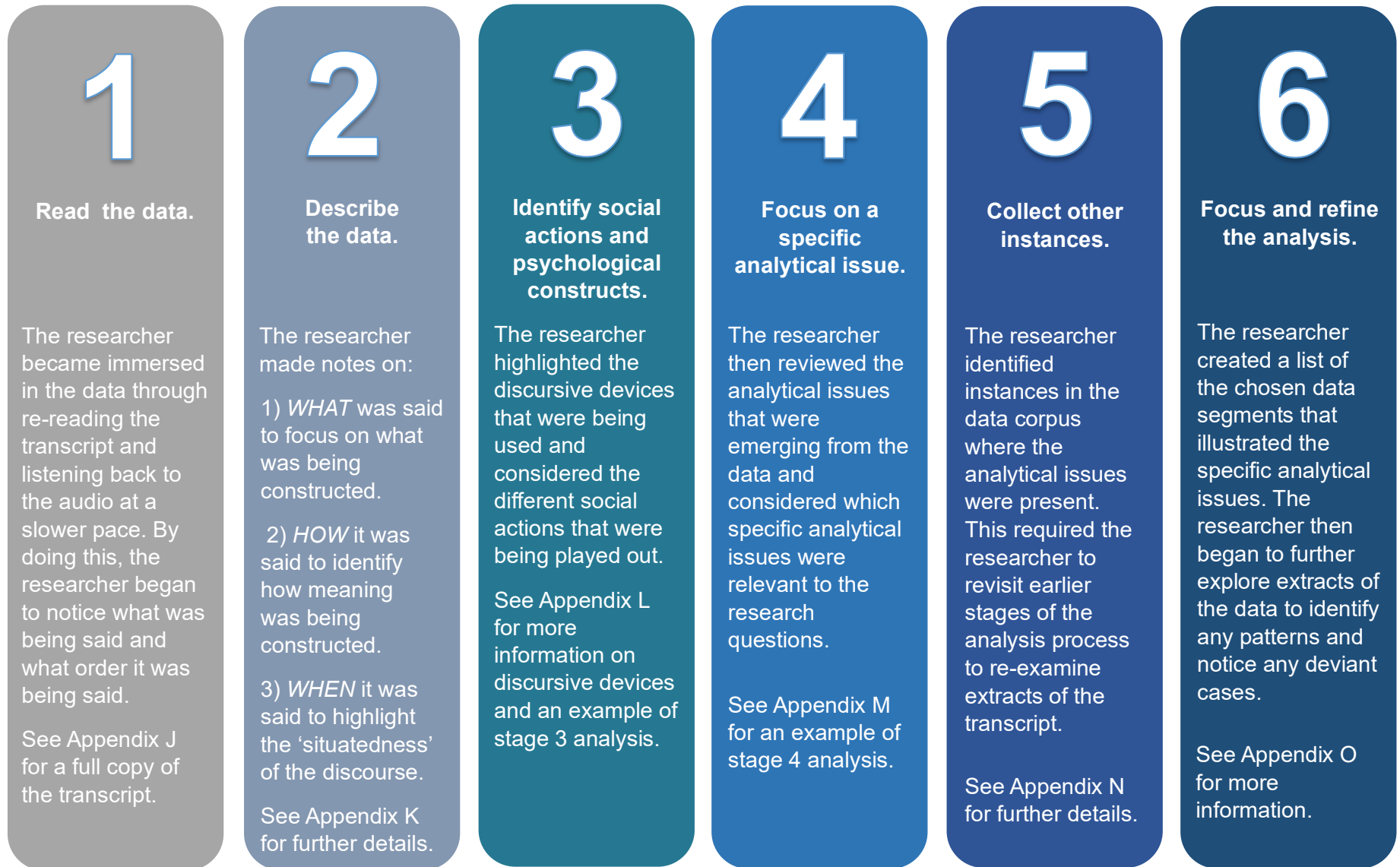
Wiggins (2017) described this transcription process as one of the earliest stages of analysis as the researcher becomes familiar with the data through the multiple playbacks of the audio recording of the focus group. Wiggins (2017) stated that whilst the transcription stage of analysis is a lengthy process, “a good quality transcript is the key to a good quality analysis” (p.93). Further reflections on the transcription process can be found in Part Three.

3.5.2 Analysis Process

Like many forms of discourse analysis, there is no specific way to approach discursive psychology (Wiggins, 2017). As such, Wiggins (2017) presented a six-stage analysis model for discursive psychology to provide scaffolding for researchers and to break down the analytical process into manageable steps. However, Wiggins (2017) stated that “doing discursive psychology is not a simple step-by-step linear process” (p.114) and suggested that the analytical process should be more of a fluid motion where researchers move back and forth between the different stages to improve the overall trustworthiness of the findings.

For the purpose of this current study, the researcher adopted Wiggins (2017) six stages of analysis for discursive psychology. The figure below presents the key stages of the analysis process. Further reflections on the analysis process can be found in Part Three.

Figure 6: Six stages of analysis for discursive psychology (Wiggins, 2017)



3.6 Ethical Considerations

The Cardiff University School of Psychology Ethics Committee awarded full ethical approval for the study in June 2022 (Appendix P). The ethical considerations for this study were guided by the BPS code of human research ethics (BPS, 2021) and Cardiff University School of Psychology Ethics Committee. Key ethical considerations for this study are outlined in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Key ethical considerations

Ethical Considerations	How they were addressed
Informed Consent	<p>To ensure that all participants were able to give informed consent, the researcher ensured that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gate keeper consent was gained.• All participants were asked to read the participant information sheet (Appendix G) and read and sign the consent form (Appendix H) prior to the focus group.• All participants were reminded of their right to withdraw up to two weeks after the focus group.
Anonymity	<p>While face to face focus groups cannot be fully anonymous, the following steps were put in place to ensure the anonymity of the participants where possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The focus group was recorded on a password-protected account and downloaded on a password-protected device.• The focus group recording was permanently deleted after the data was transcribed and anonymised.• Unique identifiers were given to the participants and used within the report.
Confidentiality	<p>To uphold confidentiality where possible, the researcher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saved any personal information of the participants on a password-protected account and device.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participants were reminded at the beginning of the focus group to respect the group's confidentiality, and they were told not to share information that had been spoken about outside of the group, such as names of people or organisations. • The focus group data was only accessed by the researcher and the supervision team. • Any identifiable information in the data was anonymised, and unique identifiers were given to the participants. • The recording of the focus group was permanently deleted once all the data was collected and anonymised.
Right to withdraw	<p>Participants had the right to withdraw their data up to two weeks after the date of the focus group. If any participants wanted to withdraw from the study, they did not have to give a reason, and their contribution to the conversation would have been deleted from the final transcript.</p>
Debrief	<p>All participants were provided with an appropriate debrief form at the end of the focus group, including the researcher's contact details (Appendix I).</p>
Welfare of the participants	<p>Participants were not manipulated or misled during the research study. Participants were informed of the confidentiality and anonymity procedures, the research purposes, and their right to withdraw from the study up to two weeks after the focus group. It was hoped that this study posed a low risk to the participants, but it was recognised that some participants may reflect on upsetting memories. Therefore, counselling services were signposted on the debrief sheet (Appendix I).</p>

3.7 Quality Criteria

To ensure the quality of the research, Yardley's (2000) criteria for qualitative research was used to reflect on the data collection and analysis process. A summary of the key considerations can be seen below in Table 9.

Table 9: Yardley's (2000) criteria for qualitative research.

Yardley's (2000) Core principles and criteria for validity	Key Considerations
Sensitivity to context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study gained ethical approval from the Cardiff University School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (Appendix P). • A thorough literature review was conducted to develop the researcher's understanding of the current context of the topic. This review included literature from across different disciplines due to the nature of the research. • Ethical consideration was given to the care of the participants. This included gaining informed consent before the focus group and providing participants with a debrief form with information about where they could access additional support. • The focus group used a semi-structured discussion schedule (Appendix D) to stimulate a reflective group conversation where participants could share detailed and accurate accounts of their experiences. • Implications for professionals across the children's workforce were suggested.
Commitment to rigour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The researcher kept a research diary and attended regular research supervision sessions to ensure continued reflection and reflexivity throughout the research process. This enabled the research to be aware of any underlying

	<p>assumptions or biases and make any necessary amendments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research adopted Wiggins' six-stage approach to analysis for discursive psychology (2017). Details of this analysis approach can be found in Section 3.3. • This analysis process adopted an inductive and rigorous approach (Wiggins, 2017). • The in-depth process of developing the Jefferson transcript and the circular nature of Wiggins' six-stage approach meant that the researcher immersed themselves in the data.
<p>Coherence and transparency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The literature review presented the rationale for the study and identified the relevance to the EP profession. • The researcher provided a copy of the Jefferson transcript (Appendix J). • The researcher followed Wiggins's six-stage approach and examples of the analysis process can be found in appendices K – O. • The researcher provided details about any deviant cases and the unexplored analytical issues that were found in the data (Appendix Q) • The researcher utilised supervision to reflect on the study's epistemological and ontological position and design. • The researcher critically reflected on the research process and provided a rationale for key research decisions. Details of this can be found in Part Three.
<p>Impact and importance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study identified a significant gap in the literature and helped to explore how EPs can support children subjected to exploitation. • The findings informed implications for the EP profession and the wider children's workforce. • Directions for future research were discussed.

4. Findings

4.1 Introduction to the findings

This section will present the findings of the data analysis. It will begin by introducing the three analytical issues that were identified in the data. It will then explore the analytical issues in turn and comment on any key social actions that were performed by the group, discursive devices featured in the talk, co-constructions put forward by the group, and any emerging implications. Following this, any deviant cases and additional analytical issues will be highlighted in order to support the overall coherence of the analysis (Wiggins, 2017). This section will then conclude with an overview of the key findings.

4.2 Introduction to the key analytical issues

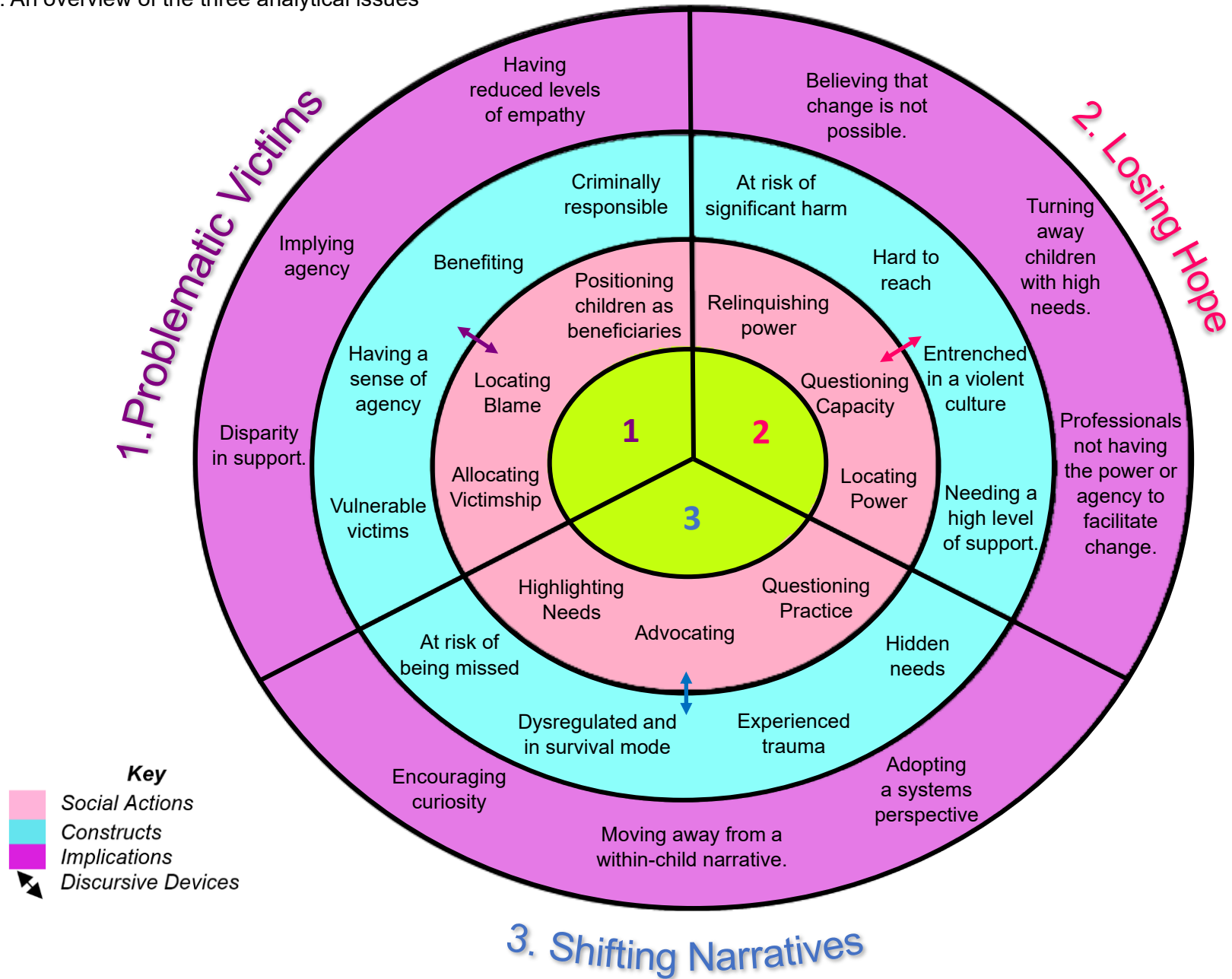
The researcher followed the stages of analysis for discursive psychology set out by Wiggins (2017) and identified eleven analytical issues and social actions that were performed by the group. Due to the scale of this thesis, it was not possible to comment on all of the analytical issues identified in the data. Therefore, this study will focus on the three key analytical issues that were most relevant to the following research questions:

1. How do professionals construct children who are exploited through County Lines through their language and dialogue?
2. What are some of the potential implications of these constructions?

The three key analytical issues were given descriptive labels and were titled 'Problematic Victims', 'Losing Hope', and 'Shifting Narratives'. These issues will now be discussed in turn using representative extracts from the data. Further instances from the data corpus of the analytical issues are recorded in Appendix O. To aid the reader, Appendix J presents a summary of the Jefferson transcription system and a full copy of the transcript to enable the reader to see the wider interactional context of the focus group discussion.

An overview of the findings can be seen in Figure 7. The diagram is comprised of three circles; the pink circle presents the key social actions, the blue circle displays the group's co-constructions that were generated through the social actions, and the purple circle summaries the emerging implications that are coming through the data. The arrows on the diagram also show the bidirectional influence of the discursive devices.

Figure 7: An overview of the three analytical issues



4.3 Analytical Issue One: ‘Problematic Victims’

The first analytical issue that was identified was professionals constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines as being ‘problematic victims’. For this analytical issue, the group performed three key social actions, including positioning children as beneficiaries, locating blame, and allocating victimship.

4.3.1 Social Action One: Positioning children as beneficiaries

At the beginning of the focus group, the participants were asked how they would describe County Lines. During these discussions, the group appeared to be performing the social action of positioning children as beneficiaries, which generated a notion about some children choosing to participate in County Lines for their own gain. Two instances of this social action will now be further discussed.

Table 10: Examples of the social action positioning children as beneficiaries

Extract	Discussion
<p>Extract A:</p> <p>Participant A:</p> <p>20 in <u>my</u></p> <p>21 experience, the <u>young</u> people think it's</p> <p>22 a <u>good</u> thing, um, and they think</p> <p>23 they're making <u>money</u> by doing <whatever</p> <p>24 it is> they're <u>asked</u> <to do> in</p> <p>25 <u>exchange</u> for >whatever it is< they're</p> <p>26 <u>getting</u>.</p>	<p>Participant A begins to describe what happens to children who are exploited through County Lines and seems to perform the social action of positioning children as beneficiaries by suggesting that some children gain something in exchange. Participant A performs this social action through the following discursive devices:</p> <p><i>Pronoun use and Footing Shifts:</i></p> <p>Participant A begins by emphasising that they are speaking from their personal experience to add credibility to their account. Participant A</p>

	<p>then shifts to speaking in the third person in line 22 and positions themselves as a commentator to further strengthen their claims.</p> <p><i>Vague Language</i></p> <p>Participant A uses the phrase “whatever it is” in lines 23 and 25 to describe what happens to children who are exploited through County Lines. The vagueness of this statement allows Participant A to avoid talking about the exploitative nature of County Lines and places the emphasis on the perceived benefits of County Lines.</p>
<p>Extract B:</p> <p>Participant B:</p> <p>154 it's <u>because</u> °they're 155 getting something in return that they 156 want°, They don't <u>think</u> it's an issue, 157 they don't see it as <as professionals 157 as parents would> see it <u>being</u> 158 an i:ssue. <u>They don't</u>.</p> <p>Participant A:</p> <p>159 And <u>then</u> o:bviously they get to see 160 <u>different</u> ácities.</p> <p>Participant B:</p> <p>161 [in overlap] Yep.</p> <p>Participant A:</p>	<p>There is a similar narrative in extract B where Participant A and Participant B perform the social action of positioning children as beneficiaries of County Lines by emphasising some of the perceived rewards of County Lines. They do this through the following discursive devices:</p> <p><i>Consensus:</i></p> <p>Throughout this account, Participant A and Participant B frequently interject with comments like “exactly” (line 165) to help corroborate each other’s account and to strengthen the validity of each other’s claims.</p>

<p>162 And they, you know, <u>different</u></p> <p>163 e:explorations that they've never <u>been</u></p> <p>164 before.</p> <p>Participant B:</p> <p>165 in overlap] Exactly.</p> <p>Participant A:</p> <p>166 Because they think it's a wonderful</p> <p>167 world out there, <which it is> (.)</p> <p>168 °But not in that, in that respect°</p> <p>169 (1.9).</p>	<p><i>Script Formulations:</i></p> <p>Participant A and Participant B present a number of scripted formulations that imply that children benefit from being exploited and get “something in return” (line 155).</p> <p><i>Extreme Case Formulation (ECF) and Disclaimers</i></p> <p>As the conversation continued, Participant A began presenting more extreme examples. In particular, Participant A suggested that children who are being exploited have the opportunity to travel and explore new cities. This prompted Participant A to say that these children think that it is a “wonderful world” (line 166). However, following this comment, Participant A quickly adds a disclaimer saying “but not in that, in that respect” (line 168) to possibly to back track on what they said and to defend themselves against criticism from the group. This comment was then met with a brief moment of silence, which suggests that the group did not agree with Participant A’s formulation.</p>
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The discourses seen in these extracts could be described as promoting the ‘exchange narrative’ as the participants are suggesting that children who are exploited through County Lines are “getting something in return” (line 155). In addition to this, the vague descriptions of what happens to children who are exploited through County Lines minimises any talk of harm and puts the emphasis on the perceived benefits of County Lines. Consequently, the group sometimes positions the children as ‘willing participants’ who are choosing to get involved in County Lines for their own gain. Possible implications of this could be that some children are seen as having agency, which may contribute to professionals being less empathetic towards them.

4.3.2 Social Action Two: Locating blame

The group were invited to talk about what happens to children who are exploited through County Lines. Through these conversations, the participants seemed to perform the social action of locating blame to protect themselves from any potential criticism. An example of this will now be explored.

Table 11: Example of the social action locating blame.

Extract	Discussion
<p>Extract C</p> <p>Participant A</p> <p>605 Um (.) well at <u>our</u> school 606 p:articularly, um, (.) it's a s:mall 607 school. There's only, there's there's 608 <u>maximum 90</u> s:tudents (.) they get 609 s:earched on the <u>door</u> (.) >things like 610 that<. So they <u>can't</u> bring a:nything 611 into school, so they're not d:oiing 612 anything on ásite (.) and we've got 613 CCTV huh f(h)oorage everywhere (.) Um, 614 so we do keep them (.) as <u>safe</u> as 615 <u>possible</u> within this (.) s:chool (.) 616 It's o:utside when they l:eave or 617 they're at h;ome in the c:ommunities, 618 that's where (.) we'd <u>love</u> to be a:ble 619 to get them but we <u>can't</u>. And we'd 620 l:ove to <u>protect</u> them <u>after</u> three 621 o'clock when they l:eave (.) But <you 622 know what t:eenagers are like>, they go</p>	<p>Just prior to this extract, Participant A made a claim that 99% of the children at their school who are at risk of County Lines are not excluded. Participant C then asks how they have achieved this as a school. Participant A appeared to manage this gentle challenge by locating blame away from the school through a range of discursive devices, including:</p> <p><i>Listing:</i></p> <p>In line 608, Participant A begins to list the different things the school has done to minimise the chances of children bringing drugs into school and consequently being excluded. Through doing this, Participant A positions the school as being pro-active and capable and distances themselves from any suggestions that they are to blame for children being excluded.</p>

623 off and do their o:wn thing, but
624 w:ithin school there's (.) it's v:ery
625 very rare that something happens, i.e.
626 they are (.) °dealing or anything like
627 that° because we, we get them s:traight
628 away. And unfortunately, if we do see
629 anything like that, if they do manage
630 to sneak something on (.) they get a
631 p:ermanent e:xclusion from us (.)
632 because it's zero tolerance (.) But
633 again, it's sort of (.) the vulnerable,
634 ones, if they do something as silly as
635 carry for s:omebody cause they've been
636 asked to hold (.) cannabis or they've
637 been asked to h:old something (.) and
638 they're f:ound with it (.) it's sort of
639 like they're getting punished for
640 d:oiing something for a friend.

Affect Displays and Disclaimers:

When listing the different things that the school does, Participant A laughed when they spoke about having CCTV cameras in school. This display of laughter potentially suggests that the use of CCTV cameras to monitor pupils may be a controversial topic. To defend themselves against criticism from the group, Participant A immediately uses the disclaimer “so we do keep them as safe as possible” (line 614) to emphasise that the CCTV cameras are there for safety reasons.

Agency Subject and Modal Verbs:

Participant A then shifts the conversation to talk about the risks facing children in the community. This can be seen in line 618, where Participant A states that the school would “love to be able to get them but we can’t”. Participant A also says in line 619 “we’d love to protect them after three o’clock when they leave but’. Together, these statements could be seen as Participant A attempting to make clear their level of agency and power to help children. This is further emphasised by the use of modal verbs used within these statements that give the impression that Participant A ‘would’ help if they ‘could’. This further suggests that Participant A is trying to shift blame away from the school by distancing themselves from having responsibility for what happens to children in the community after school hours.

	<p><i>Script Formulation</i></p> <p>Participant A appears to shift the blame onto the children by using script formulations such as, “you know what teenagers are like” (line 621) and suggests that the typical behaviour of children that age is to “go off and do their own thing” (line 622) to emphasise that schools cannot protect them.</p> <p><i>Comparison and Category Entitlements</i></p> <p>Near the end of the extract, Participant A compares different pupils who bring drugs into school. In particular, Participant A talked about pupils who “sneak” (line 630) drugs into school and get permanently excluded and compares them to vulnerable pupils who have done something “silly” (line 634) and are getting “punished for doing something for a friend” (line 640). This comparison illustrates how a child’s perceived vulnerability can sometimes influence how a professional responds.</p>
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The social action of locating blame helps Participant A to protect themselves from any potential criticism from the group. In this extract, Participant A also appears to categorise children who are exploited through County Lines. For example, children who should be held responsible for their actions and children who need support because they are vulnerable. It could be argued that categorising children in this way could lead to a lack of consistency in terms of how professionals respond to children who have been exploited through County Lines.

4.3.3 Social Action Three: Allocating victimship

On several occasions, the group spoke about professional’s perceptions of children who are exploited through County Lines. During these conversations, the group seemed to be performing the social action of allocating victimship, which can be described as deciding who is a victim. Instances of where this social action was accomplished will now be reviewed.

Table 12: Examples of the social action allocating victimship.

Extract	Discussion
<p>Extract D</p> <p>Participant B</p> <p>997 I think police can be very (.) ‘they’re 998 a <u>criminal</u>’ (.) <you know what I mean?> 999 And I I I I, and kind of they’re, 1000 they’re causing a <u>nuisance</u>, uh, ‘they’re 1001 doing this, they’re doing <u>that</u>’. <Do 1002 you know what I mean?> Whereas 1003 professionals, like <u>YOT</u> workers, <u>social</u> 1004 workers, um, <u>specialised</u> p:olice 1005 officers who are in what we call here 1006 in [Name of County], we have got the 1007 <u>[NAME]</u> áteam, um, who obviously <u>deal</u> 1008 with young people and try and get them 1009 on <u>board</u> to kind of, um, <u>safeguard</u> them 1010 where p:ossible, but also to kind of 1011 obviously put them in touch with the 1012 <u>right support</u> from the police 1013 perspective as victims as opposed to</p>	<p>In extract D, Participant B is performing the social action of allocating victimship by promoting the notion that children who are exploited through County Lines are victims. Participant B performs this social action by using the following discursive features:</p> <p><i>Assessments and Reported Speech</i></p> <p>In line 997, Participant B offers an assessment that some police officers can sometimes see children who have been exploited County Lines as criminals. To share this assessment, Participant B initially spoke in the first person singular and used the phrase ‘I think’ to make known that this was their assessment. Participant B then shifted into speaking as an animator, as Goffman (1981) described, to speak in the role of the police. In this role, Participant B suggested that some police officers see children who are exploited through County Lines as “criminals” (line 998) who are “causing a nuisance” (1000). It could be</p>

<p>1014 being (.) <u>problematic</u>, °how 1015 neighborhood policing teams might see 1016 them°.</p>	<p>argued that this use of reported speech helps to distance Participant B from the content of this statement, as it may be perceived as controversial. This assessment is also punctuated with two pauses, and by Participant B asking “you know what I mean?” (line 998) to seek validation from the other group members.</p> <p><i>Vague Language:</i> Participant B creates a sense of confusion over what actually happens to children who are exploited through County Lines by using the phrase “they’re doing this, they’re doing that” (line 1000). This follows a similar pattern identified in the data where the participants avoid talking about the exploitative nature of County Lines.</p> <p><i>Category Entitlements:</i> At the end of this extract, Participant B reinforces the idea that children who are exploited through County Lines are “victims as opposed to being problematic” (line 1013). In this statement, Participant B pauses briefly before saying the word problematic. This could suggest that Participant C was withholding from using the word ‘criminal’ and used the word ‘problematic’ to soften their statement.</p>
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In this extract, Participant B shared some of the opposing discourses that are held by professionals about children who are exploited through County Lines. These contrasting discourses suggest that some professionals are struggling to make sense of children who are exploited through County Lines.

4.3.4 Overview of analytical issue one

Together, these social actions generated a notion about children who are exploited through County Lines being 'problematic victims'. More specifically, some of the participants appeared to find it hard to commit to the label of victim due to concerns that some children are seemingly 'getting something in return'. The participants appeared to manage this uncertainty by categorising children into children who are vulnerable and children who are not. Furthermore, this may be impacting how some professionals are responding to children who are exploited through County Lines.

4.4 Analytical Issue Two: Losing Hope

The second analytical issue that was detected was indications that some professionals are 'losing hope'. This analytical issue was centred around the group performing three key social actions which were relinquishing power, locating power, and questioning capacity. An overview of the key social actions, co-constructions and implications for this issue will now be explored.

4.4.1 Social Action One: Relinquishing power

When talking about the dangers associated with County Lines, the group appeared to perform the social action of relinquishing power, where participants seemed to be giving up and surrendering to the County Lines gangs due to fears that they can't make a difference in the lives of these children.

Table 13: Examples of the social action relinquishing power.

Extract	Description
<p>Extract F</p> <p>Participant A</p> <p>51 it's alright giving them educational 52 <u>slides</u> and saying 'this is County Lines 53 <X, Y, and Z>', (.) but then they're 54 <u>just</u> gonna go 'well, I'm making money 55 (.) so what's the problem?' Or 'I'm 56 getting really good friends, or I've 57 got protection or' (.) °do you know 58 what I mean° (.) áit's, it's quite a 59 difficult one (.) <to be fair> but it's 60 huh it's freally sort of (.) you've <u>got</u> 61 <u>to really determine</u>, um, what they 62 understand and and <u>their</u> level of 63 understanding and how far (.) far in 64 they are(.)<u>into</u> >possible< exploitation 65 <as well> because if they're <u>too far</u> 66 <u>gone</u> (.) and °there is such thing as 67 too far gone° (.) <u>unfortunately</u> it's 68 >really< difficult to <u>get</u> them âback.</p>	<p>In extract F, Participant A performs the social action of relinquishing power, which in turn positioned the children as being helpless.</p> <p>Participant A uses the following discursive devices to achieve this social action:</p> <p><i>Reported Speech and Scripted Formulation:</i></p> <p>In lines 54-57, Participant A uses reported speech to share scripted formulations about the perceived benefits of County Lines, such as making money. Through the use of reported speech, Participant A adds authenticity to their account whilst minimising their accountability for what has been said.</p> <p><i>Hedging and Hesitancy:</i></p> <p>In line 63, Participant A's description of exploitation is punctuated with hedging and hesitancy. This suggests that Participant A is avoiding committing to the label of 'exploitation'.</p> <p><i>ECF and Metaphors:</i></p> <p>In line 65, Participant A used an ECF to suggest that some children are "too far gone". Participant A followed up this statement with "there is such a thing as too far gone unfortunately" (line 66) to strengthen</p>

	<p>their claim that some children cannot be helped. The metaphor of ‘too far gone’ (65) emphasises a sense of hopelessness and suggests that some professionals feel like some children are beyond help.</p> <p><i>Assessment:</i></p> <p>At the end of the extract, Participant A offers an assessment that it is “really difficult to get them back” (line 68). It could be argued that this assessment helps Participant A to minimise their sense of accountability by subtly expressing that there is very little that they can do.</p>
<p>Extract G</p> <p>Participant D</p> <p>957 they’re 958 e:ntrenched in this <u>culture</u> that, you 959 know, <like [Participant B] said> they 960 have been <u>shot</u>, they have been <u>stabbed</u> 961 (.) Wasn't l:ong ago, we had one boy in 962 that had been (.) <u>hacked</u> outside a 963 <u>train</u> station with <u>blunt</u> m::achetes 964 because they couldn't get to his <u>o:lder</u> 965 <u>b:rother</u> <because his brother was high 966 up in the< (.) chain. °He was still 967 quite low down°, but they couldn't 968 <u>reach</u> his brother so they kind of (.) 969 just seen him outside the <u>train station</u> 970 and <u>got</u> to him <u>first</u>. And he was in 971 with us as a <u>risk</u> to <u>life</u>, and <he just 972 seen it as>, 'it is what it is, my 973 b:rother will get them when they</p>	<p>Another example of the social action of relinquishing power is in extract G, where Participant D uses the following discursive devices to tell the story of a child they supported.</p> <p><i>Narrative Structure</i></p> <p>In this extract, Participant D uses a narrative structure to highlight the dangers of exploitation. Participant D does this through sharing a detailed account of a child who is subjected to a violent attack.</p> <p><i>ECF and Metaphors</i></p> <p>Participant D presents an ECF to emphasise the violent nature of County Lines. In line 958, the ECF uses a metaphor of children being ‘entrenched’ to suggest that some children are surrounded by a</p>

<p>974 leave', and to (.) <u>change</u> that t:hought 975 of p:rocess when they're <u>so entrenched</u> 976 is, is really ádifficult. (2.8)</p>	<p>culture of youth violence. Through using this metaphor, Participant D suggests that some children are unable to get away from the violence.</p> <p><i>Minimalisation & Reported Speech:</i></p> <p>Participant D emphasises how the child in the story had accepted and normalised the violence that they had been subjected to. This can be seen in line 97 where Participant D used the phrase “he just seen it as” (line 971) to demonstrate how the child minimised the severity of the violent attack. Participant D then speaks in the role of the child to add authenticity account and states “it is what it is” (line 972).</p> <p><i>Silence:</i></p> <p>At the end of the extract, there is a noticeable moment of silence. This suggests that the group were perhaps processing what had been said, were shocked or upset by the story, or were unsure about how they should best respond.</p>
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In these extracts, the social action of relinquishing power appears to contribute to the notion that some children who are at risk of significant harm are beyond help. The social action of relinquishing power also shifts the power to the County Line gangs and groups and generates a narrative that suggests that professionals are powerless.

4.4.2 Social Action Two: Locating Power

When the participants spoke about their work, the discourse often shifted to talking about some of the challenges professionals face. Through these discussions, the group appeared to perform the social action of locating power where participants began to ask, 'who is best placed to do this work?' and 'who has the power to make a change'. This social action appeared at times to specifically manage issues surrounding roles and responsibilities. An example of this will now be explored.

Table 14: Examples of the social action locating power.

Extract	Description
<p>Extract H</p> <p>Participant D</p> <p>1472 >we <u>would</u> turn them <u>down</u>, we <u>would</u><, 1473 because (.) you <u>do</u> look at (.) 'what 1474 <u>difference</u> are we gonna make in three, 1475 <u>six months?</u>'. Um, <you know>, we're 1476 p:robably just gonna <u>get</u> them in. <You 1477 know., we, <you know>, we <u>have</u> tried it 1478 and we <u>faced</u>, <you know>, <u>a:ssaults</u>, 1479 <u>i:ncidents</u> and <u>unsettled units</u> then 1480 where we see an <u>increase</u> of, of kids 1481 with <u>self-harm</u> because they can't d:eal 1482 with the <u>c:haoticness</u> of the homes. Um, 1483 so it's <u>not</u> like we <u>haven't</u> tried it. 1484 We <u>have</u> but <u>unfortunately</u>, you know, 1485 even, even I'll admit, we, we, we ><u>do</u> 1486 <u>look</u>< at that age between 16 and almost 1487 18 and you think, 'oh can, <u>can</u> we make</p>	<p>In extract H, Participant D appears to perform the social action of locating power when talking about some of the challenges of supporting older children. Participant D does this by using the following discursive devices:</p> <p><i>Consensus:</i></p> <p>Throughout the extract, Participant D repeats the phrase 'you know' to seek validation from the group and to strengthen their claim that supporting older children is difficult.</p> <p><i>Modal verbs:</i></p> <p>In line 1472, Participant D repetitively uses the modal verb 'would' to make clear the likelihood that they would turn away older children in</p>

<p>1488 a <u>difference</u> here? <u>Don't</u> think we're 1489 the <u>right</u> placement'.</p>	<p>the future. The use of this modal verb also helps to shift responsibility to other professionals.</p> <p><i>Narrative Structure:</i> In lines 1477-1482, Participant D adopts a narrative structure to share why their setting would not support older children. The narrative nature of this account helps to add authenticity to their claims and defends their reasons for not supporting older children.</p> <p><i>Reported Speech and Rhetorical Questions:</i> In line 1487, Participant D uses reported speech and states “oh can, can we make a difference here? Don't think we are the right placement”. By framing the reported speech as a rhetorical question, Participant D can distance themselves from what has been said and present the question of ‘can we make a difference here?’ as a point of reflection rather than a personal assessment.</p>
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The social action performed in this extract appears to shift the responsibility for caring for older children onto other services. The social action at play here also helps to emphasise the notion that older children who have been exploited through County Lines require a high level of care, which subsequently prompted Participant D to begin wonder who has the power to “make a difference” (line 1487).

4.4.3 Social Action Three: Questioning Capacity

Another social action in the participant’s talk was professionals questioning capacity levels. This contributed to a notion about the children’s workforce not having enough capacity to support children who are being exploited through County Lines. An instance of where this social action was performed will now be reviewed.

Table 15: Examples of the social action questioning capacity

Extract	Description
<p>Extract I</p> <p>Participant B</p> <p>1054 I think 1055 that they're (.) <u>o:verwhelmed</u> (.) by 1056 (.) this current <u>cohort</u>, <should we 1057 say>, in terms of (.) <u>safeguarding</u>. And 1058 I think that they are <u>really, really,</u> 1059 <u>really struggling</u>. They're s:truggling 1060 to <u>recruit</u>, they're s:truggling in 1061 terms of the <u>resources</u>. They're 1062 s:truggling to <u>retain</u> the staff that 1063 they <u>have</u> got because (.) <u>stress</u> levels 1064 are <u>high</u> because of the <u>risks</u>, because 1065 they don't wanna (.) let young people 1066 <u>down</u>. And, and it f:eels sometimes like 1067 the <u>staff</u> are <u>carrying the can</u> 1068 potentially and <u>worrying</u> and going 1069 h:ome and not <u>sleeping</u> (.) and you 1070 know, it, it, it just has <u>massive</u> 1071 <u>implications</u> (.)</p>	<p>In extract I, Participant B is talking about the pressures the children’s workforce is under and appears to perform the social action of questioning capacity through the following discursive devices:</p> <p><i>Hedging, Hesitancy and Pauses:</i></p> <p>In line 1054, Participant B states that social services are overwhelmed. Although, Participant B appears cautious about expressing this view. This can be seen by the series of pauses in lines 1555 and 1556, and the use of the phrase “should we say” (line 1556). This could indicate that Participant D is purposely withholding talk and is being cautious about openly criticising social services.</p>

	<p><i>ECF</i></p> <p>Participant B uses ECFs to justify the need for more resources by emphasising that social services are “really, really, really struggling” (line 1058).</p> <p><i>Lists:</i></p> <p>Participant B provides a detailed list of reasons why social services are overwhelmed. Participant B also indirectly shifts the responsibility to solve these issues to senior leaders by framing them as system problems.</p> <p><i>Metaphors</i></p> <p>At the end of the extract, Participant B uses the metaphor of professionals “carrying the can” (line 1067) to suggest that individual professionals are accepting the blame rather than senior leaders.</p>
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Through performing the social action of questioning capacity, Participant B appears to shift responsibility onto the senior leaders of the children’s workforce by framing the key challenges as system issues. Consequently, Participant B seems to be positioning the senior leaders as the problem holders, which may contribute to professionals feeling like they do not have the power or agency to facilitate change.

4.4.4 Overview of analytical issue two

The three social actions contributed to a narrative about professionals feeling hopeless. These social actions also contributed to several co-constructions of children who are exploited through County Lines, including children being helpless, being at risk of significant harm and needing a high level of support. Consequently, professionals may feel like they do not have the power or agency to facilitate change, and it may lead professionals to question whether they have the power to “make a difference here” (line 1487).

4.5 Analytical Issue Three: Shifting Narratives

The third analytical issue that emerged from the data was ‘shifting narratives’. This analytical issue identified three key social actions which were highlighting needs, challenging practice, and advocating. The key social actions, co-constructions and implications associated with this key issue will now be explored.

4.5.1 Social Action One: Highlighting needs

On a number of occasions, the discourse shifted when participants spoke about some of the hidden needs of children who are exploited through County Lines. In these interactions, the group appeared to be performing the social action of highlighting needs. An example of this social action will now be discussed.

Table 16: Examples of the social action highlighting needs.

Extract	Description
<p>Extract J</p> <p>Participant D:</p> <p>1420 not saying we don't see it <u>all</u> the 1421 time>, but we don't see that (.) 1422 <u>behaviour</u>, that ><u>violent</u> behaviour, 1423 <u>aggressive</u> behaviour<, ábecause you (.) 1424 we're <u>t:rying</u> to say when they're <u>out</u> 1425 in the community, you know, and it's 1426 <fight, flight, or freeze. Or they're 1427 in a ><u>point</u> of crisis< or (.) there's, 1428 you know, they, >it's just <u>c:haotic</u>, 1429 their life is just <u>c:haotic</u><, so they 1430 <u>l:iterally come in</u> with us and you just 1431 <u>put a stop on e::verything</u> for them 1432 and they're like, right, <they got 1433 somewhere to <u>sleep</u>, they got somewhere 1434 to <u>eat</u>, they can get up in the <u>morning</u>, 1435 they can go to <u>education</u>> (.) .h it's 1436 just that, that <u>r:outine</u> for them, just 1437 <u>bringing</u> them back down, <u>r:egulating</u> 1438 them. Um, so I think ás:ometimes, cuz 1439 they sound so <u>horrendous</u> on paper, then 1440 you don't get to, to see the <u>real</u> 1441 <u>person</u> or who they <u>are</u> and the <u>needs</u> 1442 <u>behind</u>, you know, what, what they <u>need</u>, 1443 the <u>v:ulnerabilities</u>, the <u>support</u> that 1444 the <u>f:amily need</u>. Um, you don't get to 1445 <u>see</u> all that because you look at them 1446 on paper and you think (.) 'geez, they 1447 sound <u>h:orrendous'</u> um, but they're</p>	<p>In extract J, Participant D spoke about how some of children who are exploited through County Lines being perceived by professionals. To do this, Participant D uses the following discursive devices:</p> <p><i>Disclaimer:</i> Participant D begins by using the disclaimer “not saying we don’t” (line 1420) to acknowledge that some children do display violent and aggressive behaviours.</p> <p><i>Assessment:</i> In line 1429, Participant D goes on to offer an alternative viewpoint that some children’s lives are “just chaotic” (line 1429). This assessment helps to shift the blame from the children and highlights the impact of their environment.</p> <p><i>Minimalisation:</i> Participant D repetitively uses the word ‘just’ to describe their work supporting children. For example, in line 1435, they state that “it’s just that, that routine for them, just bringing them back down, regulating them”. This could be seen as an example of downplaying</p>

<p>1448 <u>just</u>, <they're just in a>, in a 1449 >c:haotic lifestyle< áreally. Um, and 1450 they just <u>s::urviving</u> (.)</p>	<p>the significance of their work, which may help Participant D to avoid the label of being an expert. Participant D also repeatedly uses the word 'just' when talking about some of the behaviours children present with. This can be seen in line 1446 where Participant D states "they sound horrendous, um, but they're just, they're just in a, in a chaotic lifestyle really. Um, they just surviving" (line 1446).</p> <p><i>Reported Speech:</i></p> <p>At the end of the extract, Participant D makes an assessment that professionals do not always see the 'real' person behind the behaviour. To strengthen their argument, Participant D uses reported speech to say that a child's paperwork can make them "sound horrendous" (line 1447). Through framing the talk in this way, Participant D is able to maintain some distance from what has been.</p>
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In extract J, Participant D offers alternative explanations when talking about 'aggressive behaviour' (line 1423) to achieve the social action of highlighting needs. In particular, Participant D talks about children being in a survival mode due to their unsafe and "chaotic lifestyle" (line 1449).

4.5.2 Social Action Two: Challenging practice

At times the group appeared to highlight areas of practice that are seemingly not working effectively. In these discussions, the group seemed to be performing the social action of challenging practice to identify possible areas of development. An example of this will now be explored.

Table 17: Examples of the social action challenging practices

Extract	Description
<p>Extract K</p> <p>Participant C:</p> <p>1787 The other thing with, with 1788 <u>professionals</u> as well is that (.) 1789 >things like <u>CAMHS</u> < (.) I don't think 1790 <u>any</u> of my y:oung people would be able 1791 to <u>access</u> CAMHS service cuz they ain't 1792 gonna <u>turn</u> up for a doctor's 1793 appointment or, and áeven just to get 1794 these young people <u>diagnosed</u>, it's, 1795 it's just (.) there's <u>loads</u> of young 1796 people <u>floating</u> around without like a 1797 diagnosis of either <u>t:rauma</u>, <u>ASD</u>, or or 1798 some <u>other</u> (.) kind of <u>barrier</u> to, to 1799 life and stuff. And they're <u>just</u> (.) 1800 they're just <u>unnoticed</u>. And (.) to get 1801 (.) to get a <u>referral</u>, I think 1802 s:ometimes a young person has to be in 1803 <u>education</u> for, for <u>so</u> long for <u>that</u> to 1804 work or they've got to <u>make</u> their way 1805 to, to like an <u>appointment</u>. And it's 1806 just (.) it's just that, that part of</p>	<p>In extract K, Participant C is performing the social action of challenging practice to highlight how some children who are exploited through County Lines struggle to access support services. To do this, the following discursive devices are used:</p> <p><i>Vague Language</i></p> <p>Participant C initially made a vague reference to CAMHS in line 1788 where they say “things like CAMHS”. This could suggest that Participant C was initially hesitant to criticise CAMHS openly.</p> <p><i>Shifts Footing:</i></p> <p>This avoidance of being critical is short-lived, as Participant C then offers an assessment that some children find it hard to access CAMHS. To do this, Participant C shifts to the 1st person singular and states ‘I don’t think’ (line 1789) to claim ownership of their assessment.</p>

<p>1807 the <u>system's</u> (.) <u>just not working</u>, cuz 1808 (.) the young people are having to g:o 1809 to <u>them</u> instead of <u>p::rofessionals</u> 1810 g:eing to the <u>young person</u>.</p> <p>*Child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS)</p>	<p>Metaphors:</p> <p>In line 1796, Participant C uses a metaphor of children “floating around” (line 1796) to strengthen their claim that some children are going “unnoticed” (line 1800) and not accessing support services.</p> <p><i>Assessment and minimisation</i></p> <p>At the end of the extract, Participant C offers an assessment that the system is not working. Participants C also tries to minimise their assessment. This can be seen in line 1805, where Participant C states “it’s just, it’s just that, that part of the system’s just not working”. In line 1808, Participant C offers a second assessment and states that professionals should fit around the child and not the other way around. This assessment could be seen as a way of shifting responsibility onto other professionals and holding them accountable for change.</p>
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The social action performed in this extract appears to blame CAMHS for children not being able to access their services. This social action also seems to generate a discourse about children being missed by services. It also promotes the notion that some children who are exploited through County Lines may have hidden needs, such as neurodevelopmental conditions. In addition to this, the social action of challenging practice locates blame away from children and places ownership for change on professionals.

4.5.3 Social Action Three: Advocating

When the group spoke about their experiences of supporting children who are being exploited through County Lines, the participants appeared to perform the social action of advocating. Two instances of where this can be seen will now be discussed.

Table 18: Examples of the social action advocating.

Extract	Description
<p>Extract L</p> <p>Participant D:</p> <p>1263 you <u>do</u> get the <u>good</u></p> <p>1264 professionals out there that k:ind of</p> <p>1265 <u>get it</u> and they <u>understand it</u>, but then</p> <p>1266 you do get the <u>odd</u> >one or two<, .h you</p> <p>1267 know, where we are r:aising</p> <p>1268 s:afeguarding concerns about the</p> <p>1269 t:hings that they're <u>saying</u>, that</p> <p>1270 they're <u>likely</u> to be <u>exploited</u> into</p> <p>1271 these, you know, into <u>this kind of</u></p> <p>1272 stuff.(.)but they're saying, <you know,</p> <p>1273 and it can be what [Participant B]</p> <p>1274 said>, you know, we've got like the</p> <p>1275 l:ittle villages and they're like, 'oh</p> <p>1276 he's from <u>WALES</u> Like he's <u>not</u>, you</p> <p>1277 know, he's not <u>high up</u> on the <u>list</u> to</p> <p>1278 be <u>exploited</u>', and I just think if you</p> <p>1279 <u>catch him #now</u> and we get that <u>work</u> in</p> <p>1280 now and w:ork with them now, then you</p> <p>1281 know, you won't catch him up in, I</p>	<p>In extract L, Participant D is performing the social action of advocating by highlighting how children from rural communities are sometimes seen as being not as vulnerable as children from cities. To do this, Participant D uses the following discursive devices:</p> <p><i>Comparisons</i></p> <p>At the beginning of the extract, Participant D promotes the notion that there are good and bad professionals. In line 1263, Participant D references the “good professionals”, but appears to be less specific about who the ‘bad’ professionals are. This indicates that Participant D is hesitant about assigning blame to a particular professional.</p> <p><i>Reported Speech and Footing Shifts</i></p> <p>In line 1275, Participant D takes up the role of animator and speaks in the role of professionals, and states “oh he's from Wales, like he's not,</p>

<p>1282 dunno, [Name of Location] or somewhere 1283 in England, you know, a year down the 1284 line.</p> <p>*Youth Custody Service (YCS)</p>	<p>you know, he's not high up on the list to be exploited". Through speaking in this role, Participant D is able to dissociate themselves from what has been said. The extract also suggests that some professionals may not regard children as being at risk due to perceived protective factors such as living in Wales or rural locations.</p> <p><i>ECF</i></p> <p>In the final part of the extract, Participant D uses an ECF and states that children are "exploited so fast and they can move up the chain so fast" (line 1285) to justify the need for preventative work and to emphasise the need for urgent support.</p>
<p>Extract M</p> <p>Participant D:</p> <p>2089 when we get 2090 them in on a <u>welfare</u> basis or a <u>YCS</u> 2091 basis (.) um, you know, they <u>can</u> be 2092 s:een then <u>as</u>, you know, 'oh they're 2093 there on the <u>c:riminal</u> basis, they're 2094 on a <u>c:riminal</u> bed'. When <u>r:eally</u> when 2095 you look at the <u>b:ackgrounds</u>, they're 2096 <u>all</u> the same and they need the <u>same</u> 2097 s:upport, they've got the <u>same</u> n:eds, 2098 which is why we don't, (.) um, s:eparate 2099 our y:oung people between <u>welfare</u> and 2100 <u>YCS</u>. They a:ll are on <u>mixed</u> units,</p>	<p>In extract M, Participant D continues to perform the social action of advocating by using the following discursive devices to talk about the needs of children who are exploited through County Lines.</p> <p><i>Hesitancy:</i></p> <p>In line 2091, Participant D cautiously talks about the possible implications of children being constructed as criminals and states "um, you know, they can be seen then as, you know". This could indicate that Participant D is potentially withholding talk and being cautious about the words they use to protect themselves from potential criticism from the group.</p>

<p>2101 because <u>r</u>:egardless of <u>what</u> they're 2102 there f:or, um, you know, the <u>needs</u> are 2103 still the same. They <u>still</u> need the, 2104 the <u>same</u> work, and the <u>ásame</u> support</p>	<p><i>Reported Speech:</i></p> <p>In line 2092, Participant D uses reported speech to state that some children who come into the secure home are labelled as being criminals. By framing this statement in this way, Participant D can maintain distance from the narrative that children exploited through County Lines are criminals.</p> <p><i>Scripted Formulations</i></p> <p>At times, participant D positions themselves as a commentator to strengthen their scripted formulation that children who are exploited through County Lines are “all the same” and “need the same support” (line 2096).</p>
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In these extracts, the social action of advocacy highlighted that some children who are exploited through County Lines are not always being seen as victims. Extract M also provided an example of professionals categorising children as being criminals or victims. This further strengthens the claim that some professionals are finding it hard to commit to the label of victim for some children who are exploited through County Lines.

4.5.4 Overview of analytical issue three

The social actions discussed influenced a shift in the group discussions. In particular, the social actions generated several new co-constructions about children who are exploited through County Lines which emphasised some of the children’s hidden needs. This in turn helped to move away from the within-child narrative and encouraged a sense of curiosity amongst the group. The social actions of questioning practice and advocating also enabled the group to adopt more of a systems perspective.

4.6 Transparency and coherence of the analysis

In accordance with Yardley's (2000) core principles of transparency and coherence in qualitative research, considerations were given to deviant cases and any additional analytical issues identified within the data.

4.6.1 Deviant Cases

Several deviant cases were identified in the data. These can be understood as instances that go against previous patterns of interaction in the data (Wiggins, 2017). Wiggins (2017) advised researchers that deviant cases may not be able to offer any significant insight in themselves, but they can help to strengthen the overall coherence of the data by validating other analyses. To support the coherence of the analysis process, examples of deviant cases were discussed in Appendix Q. A summary of the findings can be found below.

Table 19: Summary of findings from the deviant cases and possible implications.

Key reflections	Possible implications
In certain instances, participants broke away from the pattern of using vague and tentative language and gave articulate and detailed explanations. On these occasions, participants were speaking about system processes rather than children's experiences.	This supports the notion that some participants may have found it challenging at times to talk about what happens to children who are exploited through County Lines.
At times, participants spoke openly about a topic. This differed from other patterns of interaction where they used hedging, hesitancy, and metaphors to navigate their way around a difficult topic.	This indicates that some participants may have felt hesitant to talk openly about children who are exploited through County Lines.

<p>On one occasion, Participant B used the phrase 'recruitment' to talk about children who are groomed and targeted. This term has been criticised for dehumanising abuse. This term did not fit the pattern of using trauma-informed language.</p>	<p>This suggests that some participants may at times use jargon, set phrases, and metaphors to navigate challenging conversations.</p>
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4.6.2 Additional Analytical Issues

Eight additional analytical issues were identified in the data. These were not further explored as they did not specifically relate to the research questions of the study. However, they do highlight three possible areas for future research such as:

- Learning about the experiences of children who have been exploited through County Lines.
- Exploring how professionals can best support children who have been exploited through County Lines.
- Exploring the roles and responsibilities of professionals who have been exploited through County Lines.

Further information about the decision-making process for selecting which analytical issues to focus on and the possible areas for future research can be found in Appendix R.

4.7 Summary of findings

The findings of this study have helped to explore some of the ways professionals are constructing children who are exploited through County Lines and some of the potential implications. An overview of the findings can be found in Table 20.

Table 20: Overview of findings

Analytical issues	Social Actions	Discursive devices and key patterns of interactions	Co-constructions of children who are exploited through County Lines	Emerging Implications
<p>Problematic Victims:</p>	<p>Positioning children as beneficiaries</p> <p>Locating Blame</p> <p>Allocating Victimship</p>	<p>Using vague language to talk about the possible harms that happen to children who are exploited through County Lines.</p> <p>Categorising children who are exploited through County Lines as being vulnerable or not vulnerable. This was often achieved through making comparisons between different children and through using category entitlements to make inferences about a child’s level of vulnerability, such as mentioning a child’s age, gender, race and more subtly a child’s cognitive ability.</p>	<p>Some children have agency.</p> <p>Some children benefit from County Lines.</p> <p>Some children are criminally responsible.</p> <p>Some children are vulnerable victims.</p>	<p>Some professionals appearing to have reduced levels of empathy for some children.</p> <p>Some professionals believing that some children who are exploited through County Lines have agency and are complicit in their abuse.</p> <p>Professionals are responding to children differently meaning there is some disparity in terms of how children who are exploited through County Lines. are being supported.</p>

<p>Losing Hope</p>	<p>Relinquishing power Questioning Capacity Locating Power</p>	<p>Using ECFs, metaphors and narrative structures to highlight the perceived power of County Lines gangs and groups. Using modal verbs to make clear the professional's sense of agency and to help shift responsibility to other professionals.</p>	<p>Some children are at risk of significant harm. Some children are entrenched in a culture of violence. Some children are needing a high level of support. Some children are hard to reach.</p>	<p>Some professionals feel like change is not possible. Some professionals are turning away children with high needs due to feeling like they cannot make a difference. Some professionals feel like they do not have the power or agency to facilitate change.</p>
<p>Shifting Narratives</p>	<p>Highlighting Needs Questioning Practice Advocating</p>	<p>Listing different discourses and using metaphors and reported speech to gently introduces new ideas to offer alternative narratives. Tentatively locating blame away from children who are exploited through County Lines by using vague and often minimised statements.</p>	<p>Some children have hidden needs, such as neurodevelopmental conditions. Some children are dysregulated and are in survival mode. Some children have experienced trauma. Some children are at risk of being missed by professionals.</p>	<p>Some professionals are being curious about children's needs so that they can better support them. Some professionals are moving away from the within-child narrative. Some professionals are adopting a systems perspective.</p>

5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction to the discussion section

This exploratory research study investigated how some professionals are talking about children who are exploited through County Lines. In particular, the study aimed to explore some of the ways professionals are constructing these children through their language and dialogue. It also hoped to identify some of the potential implications of these constructions. Following a form of discourse analysis known as discursive psychology, three key analytical issues were identified in the data; 'problematic victims', 'losing hope', and 'shifting narratives'. These will now be discussed in turn in relation to the research questions, existing literature and psychological theories and frameworks. Following this, implications, strengths and limitations of the study and areas for future research will then be presented.

5.2 Discussions about 'Problematic Victims'

The findings highlighted how some of the group were constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines as 'problematic'. This construct was generated through some of the group members placing blame on children by suggesting that they were making lifestyle choices and benefiting financially from County Lines. The group at times also emphasised the benefits of County Lines and minimised talk about the harms associated with exploitation. A possible implication of this could be a reduced sense of empathy from professionals and a belief that some children may be complicit in their abuse. The group also occasionally used the terms 'County Lines' and 'child criminal exploitation' interchangeably, which meant they were not making clear distinctions between drug dealing and child exploitation. This issue was also identified by Ditcham (2022) and Olver and Cockbain (2021) and they suggested that issues with terminology may be contributing to child criminal exploitation being framed as a drug problem rather than a child protection problem.

In addition to this, the group appeared to perform the social action of 'allocating victimship' where they actively categorised children into two groups; children who are victims and children who are offenders. However, Moffett (2015) has argued that complex victims rarely fit into "neat, distinct, morally acceptable categories" (p.150). This issue can be seen throughout the literature, and it supports the view that some children who are exploited through County Lines are still being criminalised because they

do not fulfil the criteria of being an 'ideal victim' (Christie, 1986; Barnardos, 2021; Lewis et al., 2021; Shaw, 2023; The Children's Society, 2021; Van Wijk, 2013). An exploration of the discursive devices used by the participants in the focus group also highlighted how some of the professionals were using category entitlements to make certain inferences about a child's level of vulnerability or innocence. This can be seen in line 321 where the sex of a child is mentioned, in line 352 where geographical locations are given, and in line 681 where a child's ethnicity is highlighted. The last example specifically supports the view of previous literature that argues that children from certain ethnic backgrounds are more likely to 'hypercriminalised' and less likely to be seen as vulnerable (Alexander, 2008 & Pitts, 2021). A key implication of this is the disparity in terms of how professionals are responding to different children. Furthermore, these findings suggest that some professionals are struggling to commit to the label of victim for some children who are exploited through County Lines. Consequently, there is a need to raise awareness of the abusive nature of child exploitation in order that professionals are more equipped at identifying potential victims. Ditcham (2022) agreed and argued that there is a need for a legal definition of child criminal exploitation so that there is a universal understanding of what equates as child criminal exploitation.

5.3 Discussions about 'Losing Hope'

The findings of the analysis highlighted feelings of hopelessness from the group. This was noted through the group performing three social actions, which were relinquishing their own power and giving up, questioning their own capacity, and locating the power away from themselves. The group also used a range of discursive devices to achieve this, such as modal verbs to make clear their sense of agency. For example, Participant A gave the impression that 'they would' help if 'they could'. In addition to this, participants also appeared to tell stories and use metaphors to strengthen their claims that some children are beyond help. Feelings of hopelessness also appeared to position some of the children as being at significant risk of harm and needing specialist support. Consequently, these constructions led the participants in the group to see themselves as having no power to facilitate change.

Feelings of hopelessness and despair is not something that was identified in the critical literature review, and offers a novel insight into the experiences of professionals working in this field. Hope can be understood as a mindset that can help us persevere towards a positive goal (Schiavon, et al., 2017). It has also been suggested that hope relies on someone having a sense of agency and someone being able to see a way forward

(Schiavon, et al., 2017). Theoretical understanding of post-traumatic growth has also identified that feelings of hopelessness can often come about when individuals or groups have experienced trauma, and as such, 'harvesting hope' can be a positive way of helping individuals and groups to see a way forward (Joseph, 2012 & Naik & Khan, 2019).

Interestingly, the impact of trauma on professionals was not mentioned in the focus group, which is surprising when considering the level of exposure the group members have had to violent crime and child abuse. It may have been that topics such as staff wellbeing did not naturally come into conversation during the focus group. It may have also been that the group did not feel like staff wellbeing was an issue. However, there are indicators that suggest that the topic of staff wellbeing is worth further consideration. For example, participants at times actively avoided talking about the harmful nature of child exploitation. This often presented itself in three ways. Firstly, participants often used vague phrases to talk about exploitation. This included phrases like 'whatever it is' (Participant A, line 23) and 'this kind of stuff' (Participant, D, line 1269). Secondly, descriptions of children who had been exploited through County Lines were often punctuated with hedging, hesitancy and pauses, such as Participant D in line 2091 where they stated, '(pause) um, you know, then, can be seen then as, (pause) you know'. Thirdly, participants sometimes used dehumanising jargon, scripted formulations, and metaphors to navigate challenging conversations. For example, in line 382, Participant B used the phrase '[they are] looking to kind of recruit more in-house' to talk about the targeting and grooming of children in rural areas. There are many reasons that could explain why we are seeing the participants act in this way, including a lack of understanding, lack of confidence, or fear of saying something controversial or offensive. However, it may also be an indicator that some of the participants felt uncomfortable about talking about emotionally charged topics.

Whilst it is important not to make assumptions and over-generalise findings, it could be argued that the wellbeing of staff that support children who have been exploited through County Lines needs further investigation. In particular, Remen (1994) stated "the expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet" (p.96). Treisman's (2021) work on organisational trauma also suggests that professionals who are exposed to high levels of trauma may experience secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, burnout, and, as identified in this study, hopelessness. In addition to this, Treisman (2021) commented that some professionals may also find themselves

working in survival mood. Furthermore, whilst this study did not specifically identify any examples of poor staff wellbeing, indicators such as hopelessness and avoiding conversations about difficult topics may suggest that further research exploring staff wellbeing is warranted.

5.4 Discussions about 'Shifting Narratives'

The analysis of the data identified that there was a shift in some of the narratives being produced by the group during certain parts of the focus group. The group achieved this through highlighting the needs of the children, challenging practice that they perceived as being inadequate and advocating for the rights of children. An in-depth exploration of the discursive devices being used in these conversations also recognised that the group were beginning to locate blame away from children who are exploited through County Lines. For example, in line 1149, Participant D talks about the chaotic lifestyle that some children are living in and how this contributes to children being emotionally dysregulated. Other examples with the literature include, academics challenging the concept of exchange (Beckett et al., 2017; Eaton & Holmes, 2017; Edwards, 2023) and the 'child first' campaign from the youth justice sector (Marshall, 2023b). To enable professionals to keep seeing children 'beyond their perceived criminality' (Lloyd et al., 2023, p.12), some professionals may benefit from further training opportunities to help them explore different ways of understanding children's needs.

The shift in the conversations in the focus group also meant that some children were now being constructed as having hidden needs. Attempts to highlight the hidden needs of children can also be seen in the literature in the 'child first' campaign where children are positioned as having unmet needs (Marshall, 2023b). The notion that some children have hidden, and unmet needs prompted the focus group to be more curious and adopt a more systemic perspective of the issue, such as talking about the difficulties of children accessing help from CAMHS. Again, this helped to locate the blame away from children and put the ownership on professionals to create systemic change. The literature suggested that one possible way forward is for professionals to adopt a contextual safeguarding approach where professionals from different sectors come together to collectively safeguard children (Firmin, 2020). However, Lloyd and Firmin (2020) warned that there may be some resistance from some professionals as they may not see this form of extra-familial harm as part of their role. This issue was highlighted in Allen and Bond's (2021) study who found that some EPs felt that matters relating to child exploitation was "outside of the educational aspect of an educational and child

psychologist role” (p. 27). Therefore, professionals may need help to consider their role and their unique contribution. To do this, professionals may benefit from reflecting on the activity framework to identify what the primary task of the group is and to navigate tensions such as divisions of labour (Greenhouse, 2013).

5.5 Implications

As described in Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) bio-ecological model, children who are exploited through County Lines are situated amongst complex and interconnecting systems. Consequently, when considering implications for change, it is essential that practitioners adopt a systemic perspective. Therefore, the table below will present the emerging implications from the literature review and the current study for the EP community and the wider interacting systems.

Table 21: Implications

Area	Implication	Rationale
EP Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPs should ensure that they have sufficient understanding about child exploitation. If needed, EPs should seek further training to ensure that they understand some of the complexities surrounding child exploitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allen and Bond (2020; 2021) identified that the EP community is one of the last professions to begin researching child exploitation, so the topic of child exploitation may be relatively new to some EPs. Therefore, EPs should ensure that they have sufficient knowledge in this field. This view is also supported by the Health and Care Professional Council (HCPC), who stated that EPs should be practising safely and effectively within the scope of their own work (HCPC, 2023).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPs should consider offering school staff who are working on challenging cases relating to child criminal exploitation reflective supervision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The findings of this study suggested that some professionals who are working in this field may be feeling a sense of hopelessness. Literature on this topic has also highlighted some of the high levels of abuse and harm that some professionals are responding to (Action for Children, 2024). Therefore, reflective supervision may help school staff to pause, reflect, and make sense of their experiences
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPs should consider offering school staff training on trauma-informed approaches to support children who have been exploited through County Lines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This study has identified that there has been a shift in some of the narratives surrounding child exploitation and it has captured a willingness from professionals to consider new ideas. Research such as Felitti et al's. (1998) study on ACEs, has also highlighted the need for school staff to understand and respond to trauma.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPs may want to consider the language that they are using when talking about children who have been exploited through County Lines. To do this, EPs may want to reflect on some of the language guides made by specialist charities (Appiah et al., 2021; The Children’s Society, 2022). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous research studies have identified the need for language guides to help professionals reflect on the language that they are using when talking about child exploitation. (Appiah et al., 2021). This current study has also captured examples of professionals struggling to talk about aspects of child exploitation. This potentially signifies that some professionals may need help to talk about some of the complexities of child exploitation.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPs may want to consider how they can use the concept of hope as a vehicle of change to help school staff and other professionals navigate feelings of being overwhelmed and stuck. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research study captured examples of professionals feeling a sense of hopelessness and feeling like some children are beyond help. EPs may want to consider using hope-based interventions and goal-oriented approaches to help professionals identify possible ways forward and feel a sense of agency (Cox & Lumsdon, 2020).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPs should consider using person-centre planning (PCP) tools when working with children who are being exploited through County Lines to help elicit their views. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPs should help children who have been exploited through County Lines to have their voices heard. In particular, it was identified in another study that professionals need to get to know the children and see them “beyond their perceived criminality” (Lloyd et al., 2023, p.12).
Wider Systemic Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for a legal definition of child criminal exploitation in order to help with the identification of victims and processes relating to section 45 of the Modern Slavery Act (2015) and the NRM. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This study identified that some professionals are struggling to commit to the label of victim due to strict ideas over who qualifies as a victim. It has been suggested that a legal definition of child criminal exploitation will help to bring clarity and greater protection for children (Action for Childrem, 2024; Ditcham, 2022).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need for formal guidance from the Department of Education to help school staff consider how they can support children who have been criminally exploited. In particular, this guidance should consider how these children could be supported within a school context. It should also discuss key issues that have been highlighted in the literature review such as the high levels of school exclusions seen in this cohort of children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The findings of this study as well as existing research have identified issues with children who have been exploited through County Lines being excluded from school and having hidden learning needs (Action for Children, 2024; Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, 2020). The literature review has also identified that there is limited information on how schools can best support children who have been exploited through County Lines. Therefore, schools would benefit from more formal guidance.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionals who support children who have been criminally exploited should consider the ‘child first’ principles so that children are seen as a child first and an offender second (Marshall, 2023b). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The findings of this study have illustrated the need to see the child beyond their perceived criminality. Previous reports have also identified the need to see the ‘child first’ in order to combat issues around adultification (Appiah et al., 2021).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionals should consider how they can best use the contextual safeguarding framework to safeguard children who are being subjected to child criminal exploitation (Firmin, 2020; Wroe, 2021a). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firmin’s (2020) has promoted the contextual safeguarding framework as a way of professionals coming together to safeguard children. The contextual safeguarding framework is also a helpful way to consider theories such as Bronfenbrenner’s (2005) bio-ecological model and think about who is best placed to support this child.

5.6 Strengths and limitations of study

The strengths and limitations of the current study are presented below. For further information about the strengths and limitations of Discursive Psychology or the use of online focus groups, please see Part Three.

Table 22: Strengths and limitations of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Morgan & Hoffman, 2018; Oates, 2011; Speer, 2002).

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This exploratory study has investigated a complex topic that has so far been understudied by EPs. • The chosen methodological approach that explored the 'action-orientation' of discourse and offered unique insights. • The chosen methodological approach offered structure for rigorous analysis. This was further supported by the researcher following the principles put forward by Yardley (2000) for qualitative research. Together, these approaches contributed to the overall trustworthiness of the findings. • The focus group design enabled naturalistic conversations to take place. This has hopefully contributed to the overall ecological validity of the findings. • The use of the learning cycle within the focus group encouraged reflective conversations. It also illustrated the benefits of reflection and supervision for professionals working in this area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study used a modest sample of professionals and as such, the findings of the study should not be overextended. • The methodological approach has been criticised for not producing clear implications for professional practice due to its focus on the micro level of discourse. • Certain analytical issues identified in the data fell outside of the remit of the study and therefore, were not reported on. • The 'group' element of the data collection method may have brought about issues relating to group think and social desirability bias. • Due to the focus of the study, the study did not collect the views children or parents. Therefore, it could be argued that there are 'missing voices' in the arguments constructed in this report.

5.7 Areas for future research

Possible avenues for future research could include:

Table 23: Areas for future research

No.	Area of future research
1	An exploration into the lived experiences of children who have been exploited through County Lines to broaden understanding about child exploitation. Although, careful consideration should be given to the care of child participants due to the ethical and safeguarding concerns raised in Part Three relating to vulnerable children participating in research activities.
2	An exploration into how children who are exploited through County Lines can best be supported by professionals. Due to the significant lack of research from colleagues in education and educational psychology, a study that investigates how these children can best be supported within a school context may be especially helpful.
3	An exploration of the role and responsibilities of professionals who support children who are exploited through County Lines. Due to the lack of previous research, a study that especially focuses on the role of an EP in relation to child criminal exploitation may provide the EP community with specific implications for future practice.
4	An exploration into the wellbeing of professionals who support children who are exploited through County Lines. This has come from indications found in this study that some professionals may be feeling a sense of hopelessness due to the level of exposure that they have to youth violence and child abuse.
5	Due to the lack of statistical data, future studies may benefit from a quantitative approach to further understand the extent and nature of child exploitation in the UK. In particular, further statistical data about exclusion levels for children who have been exploited may highlight implications for practice.
6	As the findings of the current study have highlighted issues relating to power, researchers carrying out subsequent research in this area may want to consider conducting a Foucauldian Discourse Analysis to gain deeper insight into this possible emerging issue.

6. Conclusion

This research study has explored some of the ways professionals are talking about children who are exploited through County Lines to get a better understanding of how professionals are constructing these children. Through adopting a discursive psychology methodology, this study has offered novel insights into some of the complexities surrounding child criminal exploitation. In particular, the findings suggest that some professionals are seeing children who have been exploited through County Lines as 'problematic'. In addition to this, the data identified that some of the professionals are feeling a sense of 'hopelessness' due to believing that some children who are exploited through County Lines are 'too far gone' and helpless. However, the findings of this study also captured a shift in the narrative with some of the professionals constructing children who have been exploited through County Lines in ways that acknowledged some of their emotional pain and hidden needs.

Furthermore, child criminal exploitation remains an understudied area and this exploratory study has identified implications for practice and areas for future research for the educational psychologist community to consider. The exploitation of children through County Lines remains a significant concern and issues of hopelessness are contributing to professionals feeling powerless. Consequently, there is a need for the children's workforce to come together to consider a way forward so that professionals can collectively safeguard these children (Firmin, 2020). As one of the last professions in the children's workforce to consider their role in the fight against child exploitation, now is the time for the EP community to consider, 'can we make a difference here?'

7. References for part two

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**Can we make a difference here?:
A discourse analysis of professionals talking about children
who are exploited through County Lines in the UK.**

By Jessica Pritchard

Part Three: Major Research Reflective Account

Word Count: 7194
(7822 including figures and tables)

Major Research Reflective Account

1. Introduction

This critical appraisal will present a reflective and reflexive account of the research process of the current study. It will be presented in two sections. The first section will discuss the researcher's key motivations for the study and key methodological decision making. The second section of the reflective account will explore the key findings and outline the plans for disseminating the findings of the study. Due to the circular nature of reflective and reflexive discussions, there may be an overlap between these two sections. Extracts from the research diary will also be provided to further illustrate key points. Please note, this account will be written in the first person in order to present the researcher as a 'key instrument' in the research process rather than an 'outsider' looking in (Bourke, 2014; Pellegrini, 2009). It is hoped that this will also help to highlight the researcher's learning journey.

2. Part One: Development of the research practitioner

2.1 Researcher positionality

My motivation for researching in this field came from previously working in gang intervention services, something that I will talk more about in Part two of this critical appraisal. Although, I did not identify as being an insider researcher at the beginning of the research project. However, after a conversation with my research supervisor, I decided to do some further reading into insider researchers. Fleming (2018) described insider researchers as researchers who conduct studies about the group, community, or organisation that they are part of. Through reflection, I realised that the participants in my study would have previously been my peers, and in many ways, I still saw myself as a member of their community, so I began to recognise myself as an insider researcher. Costley et al. (2010) talked about some of the benefits of being an insider researcher and said "as an insider, you are in a unique position to study a particular issue in depth and with special knowledge about that issue" (Costley et al., 2010, p.3). Fleming (2018) agreed and stated that an insider researcher may also approach a study with a 'pre-understanding' of the participant group.

However, Fleming (2018) warned insider researchers that they may come across issues regarding confirmation biases (Mynatt et al., 1977). This is something that I was

especially concerned about, and I knew I needed to recognise my own biases so that it didn't negatively influence the research. For example, I noted that I held negative views about certain child protection protocols, and therefore, I needed to be aware that I may hold more of a critical stance when talking about these protocols in my study. Brannick and Coghlan (2007) also wondered whether some researchers may be 'too close' to the subject. This again was something I was concerned about. However, I felt that I had the distance I needed to gain perspective because I had not worked in gang intervention services since I had been on the doctorate training course.

Overall, I have found the process of being an insider researcher very positive and I feel like I have experienced personal growth. Braun & Clarke (2012) also saw the benefits being an insider researcher and called for researchers to "step outside your cultural membership to become a cultural commentator" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p.9). This statement really resonated with me, and I felt that as a 'cultural commentator', I have been able to show the EP community glimpses into the world of gang intervention, a world that is often hidden and closed off to outsiders. In saying this, I also think it is important to combat some of the 'risk factors' of being an insider researcher. For me, I was particularly aware of the emotional impact that the research may have on me, and I knew I needed to find a rhythm of reflection and reflexivity to enable me to navigate the research process (Holloway & Jefferson, 2013). Willig and Rogers (2017) agreed and stated that reflexivity is especially important when conducting qualitative research. To achieve this rhythm of reflection and reflexivity, I utilised my research diary and benefited from regular supervision. Looking back, one of my key reflections was that I did not disclose to the participants that I was an insider researcher as I did not want to be seen as an expert and negatively impact the power dynamics of the focus group. In hindsight, I wondered whether this was the right decision and I wonder whether being open about my insider researcher status would have helped the participants to feel safe within the focus group.

2.2 Philosophical stance

Guba and Lincoln (1994) described a research paradigm as a set of beliefs that describes how a researcher views the world. For this study, the spectrum of research paradigms were carefully considered through the reading of key texts and discussions in supervision. After much consideration, a relativist ontology with a social constructionist epistemology was chosen. The relativist ontology stance suggests that multiple realities can co-exist rather than one pre-social reality (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Levers, 2013). As

an insider researcher, I found the relativist stance freeing, and I felt like my position as researcher changed from 'judge' to 'storyteller' as I was more interested in exploring the different beliefs rather than judging which ones were true. In particular, I reflected on the words of Marecek (2003) who asked researchers to consider what kind of truths are they interested in listening to. For me, I decided that I was interested in hearing all the 'truths' held by the participants rather than a select few that I personally found acceptable.

The social constructionist epistemological stance was also chosen to explore how knowledge is co-constructed through social processes (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Burr, 2015). Social constructionism was first introduced to me at the beginning of my doctorate course through the Constructionist Model of Informed Reasoned Action (COMOIRA) (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008), and in the past it has helped me to make sense of groups that hold multiple constructions. I was also especially interested in some of Burr's (2015) writing on social constructivism which highlights the need to reflect on 'taken for granted knowledge', identify any significant 'historical and cultural' factors, recognise how 'knowledge is sustained through social processes' and notice how 'knowledge and social action go together'. Whilst I did consider adopting a constructivism stance, I felt that social constructivism gave me a much broader picture of how knowledge is constructed together and how social meaning is constructed through discourse (Braun & Clarke, 2013)

2.3 Reflections on the research methodology

2.3.1 Reflections on deciding on a methodology

One of the earliest decisions I had to make was choosing between a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed design study. I decided that a qualitative study would enable me to explore the 'richness' of the worlds of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013). A qualitative approach also aligned well with the ontological and epistemological stance of the study as I wanted to explore the data rather than measure and test the data like I would in a quantitative study (Pyett, 2003). I then began to consider the theoretical framework for the study, and whilst I was previously interested in Reflexive Thematic Analysis and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), the study naturally lent itself to discourse analysis as I was interested in the role of language. Through extensive reading on discourse analysis and I felt that discourse analysis would enable me to explore the more subtle uses of language that often get lost in other forms of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, the more I read on discourse analysis, the more I

realised how much it differed from other cognitive forms of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I also had to choose which form of discourse analysis would best fit the study as discourse analysis is an umbrella term that describes a range of approaches to investigate discourse. The table on the following page is adapted from the work Pomerantz (2008) and shares some of my thinking around the different methodologies associated with discourse analysis.

After considering the different forms of discourse analysis, I decided that discursive psychology aligned more with the aims of the study. In particular, I felt that the discursive psychology would enable me to 'zoom in' and investigate what was being accomplished through talk so that I could better understand how some children who are being exploited through County Lines are being constructed by professionals (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wiggins, 2017). Whilst I was excited for this new challenge, I was aware that I had limited experience of discursive psychology, so I decided to invest time into improving my skills and knowledge to enable me to conduct the analysis effectively. I was also aware that discursive psychology had been criticised for not producing clear implications for professional practice due to its focus on the micro level of discourse (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Wiggins, 2017). However, I felt satisfied that discursive psychology would give me a fresh insight into a complex issue and enable me to understand the topic in a new way (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Wiggins, 2017).

Table 24: Different forms of discourse analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Pomerantz, 2008; Wiggins, 2017; Willig & Rogers, 2017)

Micro analysis of discourse <i>'The focus is solely on talk'</i>			'Macro analysis of discourse <i>'The focus is on matters other than talk'</i>		
	Conversation Analysis	Ethnography of Communication	Discursive Psychology	Critical Discourse Analysis	Foucauldian Discourse Analysis
Aims	Explores the patterns and the organisation of conversations.	Explores speech patterns in specific communities and considers the cultural and social factors that influence how individuals speak.	Explores how psychological concepts are used and managed in discourse. It also focuses on the 'action-orientation' of talk and how people use discursive devices to perform key actions.	Explores how phenomena such as gender and race are constructed through talk and other forms of discourse. It also highlights key issues relating to power.	Explores how people's identities, subject positions, and objects they speak about are continually redefined and restructured through discourse. It also specifically investigates issues relating to power.
Strengths	In-depth exploration of talk and focuses on the micro-level of conversation.	In-depth exploration, rich insight, and offers a specific focus.	Explores how interpersonal objectives are achieved and offers structure for rigorous analysis.	Offers an opportunity to challenge dominant discourses and could offer a rich discussion.	In-depth exploration, highlights issue of power and offers unique insights.
Limitations	Time consuming, risks of misinterpretation and lack of generalisation.	Time consuming, lack of breadth, and lack of generalisations.	Time consuming, complex, and potential lack of clear implications.	Time consuming and the interpretation of the data could be seen as selective and biased.	Time consuming, complex, and a lack of a focus on the talk itself.
Decision	Decided against as I did not want to solely focus on talk.	Decided against as I did not want to purely focus on the social and cultural influences of the group.	Chosen in order to explore what is being achieved through discourse.	Carefully considered but decided against due to the subjective nature of analysis.	Carefully considered but decided against due to the focus on the macro level of discourse.

2.3.2 Reflections on participant selection

My initially thinking around the participant group was to bring together a group of professionals from different backgrounds who support children who have been exploited through County Lines. In particular, I thought about the types of professionals that you would expect to see at multi-agency meetings to encourage naturalistic conversations and improve the overall ecological validity of the findings. I considered a variety of professionals from a wide range of backgrounds including education, social services, youth justice, youth services, health and the police. To help guide my decision making, I created a participant inclusion and exclusion criteria which stipulated that all professionals in the group needed to work in England or Wales and work directly with children who have been or are at risk of being exploited through County Lines. This was to ensure that all participants had enough experience and knowledge in the relevant contexts to meaningfully contribute to the focus group (Oates, 2011). To recruit the participants, I followed the recruitment process as set out in Figure 5 in Part Two.

Looking back, I can see that I pulled on my 'pre-understanding' of the participant group to help me throughout the recruitment process (Fleming, 2018). In particular, I already had an understanding about what type of professionals you would expect to see at a multi-agency meeting, I was aware of which department to contact when looking for relevant staff in local authorities, and I knew of a number of large charities who may be interested in participating in the study. However, I was also becoming aware of my own biases and how they may influence who I wanted to participate in the study. To combat these, I sent out recruitment information to a wide range of organisations rather than a select few. In addition to this, I decided not to approach any individuals or organisations that I personally had a connection with. This was to ensure that I did not show any type of bias towards certain participants in the focus group. In the end, the study recruited four participants who had backgrounds in education, youth justice, youth work and social care services. There were also two other volunteers for the study (one police officer and one social worker) who could not attend on the day. One of my key reflections on the recruitment process was that it was hard to find a date and time that suited all participants. This was mainly because of the participant's conflicting shift patterns. Therefore, for future studies I may consider individual interviews if appropriate to make the study more accessible to potential participants.

2.3.3 Reflections on data collection

An online focus group was chosen as my method of data collection. I decided on an online focus group because I wanted to give the participants the opportunity to engage in a meaningful dialogue (Oates, 2011). I specifically hoped that the focus group would enable the participants to have natural conversations, which is something that is harder to achieve in interviews (Oates, 2011). Although, it has been argued that there is a limitation on how 'natural' a participant can be in a study (Speer, 2002). To guide the focus group conversation, I also used a semi-structured discussion schedule (Appendix D) based on Jasper's (2013) Experience Reflection Action (ERA) cycle. I have not seen a study use a learning cycle as a focus group discussion schedule before, but it proved to successfully generate discussion and it allowed for free-flowing discussion. It also got the participants to 'think deeper' and make connections.

In hindsight, I think it would have been more effective if I framed the focus group as a 'reflection circle' and was more transparent about the use of the ERA cycle. As the focus group conversation was so successful, I also wondered whether 'reflection circles' could be used as a model of supervision to enable professionals to make sense of their experiences. This is because the participants mentioned to me after the focus group that they found the focus group session therapeutic as they felt listened to, encouraged and less alone. In addition to this, one participant stated that the focus group had given them the space to think. I also wondered whether the participant's positive experience was because they felt safe within the group, which was something that I carefully considered before the focus group. In particular, I spoke about rules regarding respect and confidentiality, I gave time at the beginning of the session for the group members to introduce themselves, and I emphasised that everyone had something meaningful to share regardless of their level of experience (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Morgan & Hoffman, 2018; Willig & Rogers, 2017;). To get a broader understanding about the strengths and limitations of the focus group used in the study, a summary has been created below.

Table 25: Strengths and limitations of the focus group (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Morgan & Hoffman, 2018; Oates, 2011; Speer, 2002).

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus group facilitated an in-depth discussion. • The use of the learning cycle enabled reflective conversations and enabled participants to make new connections. • The focus group enabled more naturalistic conversations which hopefully contributed to the ecological validity of the findings. • The interactive element of the group discussions enabled the participants to co-construct knowledge rather than report it. • Participants reported that they felt safe within the group, and they felt a sense of belonging. • The online element of the focus group enabled professionals from different geographical regions to come together. • The online element helped scheduling issues and opened the focus group up to participants who would not normally be able to attend if they had to travel. • The online element also meant that participants could join the focus group from the comfort of their own home. This helped the participants to feel safe and talk freely. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 'group' element of the focus group brought about new challenges. For example, issues surrounding group think and social desirability which may have influenced what the participants said and did not say. This is particularly relevant as the 'blame culture' that can exist amongst professionals may have made some participants defensive. • The power dynamics of the group may have influenced how the participants performed in the group. • The group element significantly reduced the participant's right to confidentiality and anonymity. To tackle this, participants were reminded about the guidelines on confidentiality on two occasions. • The online element of the focus group meant that participants had to have access to IT and the ability to use MS Teams. This may have prevented some professionals from volunteering for the study. • The online element of the focus group meant that it reduced the opportunity for spontaneous conversations and non-verbal communication which may have affected how the participants came together as a group.

2.3.4 Reflections on data analysis

The data analysis process started with producing the transcript. Wiggins (2017) warned researchers that preparing the transcript ready for analysis can be a lengthy process. This was certainly my experience, and even though I only had 90 minutes of data from the focus group, producing the transcript took a number of weeks. Producing the transcript happened in two stages. In the first stage, I created the orthographic transcript where I wrote the words down verbatim (Wiggins, 2017). In the second stage, I produced the Jefferson (2004) transcript where I used symbols to highlight the phonetic features of the group conversation (Wiggins, 2017). Details of the Jefferson (2004) notation and the finished transcript can be found in Appendix J. One of the key reasons the transcription process took so long was because I had never created a Jefferson (2004) transcript before, and I had to develop a whole new skill set. I was encouraged by the writings of Wiggins (2017) who urged researchers to 'push through' as a good transcript is the foundation of a good analysis. Once the transcript was created, I proceeded to follow the six stages of analysis for discursive psychology (Wiggins, 2017). Whilst there is no specific way to approach discursive psychology, the six-stage model provided me with the structure that I needed. Information about the six stages can be found in Figure 2 in Part Two and examples of the process can be found in Appendices K, L, M, N and O.

The process of analysis was strenuous, and it required dedication and discipline. It also significantly changed the timescale of the research project alongside other factors. During the midpoint of the analysis, I recall feeling lost. The circular nature of the discursive psychology analysis process meant that I was moving back and forth between the stages not knowing when I should stop. Whilst Wiggins (2017) advised researchers that the in-depth approach to analysing the data would improve the overall trustworthiness of the findings, I still wondered where I was going with it all. I took my concerns to supervision, and I was encouraged by my supervisor to go with it and push through. Leaving the supervision, I wrote down the following key messages to focus my thoughts on:

'Trust the process, keep with it, and see what the findings say'.

Looking back, I can see how the stages of analysis described by Wiggins (2017) guided me through the analysis process and enabled me to present a coherent set of findings.

I can also see how the process was like putting together a jigsaw and how I needed to wait until the end of the puzzle to see the broader picture (Wiggins, 2017). Whilst the analysis process has been one of most challenging endeavours in my academic career, it has also been one of the most rewarding. At the beginning of the study, I do not think I truly acknowledged how much of a feat I was taking on, but now I understand the sentiments of Billington (1995) who argued that discourse analysis is more than a technique and set of rules. Wiggins (2017) agreed and offered the following advice for researchers:

Two things that you need to know before you proceed. First, the theoretical arguments and principles that underpin discursive psychology are intellectually challenging; they require us to think and reflect on what we are studying, and why we are studying. There will be ideas that challenge what we know about talk, about cognition, and indeed about reality. So yes, you will need to work hard. And yes, it might change you. You might never consider talk and interaction in the same way again. (Wiggins, 2017, p3).

Wiggins (2017) description is certainly one that I can relate to. For me, discursive psychology has changed how I understand talk and treat talk, and it has opened up a whole new area of psychology for me to explore.

2.4 Ethical considerations

The study was awarded ethical approval by Cardiff University School of Psychology Ethics Committee and key ethical considerations were discussed in detail in Table 8 in Part Two. Despite carefully considering the key factors outlined by the BPS's code of human research ethics (BPS, 2021), a number of ethical dilemmas came up during the research process. Jacob-Timm (1999) described these dilemmas as 'ethical tugs' where practitioners feel torn between work demands and ethical values. To help me tackle these ethical dilemmas, I brought them to supervision, utilised my research diary and reflected on the core values of ethical research to help me make informed decisions. One of the main ethical dilemmas I came across was deciding how I could best uphold the ethical values of confidentiality and anonymity. In particular, I wanted to ensure that the readers saw the participants as humans so that the readers could relate to the participants. However, I soon realised that this was difficult because the community of professionals working in this field is relatively small and revealing too much information

about the participant's sex, geographical location and job role could risk participants being identified by their peers.

In addition to this, I found the process of assigning the participants pseudonyms difficult due to concerns about being influenced by attributional biases. Consequently, I made the decision to use unique identifiers such as 'Participant A'. I felt disappointed by this decision as I felt it dehumanised the participants. However, I did not want to compromise the participant's right to confidentiality and anonymity. In a paper by Allen and Wiles (2015), they argued that ethically bound researchers may be concerned about the process of assigning pseudonyms to participants and stated that "the common practice of allocating pseudonyms to confer anonymity - is not merely a technical procedure but has psychological meaning to both the participants and the content and process of the research" (Allen & Wiles, 2015, p1). This viewpoint supports Appiah et al's. (2021) notion that language is "inseparable from social meanings" (Appiah et al., 2021, p.8). In hindsight, I should have given more thought to the renaming of participants at the early stages of the research process, especially as my study is investigating how language and social meaning is constructed in the social world (Wiggins, 2017). However, it could be argued that this issue only came to light because the process of conducting this research made me acutely aware of the role of language. Furthermore, this experience has helped me to reflect on my ethical values and has demonstrated to me that I am unwilling to compromise when it comes to the wellbeing of the participants. However, to overcome similar issues in the future I will follow the advice of Allen and Wiles (2015) who suggested that participants should be involved in choosing their pseudonyms.

2.5 Language considerations

Another key factor of the design of the study was the language used in the write up. At the beginning of the report (page 12), I talked about two key language considerations for the study. Firstly, I stated that I would be following the legal definition of a child and using the term 'children' rather than 'children and young people' to refer to individuals under 18 years old. Secondly, I stated that I would not be using abbreviations to describe children or the abuse that they have been subjected to. These decisions were made to ensure that I did not reduce or minimise the lived experiences of children. The first decision to refer to individuals under 18 years old as 'children' rather than 'children and young people' may be seen as a controversial decision, so further explanation about the decision-making process may be helpful. This decision was driven by concerns about how the term

'young person' may influence readers to see individuals who are under 18 years old as being more 'adult like' than they actually are (Davis & Marsh, 2020). The belief that some children are more 'adult like' is an example of adultification and can consequently lead to some children being seen as being less vulnerable and less worthy of support (Davis & Marsh, 2020). Examples of 'adultification' were also captured in the findings of the study, and as such, I wanted to ensure that the language used in the report did not contribute to the further adultification of certain groups of children. However, I recognise that other studies that have investigated the exploitation of children through County Lines use the term 'children and young people' as some older children prefer to be called a 'young person' rather than a 'child' (Marshall, 2023). Although, I decided not to use term 'young people' as this study does not include child participants and the target audience of this report is researchers and practitioners.

3. Part Two: Contribution to knowledge

3.1 Development of the research topic

Through working in gang intervention services for 7 years, I developed a passion for supporting children and families whose lives had been impacted by gang violence and child exploitation. In this role, I also had the opportunity to get involved in a number of research activities which fuelled my interest in psychological research in this area. When I started as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP), I wondered how relevant my past work experiences would be. However, on the second day of my first-year placement I found myself at a multi-agency safeguarding meeting discussing three children who were at risk of being exploited through County Lines. Whilst the topic of conversation was familiar to me, I found myself on new ground and I was left wondering, 'how do I best support these children in my capacity as a TEP?'. Through continued discussions with TEPs and EPs, I discovered that some EPs were increasingly being asked to get involved in more cases involving child exploitation concerns. This spurred my interest, and in an entry in my research diary I asked:

*'If EPs have a seat at the table, how are we going use it?
What is our valuable and unique offering
when it comes to matters of child exploitation?'*

I decided that I wanted to investigate this matter further, and I chose child exploitation as my topic for my thesis. Due to my insider researcher status, I decided to adopt an inductive approach to review the literature. This enabled me to start the research without any set agenda. I soon found that significantly less research had been conducted into child criminal exploitation in comparison to child sexual exploitation. Furthermore, I struggled to find any studies from an educational psychology perspective investigating child criminal exploitation. This significant gap in the literature concerned me and I decided that my research needed to investigate the criminal exploitation of children from an educational psychology perspective. Through further reading, I very quickly identified that there were growing concerns about the criminal exploitation of children through the County Lines drug operations and I noted that researchers in this field were repeatedly calling for more research to be conducted in this area in order to raise awareness.

Through continued reading about the criminal exploitation of children through County Lines, I discovered that a number of key journals all focused on one significant case about a child who had been rescued from a County Lines gang. Whilst efforts had been made to anonymise the case, it was clear to me that this was one of the cases that I had worked on in my previous role. What struck me was how the case study was presented as a success story. This is because the child went on to be excluded from school and 'dropped' by social services who argued that the child was not their responsibility as it was not a domestic issue. The lack of support and isolation as well as other factors led to the child being re-exploited, far from the success story painted by the research journals. Through reading this case study, it made me wonder about the validity of some of the research studies investigating the experiences of children who have been exploited through County Lines. I also wondered if more needed to be done to understand the problem itself before exploring the role of the EP. Through further reading, I found that a number of charities had raised concerns about the way some professionals were perceiving children who had been exploited through County Lines and more specifically, the type of language that some professionals were using. This prompted a number of charities to create 'appropriate language' guides for professionals (Appiah et al., 2021; The Children's Society, 2022). However, little to no research has been conducted in this area. I saw this as an opportunity to explore some of the complexities surrounding the exploitation of children through County Lines.

3.2 Conducting the literature review

The process of completing the literature search was a challenging but rewarding process. I attended a session at university and read different commentaries to gain a better understanding of conducting literature reviews. I also gained the help of Cardiff University library services to help me navigate the different databases due to my limited experience of conducting literature reviews. Information about my chosen search terms including a rationale can be found in Appendix A, and information about the chosen databases and the selection process can be found in Appendix B. One of the key challenges in the early stages of the search process was the lack of consensus in terms of the terminology that is being used across the different academic fields and geographical regions. For example, the term 'child exploitation' often pulled up journals about child sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and adult perpetrators of child sexual abuse. Consequently, I had to use very broad search terms and then go through the different journals to see which ones specifically related to the exploitation of children through County Lines.

Another challenge was the significant lack of research that has been conducted from colleagues in education and educational psychology. This meant that my literature search had to draw on research from other academic fields such as social sciences, youth justice, criminology, policing, and law. I also pulled on the current grey literature surrounding County Lines and whilst I am aware of the limitations (Mahood et al., 2013), I was curious about how the grey literature could be influencing how professionals are constructing children who are exploited through County Lines. In particular, I reflected on the epistemological stance of the study which states that knowledge is co-constructed through social processes, and I wondered to what extent the grey literature is influencing the current narratives that exist about children who are exploited through County Lines (Braun & Clarke, 2013). To further structure my literature search, I did not include any position papers or studies that focused on child sexual exploitation. This was mainly due to concerns about bias (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and issues with differing beliefs about children who are sexually exploited in comparison to children who are criminally exploited (Allen & Bond, 2021).

Through conducting the literature review, I quickly realised that I needed to be highly structured and organised to conduct the searches effectively. I also reflected on the writings of Turnbull et al. (2023) who stated that constructing literature reviews is like

“attempting to build a house without a blueprint could result in a fundamentally unsound structure. A thorough investigation of a building’s foundation is essential to assess its quality and fitness for purpose” (Turnbull et al., 2023, p.1). To create my ‘blueprint’, I used the ‘Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses’ (PRISMA) model (Moher et al., 2009) and the CASP Qualitative Studies Checklist (2018). These tools also helped to offer additional transparency and strengthen the overall trustworthiness of the literature review process. When I wrote up my literature review, I adopted a narrative review approach to critique and summarise current understanding about the very broad topic of child criminal exploitation (Green et al., 2006). I was aware that narrative reviews have previously been criticised for researcher bias (Siddaway et al., 2019). To address this concern, I provided additional information in Appendix B to offer the reader greater transparency about the selection process.

3.3 Development of the research questions

The review highlighted a number of significant issues. In particular, current understanding of this topic has been described as limited, partial, and insufficient (Brewster et al., 2023; Olver & Cockbain, 2021; Shaw & Greenhow, 2020) and there were specific concerns about how some professionals are talking about children who have been exploited through County Lines (Appiah et al., 2021). In addition to this, Allen and Bond’s (2020; 2021) identified that the EP community are still in the very early stages of researching child exploitation and to the best of my knowledge, no studies investigating the exploitation of children through County Lines have been conducted from an educational psychology perspective. Consequently, I decided that an exploratory study with broad and open-ended research questions would enable me to explore some of the ways professionals are talking about children who have been exploited through County Lines. I also felt that having broad and open-ended research questions would enable me to move away from any pre-conceived notions that I may hold as an insider researcher (Mynatt et al., 1977). In addition to this, I also identified that a common criticism of discursive psychology studies was the lack of implications (Braun & Clark, 2013). Therefore, I decided that having a research question about implication was important.

This process led to the following two key research questions being offered:

- 1) How do professionals construct children who are being exploited through County Lines through their language and dialogue?
- 2) What are some of the potential implications of these constructions?

3.4 Contributions of research findings to existing knowledge

The literature review and the research findings helped to explore some of the ways professionals talk about children who are being exploited through County Lines. They also highlighted some of the emerging implications. Whilst the study's data was mainly consistent with the key findings of the literature review, the analysis of the data brought about new insight and captured new examples of how some professions talk about children who have been exploited through County Lines. It could be argued that this was due to the novel design of the study and the focus on discourse. Billington's (1995) paper stated that an interest in discourse "goes beyond that initial concern with language" (p. 44) and he argued that an exploration of discourse can enable EPs to "make visible both the simplicity and complexity of individual lives" (p. 37). These insights also shifted some of my long-held beliefs about how some professionals respond to children who have been exploited through County Lines. For example, I have felt frustrated in the past about how some professionals respond to children who have been exploited through County Lines. However, the findings of the study indicate that some of the ways professionals respond to children who have been exploited may be driven by them feeling overwhelmed. This has helped me to feel a greater sense of compassion for these professionals.

However, it is important to acknowledge some of the limitations of the findings. Firstly, the small sample size and the nature of the research means that the findings cannot be generalised (Olver & Cockbain, 2021). Although, the exploratory nature of the study did not set out to discover any objective realities, as the ontological stance of the study promotes the idea that that multiple realities can co-exist (Levers, 2013). Secondly, certain analytical issues identified in the data fell outside of the remit of the study and therefore, were not reported on (see Appendix R). Consequently, it could be argued that the findings of the study did not fully capture the voices of the participants. Thirdly, the study did not seek the voices of children who have been exploited through County Lines.

Although, the focus of the study may not have lent itself to having child participants. Ditcham (2022) also argued that the inclusion of children in research investigating child exploitation can be problematic due to the associated ethical and safeguarding concerns. Ditcham (2022) was especially concerned about going against the ethical principle of 'do no harm' by asking children to talk about distressing and painful experiences. This made me curious about how I could ethically and safely include children in studies, and I decided that this is something that I want to work towards in the future.

3.5 Implications and relevance to the practice of EPs

Implications for future practice are discussed in detail in the empirical study in Part Two. On reflection, I found the process of writing up the implications for practice especially challenging for a number of reasons. Firstly, I felt torn about whether I should just include implications for the EP community or for the wider systems at play. To help me decide, I reflected on Bronfenbrenner's (2005) bio-ecological model and Firmin's (2020) writings on contextual safeguarding and thought about how children are situated amongst complex and interconnecting systems. This helped me to adopt a systems perspective to see the children in context and I decided that I needed to consider implications for the different systems at play in order to facilitate change. Secondly, I recognised that I felt a need to come up with a list of solutions to help 'fix' the problems identified in the study. I became curious about this feeling, and I wondered about how helpful quick fix solutions actually are when you are trying to create systemic change. I reflected on the idea that qualitative researchers need to become 'comfortable with uncertainty'. This encouraged me that it was okay to sit with the problems. Thirdly, I also recognised that I felt intimidated by the prospect of drawing up a list of recommendations for an issue that has been deemed by the participants as 'hopeless'. This is captured in the following extract from my research diary:

'How do we move forward when the future looks bleak? When professionals feel like they are fighting a 'losing battle' and children are being deemed as 'too far gone'? Is there room for hope here?'

The question 'is there room for hope here?' struck me and I ruminated on this thought for a few days. Cox and Lumsdon (2020) argued that EPs can work as 'agents of hope' through using goal-oriented approaches to help children, their families and professionals

feel a sense of agency and see possible ways forward. In this sense, I wondered whether EPs could work as 'hope finders' to help professionals believe that change is possible, even in a context that is regarded as being hopeless.

3.6 Opportunities for future research

The empirical study in Part Two highlighted a number of key areas for future research that were identified through the data. Although, due to the scarcity of literature in this area, I think that any research investigating the exploitation of children through County Lines would make a valuable contribution. This lack of research made me curious, and I began to ask why the exploitation of children through County Lines does not seem a concern for the research community. I initially wondered whether some professionals within education did not see child exploitation as an education issue. This initial hypothesis was strengthened by a comment made by an EP in Allen and Bond's (2021) study that investigated the role of the EP in relation to child sexual exploitation. In the study, the participant stated that child exploitation is at times "outside of the educational aspect of an educational and child psychologist's role" (Allen & Bond, 2021, p. 27). This comment brought up several questions for me and I used my research diary to make sense of my thoughts and feelings. The following extract from my research diary summaries some of my key concerns:

'If safeguarding is everyone's responsibility in the children's workforce, why do some practitioners think that they are exempt? Can we afford to pick and choose which safeguarding matters fit into the EP remit? After all, previous research has recognised links between child exploitation and school exclusion – a matter that is of interest to EPs'.

Through spending time reflecting, I recognised that I was feeling frustrated and let down by other professional's responses. However, a blog post by Birch (2023) warns professionals to be careful of seeking out a 'big bad wolf' to transfer the blame on to. This encouraged me to think more deeply about other factors that may be acting as a barriers, such as workload, funding and issues with joined-up working.

I also thought back to when I was putting together the ethics proposal for the current study and even I wondered, 'is this study possible or are there too many obstacles to overcome?'. In particular, I decided against involving children in the study as I deemed it be too complex. One of the studies included in the literature review also came across challenges in researching children who had been exploited through County Lines and they stated that children in their study were at times hesitant to divulge certain information due to concerns about being labelled as a 'grass' and fears of repercussions (Robinson, 2019). Robinson (2019) also shared they originally wanted to complete an ethnography on gangs around Merseyside, but they could not proceed due to personal safety concerns. However, Robinson (2019) shared that they were eventually able to safely conduct a research study involving children after careful consideration. Robinson's (2019) study has encouraged me that research with children who are being exploited through County Lines is possible and I hope that in the future I will be able to conduct my own study with children to enable them to have their voices heard.

3.7 Dissemination

Fox et al. (2007) stated that the dissemination of research findings should be carefully considered in order to effectively share key messages, facilitate change and overcome key barriers. After careful considerations, plans for the dissemination of the findings of this study are listed below.

1. I will share a summary of my report with the participants via email as promised and I will offer the participants the opportunity to have a follow-up meeting online to discuss the findings.
2. I would like to share my findings with a broader audience through publishing my research. I am particularly interested in publishing in peer-reviewed journals that are read by EPs such as the BPS' Division of Educational & Child Psychology (DECP) journal and the Educational Psychology in Practice (EPIP) journal. I hope that this will help to generate a conversation within the EP community about County Lines and child exploitation.
3. I hope to present the findings of my study to key organisations that support children who have been exploited through County Lines to help raise awareness, support strategic planning, and prompt reflective conversations. I have already

been invited by a national working group to speak at their team meeting and I plan to contact similar organisations.

4. I would like to share my research with TEPs to support them in their roles. To do this, I will apply to speak at the DECP annual TEP conference and I will look out for other opportunities to speak at TEP forums.
5. I aim to share the findings of my study with the EPS and representatives from the Local Authority that I am working at to help facilitate reflective conversations and discuss how we can implement some of the key recommendations put forward in the report.
6. In addition to the plans outlined above, I hope to share some of the key messages of the research study with schools and multi-agency professionals that I will be working with in my new role as a qualified EP. This may look like sharing findings in multi-agency meetings, school consultation meetings or supervision meetings with staff.

4. Concluding reflections

This critical appraisal has provided a reflective and reflexive account of the research process including my personal motivations that fuelled the study, an exploration of the key methodological decision making, a summary of the contribution to knowledge and an open discussion about some of the limitations of the study. In addition to this, an outline of the plans to disseminate the findings of this study has also been presented. This critical appraisal has also given me an opportunity to reflect on my own journey as a researcher and enabled me to consider what I would do differently in the future. Whilst this exploratory study did not seek to discover any objective realities, the novel design of this study has hopefully offered new insights into a complex issue where current understanding is limited, partial, and insufficient (Brewster et al., 2023; Olver & Cockbain, 2021; Shaw & Greenhow, 2020). To conclude, learning from this study has surely enriched my skills and knowledge as a practitioner and as a researcher.

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Appendix A: Search terms

Mapping terms	Key search terms	Rationale
1. County Lines	AND "county lines" or "child criminal exploitation" or "child exploitation"	The review was interested in studies that explored the exploitation of children through County Lines. It was necessary to include a range of terms in the search to describe the exploitation of children through County Lines due to the different terminology that is sometimes used in different academic fields.
2. Child	AND "child*" or "young people"	The review wanted to specifically explore the exploitation of children, which I defined as individuals under the age 18 years old. To capture the different ways studies may describe children under the age of 18 years old, the search terms 'child' and 'young people' were used. These search terms also helped to exclude any studies that focused on the exploitation of vulnerable adults.

Please note, a very broad approach was used to find literature on this topic and as such, only limited search terms were used. This was necessary due to the different terminology that is sometimes used to describe the exploitation of children through County Lines in different academic fields.

Appendix B: Selection process

STAGE ONE: Details of the initial screening process

Source	Search Terms	Initial papers found	Eliminated due to being published outside of the UK	Eliminated due to not being an empirical study	Eliminated due to being published before 2015	Eliminated due to not focusing on child criminal exploitation	Total number of papers found
APA	("county lines" OR "child criminal exploitation" OR "child exploitation") AND ("child" OR "young person")	100	11	16	42	26	5
ASSIA	noft("county lines" OR "child criminal exploitation" OR "child exploitation")AND noft("child" OR "young person")	56	27	3	20	1	5
EBSCO	("county lines" OR "child criminal exploitation" OR "child exploitation") AND ("child" OR "young person")	58	46	2	3	2	5
SCOPUS	(TITLE-ABS-KEY ("county lines" OR "child criminal exploitation" OR "child exploitation") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("child" OR "young person"))	275	197	25	13	17	22
Web of Science	TS=(("county lines" OR "child criminal exploitation" OR "child	159	105	11	9	14	20

	exploitation") AND ("child" OR "young person")						
Proquest Dissertations and Theses Global	noft("county lines" OR "child criminal exploitation" OR "child exploitation") AND noft("child" OR "young person")	39	22	0	0	13	4
Additional articles identified from the snowballing process		2	0	0	0	0	2
Total		689	408	57	87	73	63

Summary:

Total paper identified: 689

Total papers eliminated after initially screening: 625

Total papers left for next stage: 64

STAGE TWO: Deleting duplicates.

30 duplicates were removed. 34 papers remained for further assessment.

STAGE THREE: Eliminating papers after reading the title and abstract:

Summary of reasons:

Reasons	Number of papers eliminated
Not an empirical study	8
Solely explored the views of children rather than professionals	2
Solely explored the views of parents rather than professionals	2
Investigated the exploitation of vulnerable adults rather children	2
Investigated other forms of child exploitation	2
Examined legal cases rather than the constructions of professionals	2
Total numbers of papers eliminated	18

This left 16 papers for further assessment.

STAGE FOUR: Eliminating papers after reading the title and abstract:

Summary of reasons:

Reasons	Number of papers eliminated
Investigated system processes and how professionals respond to children rather than perspectives of professionals	5
Total numbers of papers eliminated	5

This left 11 papers to be included in the literature review.

Summary of the papers included in the literature review.

No.	Author(s) & Date	County	Title	Outline	Design	Participants	Key findings
1	Brewster, Robinson, Silverman, & Walsh (2023)	England	Covid-19 and child criminal exploitation in the UK: implications of the pandemic for county lines	This study explored the impact of covid-19 on County Lines through eliciting the views of professionals.	Qualitative study. Data gained through semi-structured interviews. The study employed Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis.	46 participants including police officers, staff from the National Police Chiefs Council, local authority employees, youth workers from non-governmental organisations, and private sector workers.	The study explored how the County Lines drug supply model had to adapt during the pandemic due to lockdown restrictions. The study also highlighted perceptions about children and young people's vulnerabilities.
2	Ditcham (2022)	England	Child Criminal Exploitation in County Lines in England and Wales: Challenges and Controversies of Dealing with a National Problem at the Local Level	This study investigated some of the challenges and controversies surrounding how professionals respond to children who have been exploited through County Lines in England and Wales.	Qualitative study. Data gained through semi-structured interviews. The study employed Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis.	40 participants including academics, law enforcement officers, and employees from statutory and non-statutory organisations.	The study highlighted that there is no national strategy on tackling County Lines. The study also discussed how some children who are being criminally exploited are being criminalised rather than safeguarded.

3	Lloyd, Manister and Wroe (2023)	England	Social care responses to children who experience criminal exploitation and violence: the conditions for a welfare response	This study investigated social care responses to children who are being criminally exploited. In particular, the study explored the work of children's social care departments who have adopted the Contextual Safeguarding framework to address extra-familial harm.	<p>Qualitative study.</p> <p>Data gained through interviews, focus groups, meeting observations and two peer assessments.</p> <p>Data were analysed in two stages:</p> <p>Stage 1: Investigated a larger data set on 22 pilots that used the contextual safeguarding framework. These findings were reported in another article (Firmin & Lloyd, 2022).</p> <p>Stage 2: Investigated a subset of data about two specific pilots that specifically tackled criminal exploitation and violence. To do this, interviews, focus groups, observations and peer assessments were used to collect data.</p>	Participants included professionals from across the child and family social care departments.	<p>The study explored five factors that impact welfare responses including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) If legal rights promote the best interests of the child. 2) If harm reduction prioritises a child's needs. 3) If language is underpinned by caring intention. 4) The extent that systems harm is recognised and addressed. 5) How practitioners gain knowledge of young people. <p>(Taken from p. 1)</p>
4	Marshall (2023a)	England	Victims first? Examining the place of child criminal exploitation	The study explored how the 'child first' principles can be applied to supporting children who have been	<p>Qualitative study.</p> <p>Data gained through:</p>	Participants included 50 youth justice practitioners and 17 young people.	The study proposed that the 'child first' principles can help to

			within 'child first' youth justice	exploited through County Lines.	<p>Observations from Youth Offending Services (YOS) and wider council activities relating to child criminal exploitation.</p> <p>Interviews with youth justice practitioners and young people.</p> <p>The study employed a critical realist grounded theory (GT) approach (Oliver, 2012) to analyse the data.</p>		reconceptualise children who have been exploited through County Lines. The study also highlighted how some of the system processes 'further entrench' children into the justice system. In addition to this, the study also explored how the concept of child criminal exploitation can prevent some children from receiving support.
5	Marshall (2023b)	England	Victim as a relative status	The study discussed the victim label in relation to child criminal exploitation. The study also explored how this may impact how professionals perceive children who have been exploited through County Lines.	<p>Qualitative study.</p> <p>Data gained through observations and semi-structured interviews.</p> <p>The study employed a grounded theory (GT) approach to analyse the data.</p>	Participants included 17 young people and 50 youth justice practitioners. The practitioners included 38 youth offending service staff and 12 police officers.	The study explored the processes of victim identification in relation to children who are exploited through County Lines. The study also highlighted how relationships with peers and family members can influence whether a child is perceived as a victim.

6	Neaverson & Lake (2023)	England	Barriers experienced with multi-agency responses to county line gangs: a focus group study	This study explored how multi-agency teams can work effectively together when responding to children who have been exploited through County Lines.	Qualitative study. Data gained through two online focus groups. The study employed Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis	Participants included 13 professionals from the fire service, the police, housing associations, community safety teams and schools.	The study highlighted that effective multi-agency working is essential for responding to children who are at risk of being exploited through County Lines. The findings also suggested that school exclusions and a lack of prosocial sense of belonging may mean children are more vulnerable to exploited.
7	Olver and Cockbain (2021)	England	Professionals' Views on Responding to County Lines-Related Criminal Exploitation in the West Midlands.	This study investigated professionals' views on criminal justice responses to children who have been exploited through County Lines. This study also specifically explored the views of professionals who work in the West Midlands.	Qualitative study. Data gained through 10 in-depth interviews. The study employed Braun and Clark's (2019; 2006) reflexive thematic analysis.	Participants included 11 professionals. The professionals included police officers, prosecution service officers, government officials and third-sector staff.	The study highlighted how children who are exploited through County Lines are generally misunderstood. The findings also suggested that this impacts how professionals respond to children.
8	Robinson. (2019)	England	Gangs, County Lines and Child Criminal Exploitation: A	This study investigated the exploitation of children from Merseyside by examining the perspectives of children and professionals.	Qualitative study. Data gained through a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews,	Participants included 'gang-involved' or 'gang-associated' young people and	The study explored the complexities surrounding the exploitation of

			Case Study of Merseyside		informal conversations, and focus groups. The study employed Braun and Clark's (2019; 2006) reflexive thematic analysis.	professionals from Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), the Police, Young Offender Institutes (YOIs), third-sector organisations and Alternative Education Providers (AEPs). All participants were from different areas in Merseyside.	children through County Lines and discussed some of the hidden aspects of child exploitation.
9	Shaw, & Greenhow (2020)	England	Children in Care: Exploitation, Offending and the Denial of Victimhood in a Prosecution-led Culture of Practice	This study explored professionals' views on children in care who have been sexually and criminally exploited. In particular, the study investigated how professionals can best support these children.	Qualitative study. Data gained through semi-structured interviews and focus groups. The study employed Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis.	Participants included professionals from social care teams and youth justice teams in the north-west of England.	The findings suggested that children in care are at risk of exploitation due to their vulnerabilities as well as more broader system issues.
10	Shaw (2023)	England	'Won the Battle but Lost the War?' 'County Lines' and the Quest for Victim Status: Reflections and Challenges	The study explored some of the complexities and tensions surrounding the victim status of children who are exploited through County Lines.	Qualitative study. Data gained through semi-structured interviews with professionals. The study employed Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis.	Participants included 15 professionals from a range of backgrounds including children's social services, youth offending services, the police, health and the third-sector.	The findings suggested that there is a need to move away from the concept of an 'ideal victim' in order to understand children who have been criminally exploited.

11	Spicer (2021)	England	Between gang talk and prohibition: The transfer of blame for County Lines	This study critically reflected on how County Lines is being talked about. To do this, the study adopted a critical discourse analysis approach to examine different forms of publicly available content that talked about County Lines. This included newspaper articles, official publications, and transcripts from parliamentary debates.	Qualitative study. Data gained through publicly available content on County Lines. The study conducted a critical discourse analysis.	No participants were recruited for this study as it explored content on County Lines. This included extracts from newspapers, official publications and transcripts from parliamentary debates.	The findings of the study identified examples of scapegoating as a process of blame transfer. These examples included promoting prominent discourses about gangs and blaming middle class drug users.
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Appendix C: CASP Qualitative Studies Checklist

1) *Brewster et al. (2023) 'Covid-19 and child criminal exploitation in the UK: implications of the pandemic'*

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes. Stated in the methods.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes. A qualitative method was used to explore the experiences of professionals.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes. The article provided a rationale for the research design, gave appropriate references, and presented detailed steps for analysis.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes. Information was given about why certain professionals were included in the study.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes. The research team stated that interviews were chosen so that they could elicit the experiences of the participants. The research team also commented that the questions were carefully considered due to concerns about certain narratives being circulated by the media.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	The research team stated that all interviews were conducted online due to lockdown restrictions. The research team acknowledged that this may have negatively impacted their interaction with the participants.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes. Ethical approval was gained for this study and the research group stated that they considered key factors such as consent and data protection. Although, limited information was given about how these factors were addressed.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes. A detailed account of the methodology and analysis process was given. Suitable references were also provided so readers could replicate the process.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes. A brief summary of the findings is presented. Further discussion then explores the findings in more depth.
10	How valuable is the research?	The researchers identified that the Covid-19 pandemic did have a negative impact on children who have been criminally exploited. Whilst no direct recommendations were made, the article captured 'a moment in time' and identified gaps in the literature.

2) Ditcham (2022) 'Child Criminal Exploitation in County Lines in England and Wales: Challenges and Controversies of Dealing with a National Problem at the Local Level'

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes, clearly stated in the introduction to the research.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes. A qualitative method was used to explore the perceptions of professionals.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes. The article considered other forms of analysis, provided a rationale for the research design, gave appropriate references, and presented detailed steps for analysis.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes. The researcher explained that participants from a wide range of agencies were included in the study so that the researcher could triangulate the different responses.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes and strengths and limitations were discussed.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes. The researcher specifically stated that they purposely adopted a neutral visage to ensure that they did not influence any individuals
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Ethical approval was gained, and key considerations were discussed. The researcher also shared that a key limitation of the research was that no victims of child criminal exploitation participated in the study. However, the researcher stated that this was because ethically the researcher did not agree with asking children to re-live traumatic incidents. Therefore, this illustrates that the wellbeing of the participants was carefully considered.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes. The researcher provided a detailed account of the analysis process which offered a sense of transparency and gave the reader an insight into the trustworthiness of the data.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes. An in-depth exploration of the findings is given, and illustrative quotes are provided.
10	How valuable is the research?	A clear list of recommendations and future research opportunities were presented. A summary of the key findings also highlighted the original contribution to knowledge.

3) *Lloyd et al. (2023) 'Social Care Responses to Children who Experience Criminal Exploitation and Violence: The Conditions for a Welfare Response'*

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes, stated at the end of the literature review.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes. A qualitative method was used to explore the experiences of professionals.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes. Although, there was limited information given about the epistemological and ontological stance and the theoretical framework that was used in the study.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes. The researcher provided a rationale and a detailed account about the context of the participant group.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes. Although, limited information was given about why certain methods had been chosen for this study.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	The researcher provided limited information about their relationship with the participant group.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes. Ethical approval was gained for this study and ethical factors were considered. For example, a decision was made to anonymise certain information to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Three researchers were involved in the analysis process to help strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings. Although, details of the methodology and steps of analysis were not adequately discussed.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes. An in-depth exploration of the findings is given, and illustrative quotes are provided.
10	How valuable is the research?	The article did not include any clear recommendations or list any future research opportunities. However, the research captured some of the challenges surrounding safeguarding and created a rich picture of some of the tensions felt by professionals.

4) Marshall (2023a) 'Victims first? Examining the place of child criminal exploitation within 'child first' youth justice'

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes. It was stated at the end of the literature review.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes. A qualitative method was used to explore the perceptions of professionals.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes. The article gave appropriate references and presented detailed steps for analysis.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes. Although, limited information was given about how participants were identified.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes. Although, limited information was given about why interviews were chosen for this study.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes. The researcher stated that they wanted to enable professionals to speak openly about the topics that mattered most to them. To do this, the researcher stated that they chose semi-structured interviews to allow space for participants to speak.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes. Ethical approval was gained for this study and ethical factors surrounding anonymity were considered.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes. The researcher provided a detailed account of the methodology and analysis process. Strengths of the methodology were also discussed.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes. An in-depth exploration of the findings is given, and illustrative quotes are provided. Although, the findings section would have benefitted from a brief overview of the key themes and sub-themes.
10	How valuable is the research?	The article did not include any specific recommendations or list any future research opportunities. Although, the article did present a well-formed argument for implementing the 'child first' principles, which will inevitably encourage professionals to reflect on their own attitudes and beliefs and professional practice.

5) Marshall (2023b) 'Victim as a relative status'

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes, stated in the introduction.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes. A qualitative method was used to explore the perceptions of professionals.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes. The article provided a rationale for the research design, gave appropriate references, and presented detailed steps for analysis.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes. Detailed information about how participants were recruited was provided.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes. Theoretical perspectives on data collection were explored.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes. The researcher acknowledged their positionality. The researcher also spoke about the impact of exploitation on the young people in the study and what they did to make young people feel safe and ready to engage.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Ethical approval was gained for this study and ethical factors were considered. For example, to address the issue of consent, the principle of 'Gillick Competency' was followed and the researcher gained parental consent for any children under 16. Whilst the welfare of the children in the study was carefully considered by the researcher, there were certain elements of the study that I personally felt uneasy about. For example, the children in the study were given a £20 voucher for participating. This is something I personally would be very cautious about doing. This is because the children in the study may have previously been exploited by adults who gave them money in order to control them. Therefore, the concept of financial benefits for participating in a study may be confusing for a child and it may cause them to re-live painful memories.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes. The researcher provided references for the chosen methodology and gave an overview of the analysis process.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes. An in-depth exploration of the findings is given, and illustrative quotes are provided. However, the findings section would have benefitted from a brief overview of the key themes and sub-themes

10	How valuable is the research?	The article did not include any specific recommendations or list any future research opportunities. Although, the article presented a well-formed argument and encouraged professionals to reflect on the tensions surrounding the victim label.
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6) Neaverson and Lake (2023) 'Barriers experienced with multi-agency responses to county line gangs: a focus group study'

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes. It was clearly stated in the abstract.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes. A qualitative method was used to explore the experiences of professionals.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes. The article provided a rationale for the research design and gave appropriate references.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes. The research team stated that individuals were specifically chosen from different agencies in order to gain a broad and rich picture.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes. A detailed account about the strengths and limitations of the focus group were given.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes. The research team stated that they wanted everyone in the focus group to feel confident about talking so they created space at the beginning of the focus group where the moderator and focus group members could introduce themselves and get to know each other.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Ethical approval was gained for this study and ethical factors were considered, such as data protection procedures. Although, limited information was provided about how these issues were addressed.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes. The study provided a reference for Braun and Clarke's approach to thematic analysis and key steps were discussed. The research team also stated that they adopted an inductive approach to enable them to do an in-depth exploration of the emerging themes.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes. An overview of the findings is given and a table including illustrative quotes provided further clarity. The findings were then discussed in the next section.

10	How valuable is the research?	A clear list of recommendations for effective multi-agency working was presented. The recommendations also included specific and practical suggestions that practitioners could implement in their workplaces to create change.
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7) *Olver and Cockbain (2021) 'Professionals' views on responding to County Lines-Related Criminal Exploitation in the West Midlands'*

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes. Stated at the end of the literature review.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes. A detailed account of the methodology explained that a qualitative design was chosen to explore the perspectives of professionals.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes. The article provided a rationale for the research design, gave appropriate references, and presented detailed steps for analysis.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes. Although, the study stated that one specific person created an initial list of potential individuals who could be involved in the study. Therefore, a potential bias may have influenced who was chosen for the study. A broader volunteer sample may have meant that voices from a more diverse selection of individuals were included.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes. The research team explained that interviews were chosen so that participants could explore the issues that mattered most to them.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes. In particular, the study stated that the interview questions were considered very carefully to ensure that the participant group could speak openly.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes. Ethical approval was gained for this study and the researchers provided details about ethical considerations, such as how they maintained the participant's anonymity.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes. A detailed account of the methodology and analysis process was provided. The research team provided information about how many participants had raised a given theme for added transparency.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes. An in-depth exploration of the findings is given, and illustrative quotes are provided.

10	How valuable is the research?	Whilst no clear list of recommendations was presented, the article explored opportunities for future research. In addition to this, the conclusion listed some of the key challenges facing professionals and potential ways forward.
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8) Robinson (2019) 'Gangs, County Lines and Child Criminal Exploitation: A Case Study of Merseyside'

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes. Stated in the introduction.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes. A qualitative method was used to explore the experiences of professionals.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes. The article provided a rationale for the research design, gave appropriate references and presented detailed steps for analysis.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes. The researcher gave a clear statement about why certain professionals were included in the study. The researcher also explained that the study was building on previous research and so links with key organisations had already been established.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes. The researcher stated that they wanted to gather in-depth reflective accounts.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Yes. The researcher commented that they helped the participants to feel comfortable about sharing their experiences. The researcher also acknowledged that some young people may have not been able to talk about certain topics due to safety concerns.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Yes. Ethical approval was granted for this study and the researcher commented on key ethical principles such as consent and confidentiality. The researcher also shared that they changed aspects of the study due to safeguarding concerns. This illustrated that ethical principles around wellbeing were carefully considered and addressed.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes. A detailed account of the methodology and analysis process was provided. The researcher also commented that the data sets (young people sample and practitioner sample) were analysed separately in order to carry out an in-depth comparison the findings.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes. An in-depth exploration of the findings and illustrative quotes were provided.

10	How valuable is the research?	A comprehensive and informative overview was given, and a clear list of recommendations were presented. Although, as the study explores the experiences of individuals in one geographical area, it may be hard to generalise some of the findings to other areas in the UK.
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9) Shaw and Greenhow (2020) 'Children in Care: Exploitation, Offending and the Denial of Victimhood in a Prosecution-led Culture of Practice'

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes, stated at the end of the literature review.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes. A qualitative methodology was used to explore the perceptions and experiences of professionals.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes. Although, there was limited information given about the rationale of the chosen methodology
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes. The authors stated that individuals were chosen from four multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASH) teams. Although, limited information was given about how certain team members engaged in the study.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes. Although, limited information was given about why focus groups were chosen as a method to collect data.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Limited information was provided about the relationship between the researchers and the participants.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Ethical approval was gained for this study and ethical factors were considered, such as ensuring participants gave informed consents. Although, limited information was provided about how this was achieved.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes. Appropriate references were provided. Although, only a brief description was given about the analysis process.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes. An in-depth exploration of the findings is given, and illustrative quotes are provided.

10	How valuable is the research?	The article did not include any specific recommendations or list any future research opportunities. Although, the study explored some key challenges and made a case for further legislation to safeguard vulnerable children in care.
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10) Shaw (2023) ‘Won the Battle but Lost the War?’ ‘County Lines’ and the Quest for Victim Status: Reflections and Challenges’

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes. Stated in the introduction
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes. A qualitative methodology was used to explore the perceptions of professionals.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes. Although, there was limited information given about the rationale of the chosen methodology.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Yes. The researcher stated that the participants were recruited through a ‘snowball’ sampling strategy based on existing contacts of the researcher. The researcher also recruited participants through social media. Whilst this process may have been successful in finding participants, it may have also attracted participants from similar groups who hold the similar views. Therefore, a wider recruitment strategy may have identified a more diverse group of professionals.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes. The researcher stated that they wanted to create a rich picture of some of the tensions and challenges through adopting a qualitative approach.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	The researcher did briefly mention that some of participants were ‘existing contacts’ but they did not give any further description of their relationship.
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Ethical approval was gained for this study and ethical factors were considered, such as informed consent.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Yes. Appropriate references were provided. Although, only a brief description was given about the analysis process.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes. An in-depth exploration of the findings is given, and illustrative quotes are provided.
10	How valuable is the research?	The article did not include any specific recommendations. Although, it explored some complex issues and made a case for further research in this area.

11) Spicer (2021) 'Between gang talk and prohibition: The transfer of blame for County Lines'

Checklist Questions		Details
1	Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	Yes. Stated in the methodology.
2	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes. A qualitative method was used to explore discourse.
3	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Yes. The research design was specifically chosen to analyse different forms of content.
4	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	No participants were recruited. Although, details about the search process for finding relevant content was explained.
5	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Yes. Key decision making was explained.
6	Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	Whilst no participants were included in this study, the researcher still acknowledged their positionality to make clear their stance and motivations
7	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	No ethical considerations were discussed. However, this may be due to the fact that this study did not include any participants.
8	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	Methodology references were provided and the analysis process was discussed in detail including how the content was chosen.
9	Is there a clear statement of findings?	Yes. An in-depth exploration of the findings and illustrative examples were provided. Although, the article would have benefitted from a brief statement listing the three key analytical issues.
10	How valuable is the research?	The article listed possible implications, future research opportunities and possible pitfalls for future researchers. The chosen methodology also helped to explore the topic of County Lines from a new and unique perspective.

Appendix D: Semi-structured discussion

Stage	Stage	Questions
Intro	<p>Intro</p> <p>Icebreaker:</p> <p>To get the participants talking and to capture their understanding of the topic.</p>	<p>1) Can you tell me in your own words, how you would describe county lines to someone who has never heard of it before?</p> <p>Prompt: <i>Think about what people need to know about County Lines to understand it.</i></p>
Stage One	<p>Stage One</p> <p>Experience:</p> <p>To capture the participant's experiences and constructions.</p>	<p>Intro: Let's now focus on the children who are exploited through county lines in the UK and your experiences as professionals.</p> <p>2) From your own experience, tell me about the children and young people who are exploited through county lines?</p> <p>Prompt: <i>How do they get involved with County Lines? What happens to them?</i></p> <p>3) In your own experience, how do professionals view and talk about these children and young people? Please share examples if possible.</p> <p>Prompt: <i>How is the child's involvement described? How are they talked about in informal and formal meetings? How are they talked about in reports? How are they talked about in different groups of professionals?</i></p>
Stage Two	<p>Reflection:</p> <p>To give the participants space to reflect.</p>	<p>Intro: Let's begin to reflect a bit deeper now about the way these children are being seen and talked about by professionals.</p> <p>4) In your own experience, can you think of any possible explanations to describe why professionals are viewing and talking about these children and young people in this way?</p> <p>Prompt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider where do our views and other professionals views come from. - Consider any underlying assumptions. - Consider any cultural or historical factors. - Consider any significant events
Stage Three	<p>Action:</p> <p>To give the participants space to consider any implications.</p>	<p>Intro: I want to ask you one more question about possible implications.</p> <p>5) In your own experience, what is the potential impact of the way professionals are viewing and talking about these children?</p>

		<p>Prompt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Consider what happens as a consequence of the way these children are thought about and talked about. -Consider how could it impact children, other professionals, and wider systems,
Closing	<p>Final Thoughts:</p> <p>To give the participants the opportunity to make any final contributions.</p>	<p>6) Has anyone got any final comments?</p> <p>Prompt: Any final reflections or anything you haven't been able to say yet.</p>

Appendix E: Script for a telephone call to the gatekeeper

Hello, my name is xxxx and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist currently studying on the Doctorate for Educational Psychology Training Programme at Cardiff University.

I would like to talk to you today about a research study that you may be interested in, are you available to talk? {YES} Okay, that's great.

So, I am currently conducting a research study exploring how multi-agency professionals talk about children and young people under 18 years old who have been exploited through County Lines in the UK.

This study aims to understand the perspectives that currently exist amongst professionals about children and young people under 18 who have been exploited through County Lines. It is specifically interested in learning about how professionals talk about these children and what the possible implications are.

It is hoped that this study will enable professionals to better understand the complexities surrounding County Lines and to reflect on their view of these children and young people who may have been exploited.

Participation in this study would involve taking part in an online focus group via MS Teams with 6-10 other practitioners who directly support children under 18 years old who have been exploited through County Lines in the UK.

The focus group will take place on [DATE] and will take no longer than 90 minutes.

Any discussions in the focus group will be treated as confidential, and any sensitive information will be anonymised, including your name and the name of your organisation.

Do you think you or any of your team might be interested? {YES}

Okay, I am going to send you some more information by email. If you or anyone in your team is interested, I need you to email me back saying you are interested.

Participants will be chosen on a first-come, first-served basis, but attempts will be made to create a varied group of professionals so that we can have a rich conversation in the focus group.

If you have a place on the study, I will ask you to send me a consent form before the focus group.

Thank you for speaking to me today.

Appendix F: Recruitment information

Gatekeeper Letter and Email

Dear (name of Gatekeeper),

My name is xxxx and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist currently studying on the Doctorate for Educational Psychology Training Programme at Cardiff University. I would like to invite you to take part in a research study exploring how multi-agency professionals talk about children and young people under 18 years old who have been exploited through County Lines in the UK.

This study aims to understand the perspectives that currently exist amongst professionals about children and young people under 18 who have been exploited through County Lines. I am specifically interested in learning about how professionals talk about these children and what the possible implications are. It is hoped that this study will enable professionals to better understand the complexities surrounding County Lines and to reflect on their views towards these children and young people who have been exploited. All participants will receive a summary report that will outline the key findings of the study. Participation in this study would involve taking part in an online focus group via MS Teams with 6-10 other practitioners who directly support children and young people under 18 years old who have been exploited through County Lines in the UK. The focus group will take place on [DATE] and will take no longer than 90 minutes. If you or anyone in your team is interested in taking part in the focus group, please email on xxxxxxx@cardiff.ac.uk. Please be advised that all information received through the focus group will be treated as confidential, and any sensitive information will be anonymised, including your name and the name of your organisation.

I greatly appreciate your consideration of participating in this study. Participants will be chosen on a first-come, first-served basis, but attempts will be made to create a varied group of professionals so that we can have a rich conversation in the focus group. Please feel free to share this information with your team and get in touch if you have any questions.

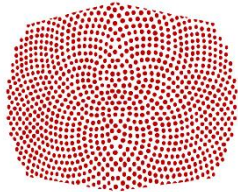
Kind Regards,

x, Trainee Educational Psychologist, x@cardiff.ac.uk

x, Professional Tutor, Doctorate of Educational Psychology, x@cardiff.ac.uk

If you have any questions about the study, please contact the research team or Cardiff University's Research Ethics Committee: School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 30 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3EU; Tel +44 (0)29 2087 0360; email: psyethics@cardiff.ac.uk

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School of Psychology

Recruitment Poster



I am interested in learning more about the perspectives that currently exist amongst professionals about children and young people under 18 who have been exploited through County Lines in the UK. I am specifically interested in learning more about how professionals talk about these children and what the possible implications are.

I am looking for professionals from different backgrounds who have worked directly with children and young people under the age of 18 from the UK who have been exploited through County Lines.

You will be asked to take part in an online focus group via MS Teams with 6-10 other practitioners. The focus group will take no longer than 90 minutes. Your participation in this study will be kept confidential, and your name and your organisation will be left out of the final report.

If you have any further questions or comments about the research, please contact:

The researcher:

xxxxxxx

The research supervisor:

xxxxxxx

Cardiff University's Research Ethics Committee:

School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 30 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3EU; Tel +44 (0)29 2087 0360; email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

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Appendix G: Participant Information Sheet

What are the aims for this study?

This study aims to understand the perspectives that currently exist amongst professionals about children and young people under 18 who have been exploited through County Lines. It is specifically interested in learning more about how professionals talk about these children and what the possible implications are.

What will participation involve?

Participation in this study would involve taking part in an online focus group via MS Teams with 6-10 other practitioners who directly support children and young people under 18 years old who have been exploited through County Lines in the UK.

How long will the focus group be?

The focus group will take no longer than 90 minutes.

Is my participation in the study confidential?

Yes, your participation in this study will be kept confidential in the final report. The focus group discussion will be video recorded through the video conferencing software and will be stored on a password-protected computer for two weeks. The video recordings will then be transcribed and anonymised after a two-week period. At this point, any identifiable information will be omitted from the final transcript, including your name, the name of your organisation, as well as the names of staff members or children that you may mention. Once the data has been anonymised, it will not be possible to trace any information back to you or your organisation. Please note, that due to the nature of the group being a focus group where other participants are present, there is sometimes a limitation on the level of confidentiality that is possible. But please be reassured that we will do what we can to uphold the confidentiality of the participants by asking participants not to repeat discussions had in the focus group, not to say the names of any organisations or children and young people and by asking participants to only share what they feel safe sharing.

Do I have to participate?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants will be chosen on a first-come, first-served basis, but attempts will be made to create a varied group of professionals so that we can have a rich conversation in the focus group. Before taking part in the focus group, the researcher will ask you to sign a

consent form to ensure you are happy to participate. Please note, participants will not be paid for taking part in the focus group.

What if I change my mind?

You have the right to withdraw what you have said in the group discussion up to two weeks after the focus group has taken place, and you do not have to give a reason why. Should you decide that you would like to withdraw within the two-week period, you should contact xxxxxx by email.

What will do you do with the information gained from the study?

The information gathered will help me to write a report about how professionals talk about children and young people who have been exploited through County Lines. The report may be published and may be talked about at training sessions and conferences. It is hoped that this information will enable others to better understand County Lines and allow professionals to reflect on their views towards these children and young people. All participants will receive a summary report that will outline the key findings of the study.

If you have any further questions or comments about the research, please contact:

The researcher: XXXX
XXXX

The research supervisor:

Cardiff University's Research Ethics Committee:

School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 30 Park Place,
Cardiff, CF10 3EU; Tel +44 (0)29 2087 0360; email:
psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

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Appendix H: Consent form

Information on Participation

The following section is asking for information about your job role and your professional experience of supporting children and young people who have been exploited through County Lines.

**The following questions are voluntary, so please share as much or as little as you want.*

What is your job role?	
How long have you worked in your profession?	
How much experience do you have of supporting children who have been exploited through County Lines?	

Consent Form

- I understand that my participation in this study will involve participating in an online focus group via MS Team with 6 -10 other professionals that should take approximately 90 minutes.
- I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary.
- I understand the importance of confidentiality and I agree to not disclose what has been discussed by other participants in the focus group.
- I understand that I can withdraw my data by contacting the researcher on the email addresses provided up to two weeks after participating in the study.
- I understand that after two weeks the data will have been transcribed and anonymised and it will not be possible to withdraw.
- I understand that I can discuss any queries with researcher x or supervisor x
- I understand that the personal data will be processed in accordance with GDPR regulations (see privacy statement below)
- I understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.
- I understand that the research will subsequently be written into a report and may be published and talked about at training events and

conferences, however as previously mentioned, it will not be possible to identify participants from the data.

I, _____ (NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by x, School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of x

Signed: _____

Date: _____

If you have any further questions or comments about the research, please contact:

The researcher:

XXXXXXX

The research supervisor:

XXXXXXX

Cardiff University's Research Ethics Committee:

School of Psychology, Cardiff University, Tower Building, 30
Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3EU; Tel +44 (0)29 2087 0360; email:
psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

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Appendix I : Debrief Sheet

Thank you for your participation in this study. The aim of this study is to learn more about how professionals talk about children and young people under the age of 18 who have been exploited through County Lines. All participants will receive a summary report that will outline the key findings of the study when the study is completed. The information that you have provided today is being held confidentially on a password encrypted device and will not be shared with others outside of the research team. After a two-week period, the original video recording of the focus group will be transcribed and the recording will be deleted. Your information will be anonymised and so it will not be traceable to you. If you want to withdraw from the study, you can and you do not have to give a reason why. If you want to do this, then please contact me within 2 weeks of participating. After this time, you will be unable to withdraw from the study, as your information would have been anonymised.

If the conversations within this focus group have brought up any worries or if you are concerned about your wellbeing, you may wish to contact:



www.mind.org.uk

If you have any further questions or comments about the research, please contact:

The researcher:

XXXXXXX

The research supervisor:

XXXXXXX

Cardiff University's Research Ethics Committee: School of Psychology,
Cardiff University, Tower Building, 30 Park Place, Cardiff, CF10 3EU; Tel
+44 (0)29 2087 0360; email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

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Appendix J: Jefferson transcription notation and full copy of transcript

Jefferson transcription notation for discursive psychology (2004)

(.)	Brief pause
(1.2)	Longer pause, timed in seconds
=	Latched talk, words which merge into one another
w:ord	Colon to indicate stretched sounds in talk
CAPITALS	Noticeably louder talk
°word°	Noticeably quieter talk
<u>Underlined</u>	Underlined words showing emphasised speech
<word>	Quickened speech
>word<	Slowed speech
áword	Change in rising pitch
âword	Change in downward pitch
£word	Smiley voice such as when hiding laughter
#word	Croaky voice such as when upset
[]	Overlapping speech
.h	Audible inbreath
h	Audible outbreath
w(h)ord	Laughter within speech
Huh, heh, hah	Laughter
'word'	Reported speech
(in overlap)	Unclear audio
word,	Comma for slight upper inflection
word.	Full stop for slight downward inflection

1 **Full copy of transcript for focus group**

2 >So<, um, just a a very broad question
3 then, and I'll write this in the in the
4 group as well. (.) Can you tell me in
5 your own words how you would describe
6 County Lines to >somebody< who's never
7 heard of it before? (5.2). So how would
8 you describe county lines to
9 >somebody< who's never heard of it
10 before? (6.3)

11 Participant A: Um, <what> student, or adult?.

12 Moderator: It could be >adults<, children.

13 Participant A: (.)<I think it> I think personally as,
14 uh, working in a ° school°, I think,
15 um, describing it to students in a (.)
16 is better in a different way than it
17 would be to the parents. Um, because
18 you don't wanna sort of scare them <too
19 much>, but you also wanna make them
20 understand what it is because in my
21 experience, the young people think it's
22 a good thing, um, and they think
23 they're making money by doing <whatever
24 it is> they're asked <to do> in
25 exchange for >whatever it is< they're
26 getting. Um, whereas parents (.) you
27 >mention< County Lines and the panic
28 (.) the sheer panic in their <you know>
29 in their faces and 'oh my God (.) my
30 son's being exploited' <or> 'my
31 daughter's being exploited and what are
32 you going to do about it?'. Sort of
33 m(h)ost of the, most of the time
34 <unfortunately> we get the blame as
35 though we're not looking after (.) or
36 keeping their child safe. Um, and I
37 suppose in a in >one way< it's <sort of
38 like> we all have to work together to
39 keep that #child safe <it's not> just
40 the sole responsibility of the
41 parent(.)or the school or the, the
42 possible agency involvement. Um, so (.)
43 the way that I've described it to
44 students is actually (.) it, <it's a

45 difficult one> where you sort of (.)
46 you try and e:explain it where it's bad,
47 but not in a way that they're gonna
48 rebel and do it more (.). So it's,
49 <it's quite> actu there is no >set way<
50 I don't think personally. <I mean>
51 it's a:lright giving them educational
52 slides and saying 'this is County Lines
53 <X, Y, and Z>', (.) but then they're
54 just gonna go 'well, I'm making money
55 (.) so what's the problem?' Or 'I'm
56 getting really good friends, or I've
57 got protection or' (.) °do you know
58 what I mean° (.) áit's, it's quite a
59 difficult one (.) <to be fair> but it's
60 huh it's freally sort of (.) you've got
61 to really determine, um, what they
62 understand and and their level of
63 understanding and how far (.) far in
64 they are(.)into >possible< exploitation
65 <as well> because if they're too far
66 gone (.) and °there is such thing as
67 too far gone° (.) unfortunately it's
68 >really< difficult to get them âback.
69 So, <I mean> I've done enough
70 t(h)alking I think huh .h.

71 Participant B: I agree with you (Participant A). I
72 think it's >really< difficult to kind
73 of, it's based on their o:wn
74 experiences and what they see as being
75 (.) you know >problematic< or not
76 really. And how do you define what we
77 know what we do as >âprofessionals< but
78 again it's how do you then convey that
79 to them as young people or to adults
80 without actually (.) pushing them in
81 the wrong direction again further, um,
82 (.) it is quite difficult, but I
83 suppose r:ealistically (.) just kind of
84 in a n:utshell, it would be kind of
85 along the l:ines of, um, (.) other
86 people (.) °be it adults or other
87 children° befriending them (.) for
88 their own gain (.) <which might mean
89 that obviously, you know, explaining or
90 expanding that little bit further>
91 a:long the lines of, um, they ask you

92 to do something as a favor and <you
93 might think that you're getting
94 something back> in return which is
95 something that you want which is >needs
96 led< for them (.) but again, I think
97 how you would describe it would depend
98 upon the >young person< or the adults
99 that you're actually trying to speak
100 to.

101 Participant A: Yeah, it's, it's also sort of (.) if
102 their, um, being offered anything that
103 their families or friends can't offer
104 them in (.) <you know its normal cuz
105 that's that's where it comes from> that
106 they're (.) you know, um, they, they
107 can't afford the trainers

108 Participant B: [in overlap] Yeah

109 Participant A: or they can't afford the jewellery, and
110 <all that sort of thing isn't it> so
111 they (.) and if we was to say 'that
112 person's ânegative', they're gonna be
113 sort of (.) 'well that's my friend you
114 are talking about'

115 Participant B: [in overlap] Yeah

116 Participant A: And then they're going to s:traight
117 away not like ya.

118 Participant B: [in overlap] Yeah

119 Participant A: And no matter what you say to them,
120 they're not gonna (.) take any notice
121 whatsoever and then in particular, <a
122 lot of our teenagers don't listen to
123 the> parents (.) unfortunately. Um, and
124 then when they do listen to us and if
125 we're all singing off the same h hymn
126 sheet (.) who are they going to (.)
127 disclose things to? How are we gonna
128 find out more i:nformation? Cause we've
129 lost that âtrust (.) So it is difficult
130 how to, to, you know, talk to the young
131 people. Um, <some of 'em have got their

132 head screwed on> and they know exactly
133 what's going on.

134 Participant B: [in overlap] Hmm.

135 Participant A: But they are scared to come out with
136 that (.) because of the repercussions
137 from the friends or, you know, the
138 a:ssociation of negative peers.

139 (Enter Participant C)

140 Participant A: Um, but then you've got others <like I
141 said> (.) who think it's c:ool.

142 Participant B: [in overlap] Hmm.

143 Participant A: Who want to then get other students
144 áinvolved (.) Um, it's (.) and
145 unfortunately because they're getting
146 rewarded, um <money, jewellery,
147 clothes> (.) fancy things like that,
148 why would they want to come out of it?
149 So it's a losing battle sometimes.

150 Participant B: They don't recognise it, do they?

151 Participant A: [in overlap] No.

152 Participant B: <A lot of them> they don't, they don't
153 say, again, it's because °they're
154 getting something in return that they
155 want°, They don't think it's an issue,
156 they don't see it as <as professionals
157 as parents would> see it being an
158 i:ssue. They don't.

159 Participant A: And then o:bviously they get to see
160 different ácities.

161 Participant B: [in overlap] Yep.

162 Participant A: And they, you know, different
163 e:xplorations that they've never been
164 before.

165 Participant B: [in overlap] Exactly.

166 Participant A: Because they think it's a wonderful
167 world out there, <which it is> (.)
168 °But not in that, in that respect°
169 (1.9).

170 Moderator: I'm just gonna pause slightly (.) Hi
171 [PARTICIPANT C]. It's lovely to see
172 you.

173 Participant C: [in overlap] Hiya.

174 Moderator: Y:ou okay?

175 Participant C: Yeah fine.

176 Moderator: ° Good° Um, we, we, you've just joined
177 us on our, on our first question (.)
178 and um, the question is (.) can you
179 tell me in your own words (.) how you
180 would describe county l:ines to
181 somebody who's never heard of it
182 before? <And I've, I've just written it
183 in the chat> so you should be able to
184 see it. Um, but I'll just q:uickly go
185 around. So, so I'm (Moderator), I'm the
186 one you have been speaking to on the
187 emails, um, from Cardiff University,
188 um, the study's looking at (.) um,
189 people's experiences and, and views of
190 children who've been exploited by
191 county álines. Um, and if we could just
192 quickly go around the group and just
193 say hi and your name, that would be
194 perfect (2.3) (Participant B) you want
195 to just say hi?

196 Participant A: Hi (Name) I'm (Name) (1.4)

197 Moderator: Participant D? (.)

198 Participant D: Hi, I'm (Name).

199 Moderator: Participant A? (.)

200 Participant B: Hi, I'm (Name) (.)

201 Moderator: And we've got (.)

202 Participant C: I'm (Name) #obviously (.)

203 Moderator: Lovely. (LAUGH) Yeah, and um, just so
204 you know, <as it said on the
205 participation information sheet>, we've
206 got this r:ecording <just for the
207 notes> and it, it w:ill be deleted once
208 the notes have been written up áokay.
209 So, um (.) so I'll just kind of come
210 back in now. So we are °just sharing
211 about how we would describe County
212 Lines to somebody° (.) and, and
213 [Participant A], you and [Participant
214 B] <both mentioned> there that, um,
215 possibly it depends on w:ho that person
216 is about how y:ou would describe it
217 (.)and how (.) young people might often
218 see County Lines as something different
219 than áperhaps what adults see it as
220 (1.8) Does any anybody have anything
221 else they want to, to share on áthat?
222 (1.6)

223 Participant D: I think as well (.) um (.) what we've
224 noticed is as well as kind of (.) if
225 you're, if <you're trying to> e:plain
226 it to a young person is how they, they
227 understand it (.) but it's a:lso kind
228 of their use of l:anguage as áwell.
229 Because d:epending on what a:rea
230 they're from or what <I suppose> gang
231 or whatever they see themselves part of
232 (.) they have kind of their own
233 d:ifferent types of álanguage. So I
234 know that's something (.) that we
235 always (.) get advice on in (Name of
236 Organisation) as well because (.) um,
237 of things that (.) you know, we might
238 say if we're doing specific work w:ith
239 them. Uh, so that's something that
240 we've always gotta watch. And a:gain,
241 you know, when they come in with us,
242 when we try and do some work with them
243 or get them to attend e:ducation (.)
244 um, it sometimes f:eels like a losing
245 battle because of the things that they
246 get, what they earn and their status
247 when they're out in the c:ommunity.

248 It's just (.) unless you have them for
249 maybe a long period, <which is very
250 rarely>, it's quite difficult to (.)
251 to get through to them (.) And what
252 another thing we've <gotta be> mindful
253 of <as well with us> is, um, (.)
254 different areas and things that
255 they're from, because you can get that
256 rivalry between them. So we've always
257 gotta be mindful of that, where they
258 were referral and, and where we mix
259 the young people. Or if we have a young
260 person that maybe isn't involved in
261 County Lines and one that is (.) um
262 (.) that kind of connection when they
263 both leave (.) Um, cuz that, that has
264 happened in the past with us as well.

265 Moderator: I I think we are naturally going on to
266 the next question (.) <and the next
267 question is in the chat>, it says, from
268 your own experience (.) tell me about
269 the children and young people who are
270 exploited through county lines. So
271 very broad question, <but> tell me
272 about some of the young people that
273 you've come across. What are they like?
274 (.) how do they get involved? What
275 happens to them? (3.8)

276 Participant C: I think, I think, for me (.) for me,
277 the first, the first thing is that as a
278 professional approaching them, it's
279 really difficult often to engage kind
280 of young people who are heavily
281 involved so, uh (.) they (.) they don't
282 wanna associate with professionals uh,
283 often the language is very like
284 verbally aggressive. Umm, if we're
285 going, if we've arranged to meet up
286 often they'll kind of (.) disappear
287 just before about to, to turn up and,
288 and do something but (.) uh (.) yeah,
289 I've lost train of the question there
290 (.)

291 Moderator: That's okay.

292 Participant A: See in o:ur school, we've got (.) a,
293 um, a s:pectrum. So <it's we've got> a
294 ástudent °at the moment° who is the
295 most v:ulnerable young person you'll
296 ever see, he looks like <butter
297 wouldn't melt> r:eally sweet, r:eally
298 naive about (.) life in g:eneral, and
299 he's being e:xploited by (.) others
300 <because he's been a victim of>
301 ábullying in áschool. And his way of
302 b:eing (.) <you know> the cool p:erson
303 is to get in with <the gangs and the
304 County Lines>. So now when it comes to
305 áschool (.) he's actually (.) gone áup
306 the, the food chains, °so to speak° and
307 in, in his head that's r:eally positive
308 and we're trying to sort of squash that
309 because we're, he's been <exploited
310 really bad>. And then on the opposite
311 end (.) we've got the (.) <you know>
312 the a:rea these are from, uh, °their
313 brothers have been in prison° they've
314 got >fathers or mothers< in, you know,
315 in the system of that. Uh, they're
316 known <to be in a> (.) a drug sort of
317 area. Um, so it's the t:ypical
318 stereotypical, um, <you know> OT County
319 Lines °sort of thing°. So it is r:eally
320 broad in our school (.) Um, so it could
321 <and, and> b:ut it's all >boys<. We
322 haven't had any girls so far off <to
323 touch f:ood>. fUm, but 30% of our boys
324 <are at risk> (.) of (.) um CCE County
325 Lines <that sort of thing> which is a
326 quite high ánumber °to be fair° because
327 of the a:reas they're from and because
328 of f:amilies, f:riends (.) um, just
329 being l:ed into that <sort of thing> So
330 it's, it's quite quite s:ad. And then a
331 (.) <you know> a few of the v:ulnerable
332 looked after children as well.

333 Participant C: [in overlap] Yeah.

334 Participant A: Uh, trying to find their place in (.)
335 society, u:mm, and just trying to f:eel
336 love I suppose °from the olders as they
337 they call them° (1.7)

338 Participant B: Yeah, I think my experience is very
339 s:imilar to yours, [Participant A], in
340 the sense that (.) a lot of what we see
341 is the (.) vulnerabilities
342 <irrespective of kind of> w:hat kind of
343 a:rea be it in t:erms of (.) their own
344 emotional and mental health, the
345 n:umber of ACEs that they've been
346 subjected to as c:hildren, the t:rauma,
347 <you know that kind of stuff> whether
348 they are LAC (.) Um, <but just to>
349 k:inda give you (.) a bit of kind of
350 b:ackground really <as to> w:here we
351 are. So (.) we are (General
352 Geographical Location) (.) we've gotta
353 lot of l:inks with ácities, so <going
354 up to> (.) (City Name), <going up to>
355 (.) um (City Name), um, o:bviously that
356 k:ind of area. And w:e're kind of on
357 the direct route i:nto kind of (General
358 Geographical Location)(.) into a:ll the
359 <little villages> (.) Um, so obviously
360 we s:ee a lot of l:ike young people (.)
361 <prior to lockdown> there was a lot of
362 y:oung people (.) um, from o:ther areas
363 (.) from cities who were being (.)
364 trafficked and (.) transported down
365 that County Line into our a:reas <into
366 our villages> And o:bviously, <you
367 know>, they'd s:pend a <couple of days>
368 and you know some as young as 12 w:ere
369 being kind of (.) sent down that train
370 line (.) Umm, <you know> o:bviously the
371 ápolice were kind of (.) p:icking
372 things up. Um, <you know> and
373 o:bviously <we were kind of> s:eeing a
374 bit of a trend there. I mean in (.)
375 from the c:ities. <But obviously during
376 lockdown> (.) we kind of seen a massive
377 shift (.) in that they weren't u:sing
378 people out of area because obviously
379 (.) the issues around trains, um, you
380 know, o:bviously traveling on trains
381 (.) young people t:raveling became more
382 ánoticeable. So they were then l:ooking
383 <to kind of> recruit more in-house
384 within the k:ind of areas. And áthat's
385 when we n:oticed the broader kind of

386 look in terms of (.) they were
387 identifying the kind of vulnerable kids
388 l:ooked after kids (.) Um (.) <you
389 know> and it's (.) the process is (.)
390 extremely c:lever <how they kind of>
391 pinpoint these kids and how they do
392 GROOM them into °this kind of activity°
393 (.) Um <but again> it's about the
394 status and t:hings that these kids
395 áfeel because they're not getting (.)
396 <you know> (.) um, the kind of n:needs
397 met being at home, being within the
398 care home. They hate their lifestyle <I
399 think>, they just want to f:eel like
400 they belong and they're kind of (.)
401 <you know> getting mixed up in a lot of
402 s:tuff that áonce they kind of (.)
403 p:otentially are in it (.) they do
404 r:really, r:really struggle to get out of
405 it. And they know obviously that the
406 c:onsequences for them trying to get
407 out of áthat. And again (.) it boils
408 down to trusting professionals (.) <you
409 know> what can they say, who can they
410 say things to? It's, it, it's, (.) h it
411 is a really really, you know,
412 concerning a:rea still and I don't
413 think <even now> as much as what we do
414 know about it, as much as we've got
415 kind of the indicators of what we're
416 looking at (.) <you know> p:otentially
417 there are those that are (.) <you know>
418 s:lippin through the net that we're
419 ánot noticing maybe (.) you know, which
420 is kind of as professionals I wouldn't
421 wanna turn around and say (.) 'oh we
422 know it all' and we're k:ind of just
423 d:oin a checklist in relation to X, Y,
424 and Z and they are meeting that kind of
425 criteria. It's an e:xtremely (.)
426 difficult (.) world to <kind of>
427 penetrate I think at this stage (.)
428 <you know> for the young people and to
429 kind of get the adults <you know> who
430 are higher up in the chain (.) and
431 break that chain ° really°. (.) But I
432 think really communication is the key
433 between us a:s professionals. What o:ne

434 young person says to one ámight be (.)
435 it m:ight fill the jigsaw piece or
436 another and then we get a bit m:ore
437 information and that intel's
438 b:roadened. And I think that's the
439 beauty of having (.) kind of (.)
440 m:ulti-agency strategy meetings a:round
441 these young people a:round
442 safeguarding. And again, I think the
443 communication is a key. I don't think,
444 I think there's a long way to go to
445 k:ind of (.) infiltrate it a bit
446 further, but I think we're m::oving in
447 the right direction, it's just k:ind of
448 k:eeing abreast and at pace with what
449 is kind of changing within this n:ature
450 of this world °really°.

451 Participant C: I think, I mean

452 Participant B: [in overlap] Sorry.

453 Participant C: For me (.) <cuz cuz> I do a lot of
454 outreach work as áwell (.) and (.) it
455 is, it's easy to i:dentify some of the
456 y:oung people who may be at risk of (.)
457 CCE and stuff (.) Uh, and also <kind
458 of> (.) in the f:uture I think some of
459 the y:oung people I've w:orked, y<ou
460 can kind of see a bit of a> pattern
461 that that's g:onna ádevelop and (.) uh,
462 for me getting to build that
463 r:elationship before (.) might help in
464 the f:uture just to (.) <cuz cuz> the
465 hard thing for p:rofessionals is
466 engaging those y:oung people <kind of>
467 once they're really áinvolved (.) it,
468 it's very d:ifficult to kind of (.) get
469 that engagement. But (.) I'd have to
470 say a:ll the young people I work with
471 are just (.) r:eally nice young
472 ápeople (.) and they've just got those
473 vulnerabilities and there's just (.)
474 something. So I've got one young person
475 who's (.) just never engaged in
476 education (.) uh, maybe through (.) uh
477 an undiagnosed (.) barrier to learning
478 (.) Uh, and then (.) what what hope has

479 he got? Cuz he wants to do a c:ollege
480 course but can't actually, he's not got
481 the s:ocial skills to do that c:ollege
482 course, cuz he's been been out of
483 education for so long. And then like,
484 'what's he gonna ádo?' He c:an't get a
485 j:ob. So he is kind of (.) the only way
486 he can earn money in the s:hort term is
487 (.) is to do that °really° (1.8)

488 Participant D: Y:eah, I áagree and like (.) even (.)
489 in (.) um (.) even in with us
490 <obviously> l:ike we get young people
491 in on a w::elfare basis or a YCS (.) um
492 bed (.) um, and m::ajority <I'd say> of
493 o:ur um, C:ounty Lines young people
494 come through on the YCS basis rather
495 than a, a w::elfare. Um, but w:hen you,
496 like (Participant B) said, when you
497 look r::eally at k:ind of the
498 backgrounds, they're all from that (.)
499 same background. The vulnerabilities
500 are the same, the needs, <you know>,
501 when you l:ook at the ACEs, they're out
502 of e:ducation, um, they're a:lready in
503 care. Um, that's all kind of, they're
504 a:ll, they're a:ll the same. Um, but
505 obviously you t:end to see them more
506 then as th as the YCS. So there's
507 d:ifferent, um, <obviously when they're
508 in> w:ith us on a YCS bed, we're
509 l::imited then to what work we can d:o
510 with áthem. Um, so we, we were a:lmost
511 kind of restricted around being a::ble
512 to do the w;ork with them and um,
513 support them to, to maybe someone like
514 a áwelfare (.) when r:eally every
515 e:verything that they need and the
516 support they need is the same as
517 someone that is in with us on a
518 w:elfare bed. Umm (.) and o::bviously
519 as secure (.) it t:ends to be more of
520 a, it's a l::ast resort r:eally. Um,
521 °so by the time° the young people come
522 to us (.) m::ajority of the time (.)
523 they are v:ery much entrenched (.) um
524 within, within that that gang and that
525 County Lines that they're part of. Um,

526 so unless we have them for a long
527 period of time, it's really difficult
528 to get through. There are positives
529 in the sense of because they're so
530 entrenched, once we can kind of get
531 them on board and, earn their trust
532 and they start divulging information
533 (.) the information we get is kind
534 of really really (.) um, vital then
535 for, for police and, and the local
536 authority. Um (.) or we get young
537 people in, um, on, on a risk to life,
538 um, basis is, is what it's classed as
539 through the referral panel where um,
540 they they feel that there is a serious
541 risk to that young person's life if
542 they're in the community. So then they
543 come in with us for a period of time
544 then to keep themselves safe (5.6)

545 Moderator: And just, um, [Participant D], just for
546 my notes, um, YCS, what does that
547 stand for? Just so I can double check I
548 know what you mean.

549 Participant D: Youth custody service. S(h)orry.

550 Moderator: That's okay. It's okay. Thank you
551 (5.2) I think maybe if we could talk
552 a <little bit> more about 'what
553 happens to these young people' (4.1)

554 Participant A: In h well (.) in a in m (.) thankfully
555 in my experience, um, they've stayed in
556 school. Um, and I would say 99% of our
557 students that at risk are still
558 attending school (.) where they can.
559 Um, and <the thing is with with us> is
560 that <we are we are> HOT on attendance.
561 So if we don't see them for two or
562 three days, we're sort of (.)
563 especially the ones we know are at
564 risk of County Lines we're sort of
565 keeping an eye out ringing parents and
566 <and things like that>. So we do follow
567 that procedure. Um, there are
568 occasions where a couple of years ago,
569 for example, there was one student that

570 there was THAT much risk to his safety,
571 um (.) that he was r:unning away, he
572 was going missing for two or three days
573 at a t::ime, he would up to school for
574 10 minutes and then run off site (.)
575 and we just said 'he's a flight risk'
576 and because we're b:ased in the city
577 center (.) we've got a:ccess to buses,
578 trains (.) um, trams, so he can just go
579 a:nywhere. And he was a:ctually removed
580 from (.) p:arents care (.) and t:aken
581 out of county to be in a s;ecure áhome
582 (1.8) So (.) u:nfortunately we lost
583 that student, but then in my head it
584 was sort of like a win because he could
585 have, he was at risk of (.) like
586 s::ignificant harm in the city center.
587 So, um, you know, we have had updates
588 that he's a:ctually gone to college now
589 (.) where he lives (.) So there are
590 s:uccess stories, but it's g:etting
591 them out of that danger zone (.) which
592 is a difficult, difficult thing to do.

593 Participant C: How do you manage that as a school
594 though? Cause we've p:robably got
595 schools who (.) kind of (.) >if there's
596 kind, uh, a t:hought about< a young
597 person who could be d:ealing within the
598 s:chool, they're kind of (.) they then
599 moved away (.)fairly quickly (.)

600 Participant A: .H yeah, I mean, um, when they.

601 Participant C: [in overlap] It's fámazing that you do
602 IT

603 Participant A: Huh. It it is d:ifficult. I mean it's
604 like I say it depends on the a:ctual
605 students. Um (.) well at our school
606 p:articularly, um, (.) it's a s:mall
607 school. There's only, there's there's
608 maximum 90 s:tudents (.) they get
609 s:earched on the door (.) >things like
610 that<. So they can't bring a:nything
611 into school, so they're not d:oiing
612 anything on ásite (.) and we've got
613 CCTV huh f(h)ootage everywhere (.) Um,

614 so we do keep them (.) as safe as
615 possible within this (.) s:chool (.)
616 It's o:utside when they l:eave or
617 they're at h;ome in the c:ommunities,
618 that's where (.) we'd love to be a:ble
619 to get them but we can't. And we'd
620 l:ove to protect them after three
621 o'clock when they l:eave (.) But <you
622 know what t:eenagers are like>, they go
623 off and do their o:wn thing, but
624 w:ithin school there's (.) it's v:ery
625 very rare that something happens, i.e.
626 they are (.) °dealing or anything like
627 that° because we, we get them s:traight
628 away. And unfortunately, if we do see
629 anything like that, if they do manage
630 to sneak something on (.) they get a
631 p:ermanent e:xclusion from us (.)
632 because it's zero tolerance (.) But
633 again, it's sort of (.) the vulnerable
634 ones, if they do something as silly as
635 carry for s:omebody cause they've been
636 asked to hold (.) cannabis or they've
637 been asked to h:old something (.) and
638 they're f:ound with it (.) it's sort of
639 like they're getting punished for
640 d:oing something for a friend.

641 Participant C: Yeah.

642 Participant A: So it's h:ow, how you balance that (.)
643 Um, and in t:hose extreme cases where
644 >they are< (.) like high risk, we do
645 consider m:aybe an inclusion (.) so not
646 a permanent exclusion, but we've got
647 different s:ites to sort of (.) educate
648 them for a few weeks, one to one (.)
649 But it it depends on, on the person, it
650 depends on the student and, and their
651 (.) um, <you know> how they are (2.4)

652 Participant B: I:nterestingly (Participant A) I d:eal
653 with those, who o:bviously are (.) kind
654 of (.) or h:ave been (.) um, punished,
655 <shall we say>, as a r:esult of
656 obviously being i:nvolved in something.
657 .H and what's quite (.) f::rustrating
658 >I think< is the p::rocesses that kind

659 of lead to that for these y:oung
660 people, in that (.) yes there is a
661 m:echanism to i:dentify that these are
662 v:ulnerable victims and they c:an't
663 consent to (.) um, being t:rafficked
664 or, or, or b:eing, <you know> exploited
665 °in that sense°. And that whole process
666 in itself I think .h kind of needs to
667 be (.) a::mended (.) b:ecause my
668 experience with that is, is °we've
669 dealt with° a number of young people
670 who have either been m:oved out of
671 ácounty (.) and we've dealt with some
672 who have come up from (City Name) (.) H
673 Um, and o:bviously where we are
674 r:urally is, is e::xtremely small
675 compared to the bigger cities where
676 these young people are u:sed to kind of
677 (.) áfrequenting (.) and h <you know>,
678 um, based on the e:xperiences of the
679 young people (.) you know, you're
680 moving them from a city (.) Um, a l:ot
681 of them, um, ar are fro from a °m:inor
682 m:inority background° and you're
683 p:lacing them within <very very> s:small
684 villages (.) in Wales (.) where (.) for
685 them <you know> and I'm, I'm u:sing
686 their t:erminology (.) 'they stick out
687 >like a sore thumb<' (.) do you know
688 what I mean (.) and >people kind of
689 like< do you know what I mean? And
690 that's not (.) to be (.) racist >in any
691 way, shape or form<, but (.) your
692 m:oving young lads (.) who have got
693 three to one c:arers potentially who
694 are (.) in the middle of nowhere (.)
695 h:oping that they're not gonna be (.)
696 s:avvy enough to get themselves back on
697 the train, back down to (City Name).
698 <Whereas> we've e:xperienced it where
699 they have (.) and one young person came
700 out of s:ecure (.) out of, um, out of
701 being in c:ustody (.) .h um, and (.)
702 was put before the c:ourt (.) got
703 transported up here (.) and
704 i::mmediately after leaving the court
705 and between (.) .h g:etting here (.)
706 and get was back on the train within an

707 hour to get back down to (City Name)
708 (.) .h and this is how, and these were
709 14 year old kids (.) they look (.)
710 <obviously, you know, a lot of them
711 look a lot> a lot older, but I'm
712 t:alking these kids have been stabbed
713 (.) shot (.) y:ou name it °as part of
714 the° gangs and the infiltrations that
715 they're part of (.) .h and they're,
716 they know if they don't get back down
717 to do <whatever they've gotta do>,
718 they're g:onna c:ome looking for 'em
719 (.) and the consequences for them (.)
720 that they're not (.) is put on these
721 y:oung p:ople. So they have to feel,
722 they've g:otta get back down (.) <to
723 wherever>. And o:bviously they were (.)
724 this y:oung person was stopped because
725 (.) staff had a:lerted police that they
726 knew he was on the t:rain. They gave
727 the (.) train that he'd left on (.) Um,
728 and he was stopped by um, B:ritish
729 T:ransport police (.) kind of (.) in
730 kind of (General Geographical
731 Location).Um, and he was found to
732 a:lready have had 28 grams (.) of
733 cocaine on him (.) So between that
734 period, >h:ow's he got that< and what
735 <do you know what I mean>, it kind of
736 blows your mind already, <but he's
737 obviously>, they don't (.) 'no
738 comment', they're not g:onna give any
739 information áaway. Um, >they know if
740 they're ágrassing<, they're gonna face
741 the consequences if they're ágrassing
742 (.) you know it's all that kind of
743 stuff. Um (1.8) but then (.) there's
744 the other side of it w:here (.)if they
745 are deemed to be vulnerable, there's
746 the >NRM áprocess<, the national
747 referral mechanism process. So (.)
748 depending upon, um (.)h which
749 o::fficers, um (.) have <you know>
750 obviously dealt with this situation,
751 the officers can put in, um, an âNRM,
752 which is to the Ministry of Justice to
753 say that >these are kids< who are
754 potentially (.) .h um, <you know>,

755 v::ictims of exploitation (.) and then
756 that they can use the >section 45
757 defense< when they do go to ácourt (.)
758 .H But again, not all of the ápolice
759 officers are using it, not all the
760 ápolice officers are putting the NRM
761 áin. Not all the social workers are
762 doing it. So (.) there's d::isparity in
763 terms of the (.) service that is being
764 provided for these kids. Not all the
765 solicitors then use it. We as a service
766 will áraise it if we know that these
767 k:ids have got an NRM °whether it be°
768 (.) a con c:onclusive, a positive
769 reasonable grounds or a conclusive
770 grounds (.) And as a result of that (.)
771 it's not brought up within a lot of the
772 (.) um, a lot of the (.) ácourts. I've
773 had cases where we've had kids who
774 h:ave (.) got the >um, reasa um the<
775 positive c:onclusive ágrounds (.) um,
776 and then it's not been áraised and then
777 they've still been prosecuted for
778 possession with intent to ásupply (.)
779 Um, ,you know,, it's, it, the disparity
780 is, is is is just s:hocking to say that
781 there's a (.) a mechanism there, but
782 yet (.) it isn't being utilized, to its
783 fullest ability. Um, and b:ecause of
784 the amount of NRMs that (.) first
785 responders are putting áin (2.4) it can
786 take up to 12 months for a d:ecision to
787 be ámade (.) and that in itself, whilst
788 they're given a reasonable ground (.)
789 we're constantly c:hasing and
790 p;roviding the information on a daily
791 basis to (.) you know, send back to the
792 Ministry of Justice (.) for the NRM to
793 be c:onclusive (.) um, but again, it
794 might be 12 months later (.) where we
795 may not °at that point° have any
796 i:nvolvement because they may have
797 moved on áor do you know mean or (.)
798 their order may have expired and (.)
799 it, it, the s:ytem I think needs to be
800 (.) a;djusted to fit the needs of these
801 kids. And I don't think that's
802 r:eflected in terms of some of the

803 information that is (.) s:hared
804 amongst professionals °should we say°.

805 Participant A: [in overlap] I agree. Totally agree.
806 Cause um (.) like y:ou said, it's the
807 waiting because 12 months is a long,
808 long time. Even a week, >a two weeks
809 three weeks< is a long time because
810 when these are so (.) v:ulnerable and
811 involved in something so dangerous (.)
812 who knows what will h:appen. And
813 there's a lot of (.) <do you know what
814 I mean> the l last thing we all want is
815 (.) the worst-case scenario, a fatality
816 or (.) <do you know what I mean?> And
817 we've done e:verything as we can up
818 until to our limit. And then (.) you
819 know, staff will always áthink, you
820 know, 'could we have done more?' (.) Ya
821 You k:now it's the blame game if
822 something gonna happen that 'whose
823 fault is it? (.) Da da da'. And it (.)
824 it is just a messy thing. And I do
825 think, um, you know, the agencies and
826 everybody are w:orking very well. It's
827 budgets, it's resources, it's staffing.

828 Participant B: [in overlap] Yeah.

829 Participant A: There's so many things (.) that (.)
830 make it s:low ádown.

831 Participant B: [in overlap] Yeah.

832 Participant A: And we a::lways want it to just speed
833 up (.) like, 'oh he is at risk (.) SAVE
834 him' (LAUGH).

835 Participant B: [in overlap] Yeah.

836 Participant A: Like 'Save him tomorrow' (LAUGH)

837 Participant B: [in overlap] And it (.) and it is that,
838 <you've hit the nail on the head there>
839 as well in terms of, <you know>, ° you
840 said it before°, ev i:t's everybody's
841 d:uty in terms of s:afeguarding and
842 we're r:aising them concerns (.)H but

843 again, we know nationally this is a
844 problem (.) and nationally we are
845 s:eeing funding cuts. Um, I'm sure
846 [Participant D] you are seeing it
847 yourself (.) in terms of secure units.
848 We knew obviously that um (.) there was
849 a lot of ádecommissioning (.) in terms
850 of a lot of the ábeds at the Y:JB were
851 using, °the youth justice board°, were
852 u:sing, um, in relation to not only
853 criminal beds but welfare beds. And (.)
854 we are identifying significant risks in
855 r:elation to a lot of these y:oung
856 p:ople who require a secure bed (.)
857 not necessarily áon c:riminal grounds
858 (.) and it used to be where there was a
859 need for a welfare bed, um, the youth
860 justice board, you know, would (.)
861 release a w:elfare bed (.) from the
862 criminal side because there was enough
863 to kind of go around. And n::ationally
864 now there is just not (.) e:nough beds
865 for t:hese young people. It's a case
866 of, <I think at one point> we had one
867 and, <and obviously we cover> [General
868 Geographical Location], there was (.) I
869 think (.) s:ix referrals going in from
870 [Name of County] and I wanna say (.)
871 six p:otentially from [Name of County],
872 m:aybe more (.) .h but there was
873 another 77 r:eferrals going in for one
874 w:elfare bed that was a:available (.)
875 and that is just kind of (.) the scale
876 of the problem I think in t:erms of (.)
877 we k:now there's risks, we're trying to
878 i:dentify them risks, we're trying to
879 m:anage that risks, but (.) we haven't
880 got the r:esources to (.) safeguard
881 that y:oung person. And I (.) you know
882 I just know that (.) we're all kind of
883 feeling that f:rustration I think as,
884 er er professionals within this kind of
885 a:rena (1.9) Sorry, I think I've talked
886 enough. (LAUGH)

887 Participant D: No, no, I agree with you [Participant
888 B] and you are spot on there, um, with
889 r:egards to kind of our w:elfare and

890 our YCS beds. Um, we initially can have
891 up to six (.) but I think (.) um, over
892 the, this this year and going into next
893 y:ear, we are l:ooking a halving that,
894 °so going down to three YCS beds°, the
895 rest being welfare, um, and with
896 e:verything with Covid o:bviously
897 that's had a massive (.) knock on
898 effect as well, so I think where, you
899 know, a welfare referrals for us would
900 be, °you know°, 30 would be a lot (.)
901 talking up to 60 now since c:ovid, em
902 so a:almost doubled. And yeah, <like
903 [Participant B] said> you know, at one
904 point you could have 60 l:ive
905 referrals, this is just on welfare, and
906 only one bed in the country. Um, and
907 °you know°, then h:aving to pick that
908 one p:erson and you k:now that there's
909 59 others out there and p:otentially
910 that are at risk. It's um (.) yeah
911 there's just not enough, just not
912 enough r:esources and t:hings to go
913 around. And then you then have, we, we,
914 we then face the d:ifficulty of when we
915 have a young p:erson in, which <I I>
916 can understand for like a s:ocial
917 worker, a Y:OT worker its (.) 'Phew,
918 they're safe (.) their in secure' (.)
919 so you k:now, when they've got a
920 caseload of 30, 40 other huh kids that
921 are still out there at risk and you've
922 got a y:oung person that's in secure
923 for three ámonths. So to get a hold of
924 a:nyone then to be like, 'what is the
925 plan for this person to go back into
926 the c:ommunity because they're at árisk
927 in the area that they, that they're
928 p:otentially going áback to'. Um, you
929 know, we haven't e:ven touched on any,
930 any work with them. Um, but they, they
931 are k:ind of second thoughts because I
932 suppose they're just safe at that time
933 r:eally. Um, and p:articularly then the
934 young people that we get in, b:ecause
935 it's a last resort (1.4) .h they tend
936 to come in (.) they are a:lready, um,
937 you know, they've kind of hit c:risis

938 point is is what how we see it, and
939 they're v:ery much (.) um, in, in a
940 kind of a, a fight situation. So we see
941 an i:ncrease of incidents. Um (.) it
942 t:tends to take us quite a w:hile to be
943 able to s:ettle them into like a secure
944 environment. Um, and then (.) you
945 almost get then when it comes to their
946 m:etings, you focus on incidents. So,
947 assaulting on staff (.) fights with
948 young people (.) but (.) it it's a lot
949 more than that. That's kind of just
950 where they've come in and, and there's
951 a:drenaline, they are still
952 h:eightened, it takes a w:hile to be
953 able to settle them and, and kind of
954 regulate them back down really um (.)
955 we get like y:oung people in with us,
956 from say from anywhere from you know,
957 [Geographical Location] way and they're
958 e:ntrenched in this culture that, you
959 know, <like [Participant B] said> they
960 have been shot, they have been stabbed
961 (.) Wasn't l:ong ago, we had one boy in
962 that had been (.) hacked outside a
963 train station with blunt m::achetes
964 because they couldn't get to his o:lder
965 b:rother <because his brother was high
966 up in the< (.) chain. °He was still
967 quite low down°, but they couldn't
968 reach his brother so they kind of (.)
969 just seen him outside the train station
970 and got to him first. And he was in
971 with us as a risk to life, and <he just
972 seen it as>, 'it is what it is, my
973 b:rother will get them when they
974 leave', and to (.) change that t:hought
975 of p:rocess when they're so entrenched
976 is, is really ádifficult. (2.8)

977 Moderator: (Unclear) (11.6)

978 Participant B: You're on mute huh.

979 Moderator: Oh, huh it's very good you fmanaged to
980 spot that I was on mute. Um, <I was
981 just saying> during our conversations
982 we've, we've mentioned a c:ouple of

983 times that, um, about o:ther
984 professionals being involved and
985 professionals being involved in
986 d:ecision making and d:iscussions. And
987 I'm just wondering in your own
988 experience, how do professionals, um,
989 view these children and how do they
990 talk about them? (2.1) And I'll just
991 put that question in the chat box as
992 well (5.3)

993 Participants B: I think it depends.

994 Participants A: [in overlap] I I.

995 Participant B: Sorry. I I was g:onna say, I think it
996 depends on what area they're c:oming
997 I think police can be very (.) 'they're
998 a criminal' (.) <you know what I mean?>
999 And I I I I, and kind of they're,
1000 they're causing a nuisance, uh, 'there
1001 doing this, they're doing that'. <Do
1002 you know what I mean?> Whereas
1003 professionals, like YOT workers, social
1004 workers, um, specialised p:olice
1005 officers who are in what we call here
1006 in [Name of County], we have got the
1007 [NAME] áteam, um, who obviously deal
1008 with young people and try and get them
1009 on board to kind of, um, safeguard them
1010 where p:ossible, but also to kind of
1011 obviously put them in touch with the
1012 right support from the police
1013 perspective as victims as opposed to
1014 being (.) problematic, °how
1015 neighborhood policing teams might see
1016 them°. Um, so (.) obviously in terms of
1017 safeguarding (.) it does depend, I
1018 think the e:ligibility criteria have
1019 shifted a:gain (.) to kind of put the
1020 focus not just on p:rofessionals, but
1021 as the community. 'What can the
1022 community provide (LAUGH) to try and
1023 safeguard fthese kids?' And, and that's
1024 made a shift in terms of (.) the
1025 e:ligibility c:riteria in terms of what
1026 they see as b:eing problematic. And we
1027 know this area is problematic, .h but

1028 (.) I think [Working over two
1029 counties], it has d:epended upon
1030 whether (.) <you know the social
1031 worker> or whether the management
1032 s:tructure >is saying< 'well we've got
1033 X, Y, and Z numbers, we need to keep
1034 these numbers down because we can't
1035 increase these n::umbers'. And you
1036 know, the pressures are coming from
1037 them because of their resources, their
1038 funding (.) and they are then saying,
1039 right 'close that case, close that
1040 case'. And we're saying 'there's a
1041 safeguarding issue. Why are you closing
1042 the case? You cannot close a case'. And
1043 so we are t:rying to argue and there's
1044 multi-agency strategy meetings, we are
1045 saying, 'NO, it's not appropriate'. <Do
1046 you know what I mean?> 'We can't do
1047 that. There's still an, there's still
1048 an issue here around safeguarding' (.)
1049 and a:lthough we are saying
1050 'safeguarding is (.) everybody's
1051 business', ultimately it would fall to
1052 the local a:uthority, in terms of the
1053 s:ocial services side to safeguard
1054 these young people. Um, and I think
1055 that they're (.) o:verwhelmed (.) by
1056 (.) this current cohort, <should we
1057 say>, in terms of (.) safeguarding. And
1058 I think that they are really, really,
1059 really struggling. They're s:truggling
1060 to recruit, they're s:truggling in
1061 terms of the resources. They're
1062 s:truggling to retain the staff that
1063 they have got because (.) stress levels
1064 are high because of the risks, because
1065 they don't wanna (.) let young people
1066 down. And, and it f:eels sometimes like
1067 the staff are carrying the can
1068 potentially and worrying and going
1069 h:ome and not sleeping (.) and you
1070 know, it, it, it just has massive
1071 implications (.) across the board and I
1072 think (.) it does depend on, upon the
1073 t:raining and what they're seeing in
1074 terms of how they're responding (.) to
1075 these difficult situations really (1.5)

1076 Participant A: I found the s:ame. So it's sort of like
1077 you get certain (.) <you know., °social
1078 workers, YOT workers°, um, really,
1079 really c:aring people who will do the
1080 upmost (.) like, <you know where we all
1081 work together and, and it's a success
1082 story>. But then I found where (.) I've
1083 had to a:rgue as a school and actually
1084 come sort of (.) <not un:professional>,
1085 but getting quite irate to try and
1086 protect this ch:ild. And uh, for
1087 example (.) (LAUGH) f:um, there was a,
1088 there was a y:oung person, 14 years old
1089 (.) um, in #care, um (.) really em he
1090 was t:aken into care because of drug
1091 use in the house, so mom was a drug
1092 u:ser, so it was in the, the b:rother
1093 was #um, arrested and locked up for (.)
1094 °CCE âstuff° <you kno, drug running and
1095 all that thing> so it was a pattern.
1096 However, he kept out of it. He came
1097 from [Name of Location] he moved up
1098 h:ere (.) was in a care home but then
1099 s:omehow unfortunately got (.) got back
1100 to it. Um, first response we got from
1101 an agency was (.) 'oh, it's, it's fine,
1102 it's, it runs in the family we know
1103 where he'll end up' (.) which we didn't
1104 w:anna hear that. Um, and then, um, we
1105 had an emergency CCE ámeeting (.) he
1106 ticked e:very single ábox, but they
1107 rated him as median (1.5) So you can
1108 imagine my (LAUGH) f:rustration is to
1109 say, 'well your not taking this serious
1110 then' #um (.) Um, and it can be
1111 r:eally, r:eally annoying when um,
1112 agencies don't take the schools as
1113 áserious because sometimes they think,
1114 'oh, you're just a school, what do you
1115 know? You teach them, get on with the
1116 job and shush' (.) Um (.)but then on
1117 the áother end of the scale, <like I
1118 said>, you get the, the r:eally, <you
1119 know>, 'I don't care if he's low (.)
1120 we're gonna help him, we're gonna do
1121 <this, that and the other>', and all
1122 the schools work together, all the
1123 p:arents are involved (.) and you,

1124 it's, it's, it's hit and miss. It's
1125 <who you get> (.) Um unfortunately, and
1126 I wish that sometimes the one (.) the
1127 one or two s:ocial workers that are
1128 r:eally hands on, I wish they could do
1129 all, all our kids and, and deal with
1130 all of them, but it, like I say,
1131 <resources, budgets, overwhelm>. I mean
1132 there was one social worker I was
1133 talking to and I think she had 200 (.)
1134 kids on her case and I was thinking,
1135 'how can you DO that? (.) How can you
1136 sleep?', (LAUGH), 'Where's your life?'
1137 <Do you know what I mean? So it
1138 depends>. (.) And I r:eally do think it
1139 depends (.) on (.) um, their, their
1140 workload as well.

1141 Participant C: I think cuz er (.) <for me>, a lot of
1142 p:rofessionals just don't, don't kind
1143 of have the time to, to spend with
1144 these young people. So it's like 'how
1145 do we finish this case?' And probably,
1146 I, I have the reverse of the problem
1147 cuz ours is a youth work project that
1148 engages young people at risk of CCE (.)
1149 So I don't have a t:ime scale (.) to
1150 w:ork with a young person (.) uh, it's
1151 kind of, it's agreed with, with
1152 áprofessionals. Uh, but I think (.) I
1153 know with the, the multi-agency
1154 meetings, I think (.) I think that's
1155 kind of a, a real ápositive (.) uh,
1156 move áforward (.) where all agencies
1157 have to <get t:ogether> and we've,
1158 we've had the opportunity to do a
1159 mapping exercise with kind of a g:roup
1160 of schools in that particular town.
1161 We've actually linked a lot of the
1162 y:oung people up together and it, it is
1163 kind of (.) what <do we do with that>
1164 and, and kind of what do we do with,
1165 with that context. So, uh, so in my
1166 p:articular area I'm working with two
1167 or three young people in the >same
1168 context< and, and the same area. And I
1169 think how to referral this, this (.)
1170 this week. And it's like, 'yeah, he's

1171 in e:xactly the same area'. So I think
1172 we're very good at working with the
1173 áindividual, but not (.) always very
1174 good at working at the con ácontext and
1175 kinda saying, 'what are we gonna do
1176 about this, this particular problem?'
1177 (.) But yeah, I think it is difficult
1178 uh, cuz I, I do agree that often the
1179 young people are closed really quickly,
1180 uh, to social care (.) or they'll,
1181 they'll kind of get put into child in
1182 n:eed as quickly as possible (.) And
1183 it's h:ard cuz with a lot of our y:oung
1184 people, we don't know (.) what's going
1185 on (.) in the background. So I think
1186 going back to that question, there's a
1187 lot of, for me there's a lot of
1188 unanswered áquestions. So 'are my
1189 y:oung people running C:ounty L:ines?
1190 Are they d:ealing in the a:rea that
1191 they're in?' And it's, it is (.) we
1192 just don't know. We know that like a
1193 lot of my y:oung people s;leep during
1194 the day (.) and uh, and if I don't (.)
1195 if I don't a:rrive at 9:30 in the
1196 morning to meet a p:articular young
1197 person, I know that he's gonna be <out
1198 and about> and he's not gonna (.) °
1199 come back°. So it, it's like I
1200 guess that's, that's the issue. But I
1201 guess you get (.) you get good and bad
1202 p:rofessionals don't you, in a:ll areas
1203 and I know kind of some schools (.)
1204 are, are very keen to, to move some
1205 y:oung people áon and kind of out of
1206 that school environment (.) so (3.1)

1207 Participant D: I think with us in secure as well, I
1208 know a lot of people tend to have (.)
1209 um, quite a negative view of ásecure,
1210 um, especially cuz we're a secure
1211 children's home (.) um, they see it as,
1212 you know (.) that you locking the
1213 children up <and things like that>. But
1214 the, the actual work (.) and the
1215 relationships and stuff that go on
1216 w:ithin the children's home, cause
1217 that's what it essentially is. It's

1218 still a children's home, um, there's
1219 some brilliant stuff that goes on and
1220 we don't >unfortunately get< the
1221 children for a l:ong enough period. It
1222 tends to be we're just like a stop gap
1223 and then they're like, 'alright, okay,
1224 they're safe for about three months,
1225 just move them on' (.) And you know,
1226 we, we see a lot of the >same young
1227 people< come áthrough. Um (.) so when
1228 we are l:ooking at the r:eferrals
1229 process and we look at the live
1230 referrals, we do tend to take a lot of
1231 the y:oung children that we've had
1232 before and we think, 'oh, blinking
1233 heck, they've only been out six months
1234 and they're back again', where you
1235 know, you know, we even argue with the
1236 local authority sometimes. You know,
1237 'Can you go for another court order? We
1238 think it would be good for them, you
1239 know, another six months', just because
1240 (.) sometimes they can have initially a
1241 three months and they want, you know,
1242 the local authority <want this work
1243 done and this work done>, and that's
1244 just not p:ossible. If we can just kind
1245 of stabilise them, get them into a
1246 routine, feed them, you know, make sure
1247 they're healthy, then we've done a good
1248 job in those three months. If you want
1249 a::nything further, then you know
1250 you're talking l:ong term then, um, (.)
1251 and you know, when they are with us
1252 long term, we do see a lot of, you
1253 know, good work come from áthat. There
1254 is a f:ine line. You've gotta be
1255 c:areful at how long that we keep them
1256 as well that they become too
1257 comfortable because we have had young
1258 people that wanna come back just
1259 because they're safe and they don't
1260 wanna go back out into the community.
1261 Um, and then we also have (.) <you
1262 know, like what [Participant A] was
1263 saying>, you do get the good
1264 professionals out there that k:ind of
1265 get it and they understand it, but then

1266 you do get the odd >one or two<, .h you
1267 know, where we are r:aising
1268 s:afeguarding concerns about the
1269 t:hings that they're saying, that
1270 they're likely to be exploited into
1271 these, you know, into this kind of
1272 stuff.(.)but they're saying, <you know,
1273 and it can be what [Participant B]
1274 said>, you know, we've got like the
1275 l:ittle villages and they're like, 'oh
1276 he's from WALES Like he's not, you
1277 know, he's not high up on the list to
1278 be exploited', and I just think if you
1279 catch him #now and we get that work in
1280 now and w:ork with them now, then you
1281 know, you won't catch him up in, I
1282 dunno, [Name of Location] or somewhere
1283 in England, you know, a year down the
1284 line, because they (.) you know (.)
1285 they get exploited so fast and they can
1286 move up the c:hain so fast, and we can
1287 see the vulnerabilities now they're
1288 already, you know, getting involved in
1289 certain peer groups now let's get the
1290 work done now before it's too late. (.)
1291 but u:nfortunately, they're just not a
1292 priority on their list because then on
1293 the other hand their workload and
1294 you've got kids that are higher risk
1295 (3.6)

1296 Participant A: I have found as well, <just to add>,
1297 add to that, some agencies think that
1298 if they're in school (.) they're safe.

1299 Participant D: Y(h)eah

1300 Participant A: They're n(h)ot a priority, so just
1301 because they're here from nine till
1302 three, that means they're totally safe
1303 and they're not on the priority list.
1304 Well it's actually (.) before 9:00 AM
1305 and after 3:00 PM that are the issues
1306 and this is what I'm t:rying to tell
1307 you. And they're like, 'no, but they're
1308 in school every day, they're really
1309 good, he parents are on board, you
1310 know, they've got a r:eally nice

1311 family'. I'm not disputing a::ny of
1312 that (.) They are good attenders, they
1313 are good at engaging, because they're
1314 the ones that are very savvy and, in
1315 their head, they are thinking, 'if I
1316 don't attract áattention (.) then your
1317 not gonna be (.) b:asically turning the
1318 police on me o<r this, that and the
1319 other>'. And they're the ones, <to be
1320 fair> in my opin, uh in our experience
1321 (.) because they're so u:nder the radar
1322 (.) because they're adhering to rules,
1323 <and everything like that> that you
1324 don't (.) think, but then I'm sort of
1325 a:rguing going, 'but what they're
1326 saying in school, their friendships
1327 group, what I hear outside of school
1328 (.) they are high risk' (.) 'n:o
1329 t:hey're n:ot'

1330 Participant C: [In overlap] And I think (.) cuz (.)
1331 cuz a lot (.) cuz some of, some of my
1332 young people have come from (.) kind
1333 of, not m::iddle class, but fairly
1334 middle class, nice home, uh, mum's
1335 r:really keen to, to kind of engage
1336 with, with professionals and stuff. And
1337 then I think (.) they're more likely to
1338 get (.) ásometimes (.) more l:ikely to
1339 get closed to social care cuz I think,
1340 'o:h w:ell, they're from a (.) g:ood
1341 family and stuff'. And (.) .h s:o I
1342 think that's, that's a (.) bit of a
1343 problem. And often (.) .h y:oung people
1344 will (.) make a throw away áremark. So,
1345 uh, I had one y:oung person who told
1346 his dad, 'I w:anna be the biggest drug
1347 dealer in like the p:articular town
1348 that he was' (.) um (.) and I think he
1349 just said it in the spur of the moment,
1350 k:ind of s:aying, 'oh that's just what
1351 you think of me'. But (.) that was
1352 k:ind of passed on through
1353 professionals and (.) never, ever
1354 challenged. And (.) it was a:ctually
1355 just a throw away with remark. And then
1356 I had a:nother young person who, who
1357 said, 'oh, I just want to stay in a

1358 secure, uh, secure, uh, residential
1359 home'. And he had, he had said that as
1360 (.) I think (.) < cuz I, I had a chat
1361 with him> and I went, 'o::h did you
1362 just go, oh I just wana stay in a
1363 secure? Was it that kind of comment?'
1364 (.) And it was, and it was just, it was
1365 completely taken out of context(.)
1366 w::hereas professionals were saying,
1367 'oh, it's r:eally bad, this young
1368 person wants to live in a s::ecure home
1369 (.) this is (.) it must be r:eally bad
1370 for him'. And yeah, but I, I think just
1371 sharing kind of s:tories, cuz hearing
1372 [Participant D's] (.) kind of stories
1373 about how they work <with young
1374 people>, cuz we've got a lot of y:oung
1375 people (.) who are based in one to one
1376 (.) uh, accommodation, like solo
1377 placements (.) who have NO idea how to
1378 (.) <it's p:robably being a bit harsh>,
1379 but (.) .h the staff are just (.) they
1380 want to, they want to be good carers,
1381 but they've áno i:dea how to support
1382 some of these young people or (.)
1383 there's no interventions for that young
1384 person (.) in, in the houses. So they,
1385 they've not r:eally got a ároutine to
1386 their day. So they'll sleep all d:ay
1387 and then the (.) the kind of
1388 independent provider will be phoning up
1389 saying, 'this young person's gone
1390 missing (.) at night time'. (.) and for
1391 them (.) that's, that's kind of their
1392 job ádone (.) It's (.) there's, there's
1393 sometimes issues around, (.) it's not
1394 right that young p:ople are in
1395 independent accommodation and then (.)
1396 uh, going m:issing in the e:vening and
1397 stuff. And I think (.) more needs to be
1398 done (.) but then (.) p:olice aren't
1399 always that áhappy if they've got to go
1400 and (.) áfetch a young person who's,
1401 (.) who's gone ámissing. Cuz they see
1402 it as the (.) responsibility of the,
1403 the care providers and I guess it's
1404 workloads int-it. Cause the police (.)
1405 they've gotta prioritise their workload

1406 and (.) then kind of, we've all got to
1407 safeguard these young people (1.3).

1408 Participant D: And we get, when we get the r:eferral
1409 documents and we look at them and, and
1410 they do sound, you know, they sound
1411 h:orrendous

1412 Participant C: [in overlap] yeah.

1413 Participant D: on, on paper, but which a par, a part
1414 you get that they've gotta put
1415 e:verything in there to be a:ble to get
1416 to court and get a court order and
1417 t:hings to be able to get them in
1418 secure. But then (.) when they come in
1419 with us, we don't, (.) <like, we don't
1420 see, not saying we don't see it all the
1421 time>, but we don't see that (.)
1422 behaviour, that >violent behaviour,
1423 aggressive behaviour<, ábecause you (.)
1424 we're t:rying to say when they're out
1425 in the community, you know, and it's
1426 <fight, flight, or freeze. or they're
1427 in a >point of crisis< or (.) there's,
1428 you know, they, >it's just c:haotic,
1429 their life is just c:haotic<, so they
1430 l:iterally come in with us and you just
1431 put a stop on e::verything for them and
1432 they're like, right, <they got
1433 somewhere to sleep, they got somewhere
1434 to eat, they can get up in the morning,
1435 they can go to education> (.) .h it's
1436 just that, that r:outline for them, just
1437 bringing them back down, r:egulating
1438 them. Um, so I think ás:ometimes, cuz
1439 they sound so horrendous on paper, then
1440 you don't get to, to see the real
1441 person or who they are and the needs
1442 behind, you know, what, what they need,
1443 the v:ulnerabilities, the support that
1444 the f:amily need. Um, you don't get to
1445 see all that because you look at them
1446 on paper and you think (.) 'geez, they
1447 sound h:orrendous' um, but they're
1448 just, <they're just in a>, in a
1449 >c:haotic lifestyle< áreally. Um, and
1450 they just s::urviving (.) ásome of them

1451 out there. Um, and a big issue that we
1452 see is, um, is age as well. So (.) if
1453 we (.) °this s:ounds awful°, but in, if
1454 we can have, have them younger the
1455 better. And you do get to a point where
1456 they've reached us at 16 and it's
1457 a:almost like services don't know what
1458 to do with them because they're like,
1459 'hmm they will almost be reaching
1460 adults soon anyway'. Um, they won't go
1461 into a care home or foster (.)
1462 p:robably look at independent living
1463 for them. But that (.) <you know, you
1464 know>, that's not the right decision
1465 for them. And even with us, so if we
1466 have a young person that's 16 nearly
1467 17, and they've a:lready been in two
1468 secures, and they've bounced from
1469 <placement to placement>, and they're
1470 quite complex or they are r:really
1471 aggressive and violent, for example,
1472 >we would turn them down, we would<,
1473 because (.) you do look at (.) 'what
1474 difference are we gonna make in three,
1475 six months?'. Um, <you know>, we're
1476 p:robably just gonna get them in. <You
1477 know., we, <you know>, we have tried it
1478 and we faced, <you know>, a:ssaults,
1479 i:ncidents and unsettled units then
1480 where we see an increase of, of kids
1481 with self-harm because they can't d:eal
1482 with the c:haoticness of the homes. Um,
1483 so it's not like we haven't tried it.
1484 We have but unfortunately, you know,
1485 even, even I'll admit, we, we >do
1486 look< at that age between 16 and almost
1487 18 and you think, 'oh can, can we make
1488 a difference here? Don't think we're
1489 the right placement'. So it does make
1490 you think 'where, where are that age
1491 gap?' (.) They're almost in a worse
1492 position than anyone else r:really
1493 because what, <you know, if we're
1494 probably not the only place that thinks
1495 that either. Um, and where does that
1496 leave them? Isn't it? (.)

1497 Participant B: I'm a:ware of um (.) some (.) services
1498 omitting some of the i:nformation.

1499 Participant D: [in overlap] yeah.

1500 Participant B: In order to try and secure some work
1501 for them as well.

1502 Participant D: [in overlap] yeah, yeah.

1503 Participant B: And I'm not, not saying that that's
1504 c:ommon practice, but I guess in t:erms
1505 of risks and kind of (.) you know,
1506 e:ligibility again, it goes back to
1507 that c:riteria, doesn't it?

1508 Participant D: [in overlap] yeah, yeah.

1509 Participant B: I think that's the d:ifficulty because
1510 they know somebody is at risk and then
1511 they know that °obviously if they're°,
1512 they're >deemed f:our to one staff< (.)
1513 what are the chances and the likelihood
1514 of them getting into certain secures

1515 Participant D: [in overlap] yeah, yeah.

1516 Participant B: or into certain placements and, and
1517 they know by fact that, so they might
1518 omit some of the i:nformation and not
1519 be open and áhonest, which I think that
1520 brings a l:ot of issues in áitself
1521 because (.) you as the provider then
1522 don't have the full picture to be able
1523 to meet the needs of that young person.
1524 And also it poses potential risks to
1525 yourselves as áwell.

1526 Participant D: [in overlap] yeah, yeah.

1527 Participant B: So I think that's kind of an a:rea for
1528 c:onsideration as well because of

1529 Participant D: [in overlap] Definitely.

1530 Participant B: (.) other kind of aspects out of
1531 people's control around the limited in
1532 terms of resources and things (2.5)

1533 Participant D: Yeah. You know, if we've got a young
1534 person that's (.) >12, 13< you know,
1535 v:ulnerable to being exploited and
1536 we've got someone that's >16, 17<
1537 r:eferral that's kind of a:lready
1538 entrenched in that b:ehaviour, we've
1539 got a safeguard the y:oung people that
1540 we've (.) c:urrently got in, they are
1541 our r:esponsibility, the ones that are
1542 in the building. And we're thinking (.)
1543 'a:bsolutely no, we could, we could
1544 n:ever, we'd be putting that y;oung
1545 person at r:isk' and it's almost (.)
1546 <you know>, we feel a;wful for that,
1547 for the, for the o:ldest, the 16 year
1548 old but (.) .h we, we just gotta look
1549 at the, the kids that we have in at the
1550 time as well. (1.3)

1551 Participant B: A:bsolutely. I think it's an issue
1552 around t:raining for staff as well.

1553 Participant D: [in overlap] Yeah.

1554 Participant B: Because we are seeing new people coming
1555 in who ma might not have as much
1556 e:xperience as some of the (.) .h <you
1557 know> previous (.) people who have been
1558 in kind of post as well. I've certainly
1559 seen it r:ecently where (.) .h um,
1560 again it was, it was, it was a c:hild
1561 who had i:ssues around e:ducation, um,
1562 and obviously e:ducation were r:eally
1563 áconcerned. There was obviously, you
1564 know (.) um, he, he he was l:ess and
1565 l:ess attending a at education, which
1566 kind of was a trigger ápoint. There
1567 were other concerns but there might not
1568 be the concerns, you know, when I was
1569 saying about >the j:igsaw piece before<
1570 about how (.) different professionals
1571 get bits of different information. And
1572 what t:ranspired is education was
1573 saying, 'we've got real significant
1574 áconcerns about this ákid, we're seeing
1575 (.) you know, a lot of other stuff and
1576 it just so h:appened that this child
1577 was a [Name of County] child and we

1578 just had a multi-agency strategy
1579 meeting in relation to (.) a:nother
1580 child who was friendly with this child.
1581 So already I had a bit more information
1582 that education weren't a:ware of
1583 because they'd not been invited to that
1584 meeting. So off the back of that,
1585 education had kind of cc'd me in it
1586 cause I, with being the lead, said, 'do
1587 you know anything about this child? <Da
1588 da da?>'. (.) And again the j:igsaw
1589 p:ieces kind of came t:ogether. So I'd
1590 said, 'right, okay', the social w:orker
1591 didn't have a clue about (.) um, County
1592 Lines (.) didn't have a clue how to
1593 complete the CCE toolkit (.) education
1594 were really concerned. So the, the
1595 child wasn't o:pen to us, and again I
1596 said, 'right, okay, this is about
1597 safeguarding, I'll comple help you
1598 complete the CCE toolkit so that the
1599 (.) social worker got more (.) er er er
1600 you know, more than enough kind of
1601 intel i:nformation then to go off and
1602 kind of, you know, do um, some actions.
1603 Um, so we completed the CCE toolkit,
1604 this c:hild scored 60, which is high.
1605 So I said, 'right, what you need to do
1606 now, is you need to go off and do the
1607 NRM and do an independent child
1608 t:rafficking guardian referral' (.)
1609 education were like, '°thank god°
1610 you've got involved', <you know what I
1611 mean?> And I said, 'I can't complete
1612 the NRM because it's not an open case
1613 to me. The (unclear) agency will come
1614 back to me as a referrer asking me for
1615 more information, which I haven't got
1616 cuz it's not an open case to us (.) .h
1617 so you have to do it as a local
1618 authority, your the first responder,
1619 your the holder of that case' (.) That
1620 was in (.) May, I got invited to
1621 another review meeting in A:ug, in
1622 August going into September, <back end
1623 of August going into September>, about
1624 this child. Um, because there was
1625 further concerns. When I went back into

1626 that meeting in August, Um, I said, um,
1627 'so can I just ask?' I said, 'this was
1628 a case that we looked at back in May,
1629 what's h:appened with the NRM and the
1630 independent child trafficking guardian
1631 referral' (.) N:othing had been done
1632 (1.6) And I just thought, 'o:h my
1633 G::OD'.

1634 Participant A: [in overlap] °J::esus°.

1635 Participant B: And there were more c:oncerns. So then
1636 a multi-agency strategy meeting got
1637 áreconvened, then it got cancelled,
1638 then it got reconvened a:gain and the
1639 social w:orker was kind of saying, 'I
1640 know I'm public enemy number one'. I
1641 said, 'can I just stop you there?' I
1642 said, 'it's not about being p:ublic
1643 enemy number o:ne', I said, 'we've all
1644 got a duty to safeguard'. I said, 'and
1645 I (.) took the time out and gave you
1646 the g:uidance and a:dvice that you
1647 needed (.) to complete that referral.
1648 Had a:nything happened within this
1649 period of time (.) with this young
1650 person (.) as agencies, we would a:ll
1651 have been u:nder scrutiny, not just
1652 one'. I said, 'and I would hate to
1653 think that any of my c:olleagues that
1654 I've had i:nvolvement with would be in
1655 that p:osition. So, it's not about (.)
1656 c:riticising you, I'm just saying (.)
1657 this needs to happen NOW. ASAP. You
1658 need to go away. This is what you need
1659 to do'. And um, the responses from
1660 m:anagers were really c:oncerning, 'oh
1661 sorry, I'm not a:ware of this case. It
1662 was on a chi care and support plan'.
1663 'I'm not aware of this case'. I was
1664 thinking, '>oh my G:od<. And you know
1665 you kind of (.) the f:rustration that
1666 the kind of, you don't wanna be
1667 u:nprofessional <like you were saying
1668 before [Participant A), but (.) you
1669 k:ind of a:lmost just having to .hhh
1670 take a b:reath and c:alm yourself down
1671 because you're thinking, this child has

1672 c::learly been at risk and what's
1673 h:appened in the interim. And then
1674 obviously mum had then res (.) they
1675 were saying obviously, 'oh we haven't
1676 got a lot of information cuz mum
1677 doesn't want to engage in the care and
1678 support plan'. And I'm like, 'there in
1679 itself is a big indicator, a big risk
1680 indicator'. And then you've got mum's
1681 got a now got an injury to her hand. We
1682 know that older b:rother is involved
1683 and yet you're saying that this y:oung
1684 person is still not at árisk' (.) And I
1685 was just like, 'I don't understand it'.
1686 And then the manager went, 'oh yeah,
1687 perhaps we should have been a bit more
1688 on the board with this áone'.

1689 Participant A: Yeah. And <do you know we had a recent
1690 case> as w:ell, um, we had a, a parent
1691 that scared of her child that she left
1692 (.) he's got a house key, but because
1693 he's s:taying with a friend, he's safe
1694 (1.6) L:ike your not telling me at 14
1695 years old, you've got a house to
1696 y:ourself, no parent, you're not gonna
1697 go around and have áparties. And he is
1698 a >known CCE risk< as well. He is got
1699 o:lders and y:oungers and all this sort
1700 of thing on, you know, he is got a
1701 girlfriend, c::ome on right. The risk
1702 is there your (.) Ohhh. <But anyway>
1703 (2.3) (LAUGH).

1704 Participant D: Yeah, we have the same like with, um,
1705 the young people kind of do change
1706 s:ocial workers and things a lot. So
1707 you can have a s:ocial worker ring up
1708 and say, oh I'm taking over so and so's
1709 case now. Um, you know, can, can you
1710 tell me about him? Can you>'. And I'm
1711 thinking, 'oh my gosh, this is
1712 a::wful'. Um, and then and it makes you
1713 wonder then, no wonder w:hy the young
1714 person doesn't wanna ring their s:ocial
1715 worker or ends up <kind of> (.) you
1716 know, attend there meeting but there
1717 ends up being an incident because they

1718 just don't, they don't get the young
1719 person. And, and again that comes back
1720 to kind of I suppose maybe stretching
1721 s:ervices (.) and you know, d:ifferent
1722 s:ocial wo:rkers coming and going. It's
1723 the same with us in in the, in kind of
1724 the care sector as áwell. You know, the
1725 t:urnover in staff is is huge (.) um,
1726 so we a:lways try and kind of get our
1727 staff t:rained as much as possible. We
1728 have a long induction p:eriod where
1729 that's just like a six to eight week
1730 induction before they can even set foot
1731 on the home. Cuz I think it's so
1732 i:mportant for the staff that's doing
1733 that, frontline work with the y:oung
1734 people. The information that they pick
1735 up is, can be so vital. You know, we
1736 always emphasise on, <you know>,
1737 a:nything that just doesn't quite sit
1738 right, record it, we'll pass it on
1739 because, <you know>, like you were
1740 saying 'Participant B', it can be a
1741 jigsaw to so much stuff. And ábecause
1742 they bounce from >local authority to
1743 local authority< (.) information does
1744 get ámissed. You know, or if there's
1745 a:llegations or a:nything made, <you
1746 know>, you can put it to one local
1747 a:uthority. We have this argument all
1748 time, 'Oh they, they di didn't make
1749 that allegation in o:ur, you know, in
1750 our local authority, so it's not for
1751 us, it's for you'. Then we say, 'no,
1752 it's where the a:llegation took place,
1753 that can bounce >back and forth< for
1754 ages and <you know>, i:nformation can
1755 just get missed. So (.) that's, that's
1756 a key thing that needs to happen more
1757 is that kind of more multi-agency
1758 sharing that information. And that's
1759 something that (.) <you know>, we do
1760 r:really emphasise on with us, you know,
1761 with our staff, 'anything, a:nything
1762 small, you document it, you pass it on
1763 because it could be that piece to a
1764 bigger picture for someone out there,
1765 whether it's the police, the l:ocal

1766 authority, the YOT, anyone'. Um (.) so
1767 yeah, I think it's about t:raining for
1768 all the staff as áwell. Cuz ásometimes
1769 I think the care staff, you know, I
1770 have been care staff where you do
1771 a:almost feel devalued r:eally, you
1772 just, <you know>, you day in, day out,
1773 down to work with the young person,
1774 (Unclear), but they actually build the
1775 best r:relationships

1776 Participant A: [in overlap] Yeah.

1777 Participant D: Um (.) with the young ápeople and they
1778 do r:eally confide in them, trust in
1779 them. Um (.) and the things that, you
1780 know, the information that they will
1781 tell the staff (.) um, is r:eally,
1782 really important áinformation. And I
1783 think it can feel a bit d:evaluated
1784 sometimes. (1.9)

1785 Multiple: (unclear)

1786 Moderator: Sorry [Participant C], g:o on.

1787 Participant C: The other thing with, with
1788 professionals as well is that (.)
1789 >things like CAMHS < (.) I don't think
1790 any of my y:oung people would be able
1791 to access CAMHS service cuz they ain't
1792 gonna turn up for a doctor's
1793 appointment or, and áeven just to get
1794 these young people diagnosed, it's,
1795 it's just (.) there's loads of young
1796 people floating around without like a
1797 diagnosis of either t:rauma, ASD, or or
1798 some other (.) kind of barrier to, to
1799 life and stuff. And they're just (.)
1800 they're just unnoticed. And (.) to get
1801 (.) to get a referral, I think
1802 s:ometimes a young person has to be in
1803 education for, for so long for that to
1804 work or they've got to make their way
1805 to, to like an appointment. And it's
1806 just (.) it's just that, that part of
1807 the system's (.) just not working, cuz
1808 (.) the young people are having to g:o

1809 to them instead of p::rofessionals
1810 g:eing to the young person.

1811 Participant B: I think you, you've hit the nail on the
1812 head there, [Participant C]. And even,
1813 you know, how they run the service.
1814 It's, it's very c:orporate. You know
1815 what a child is gonna wanna go to a
1816 °hospital° environment or you know,
1817 into a separate building, which is
1818 v:ery corporate. I mean (.) as you can
1819 see where I am here, it's e:xactly the
1820 same. We've m:oved from a a b:uilding
1821 ourselves and it is a very corporate
1822 building. Just trying to get the y:oung
1823 people through the front door is a real
1824 issue (.) .hh but health, you know,
1825 these are complex c:hildren that we're
1826 talking about with complex n:needs and
1827 if they don't attend three
1828 appointments, they close the case (.)
1829 Well (.) you know, the c:omplexities of
1830 these kids that we're dealing with (.)
1831 they've got so much o:ther (.) things
1832 going on in their head and worries that
1833 that doesn't a:ctually feature as a, as
1834 an issue for them. Even âthough as
1835 professionals and adults and education
1836 providers, we are saying, 'yes it
1837 does', to them it doesn't. But there's
1838 got to be a, a shift I think in t:erms
1839 of h:ow they are m::anaging (.) um (.)
1840 how they d:eal with young people. But I
1841 think going back to a point that you
1842 kind of made as well, [Participant D],
1843 <you know, where you were saying about
1844 the c:ommunication>, what I've noticed
1845 as well is (.) you know, the systems
1846 that are in place, we're all on
1847 s:eparate ásystems (.) we've all had
1848 c:onversations about wouldn't it be
1849 e:asier if we were all on one system.
1850 So you've got e:very, single
1851 professional that can input into a
1852 specific system (.) .hh >police, CAMHS,
1853 education< and we know you can build
1854 that story for that y:oung person. You
1855 can s:ee the i:nformation. The young

1856 person doesn't have to go >on and on
1857 and on<, or repeat their story >time
1858 and time again<, or what's h:appened in
1859 education today or, <do you know what I
1860 mean?> You can c:learly see there's a
1861 track of it, you know, and I thinl (.)
1862 I know again, it's about f:unding, it's
1863 about c:ost, it's about m:oney, it's
1864 about r:esources. But (.).h you know,
1865 when we are m:issing vital i:nformation
1866 when these kids are c:rossing these
1867 borders, (.). I'm sorry you can't put a
1868 price on that can áyou? (.). <You know
1869 what I mean>, and t:hat's kind of
1870 a:nother f:rustration I think a l:ot of
1871 a:gencies and a l:ot of staff feel
1872 (1.8)

1873 Participant D: And the young people that we are
1874 g:etting (.). um, you know, the y:oung
1875 people that we âw:ork with, like you
1876 said, there's s:o much going on behind
1877 the s:cenes. There's so c:omplex,
1878 there's, there's m:ental health issues
1879 going o:n. Um, there's, you know, know
1880 t:hings, u::ndiagnosed, um, conditions
1881 and stuff, and (.). <you know>, we, we
1882 see it w:here the young person ends up
1883 kind of o:pening up and and c:onfiding
1884 in you, and telling you bits of
1885 i:nformation and then >one week, say
1886 the following week<, they can say (.).
1887 ás::imilar information, but it can
1888 differ slightly, when you refer that in
1889 then, you know, or even when, when you
1890 ask the police to come in, uh, you
1891 know, but, but the >story isn't
1892 straight<. There's h:oles in, in what
1893 they're s:aying. You know, or we've had
1894 even s:ocial workers say, 'oh you know,
1895 they °f:abricate things° all the time',
1896 >but it's not about that<. It's about
1897 that they've been through so much
1898 t:rauma, and they've got so much
1899 complex needs .h that they can't, what
1900 they're saying has h:appened (.). but
1901 they can't maybe w:ork out the time
1902 scales of things or the fact that (.).

1903 this happened in this incident, and
1904 this happened in another incident, but
1905 they can't (.) quite get the t:imeline
1906 áright (.) And s:ometimes when they're
1907 in a c:haotic lifestyle or when you
1908 know they're in the h:eightened state
1909 or when they're m:aking these
1910 disclosures (.) that things do get
1911 b:lurry for them. You know it's like
1912 (.) you know, when we try and explain
1913 them to explain it to young people, if
1914 we're in a h:eightened state and we've
1915 got a:drenaline and you're trying to
1916 t:hink of (.) something that just
1917 happened, you know (.) you're trying to
1918 r:emember the s:equene of áevents. It
1919 can be difficult for us as adults (.)
1920 So when you t:hink of it like that for
1921 a child, it's r:eally, r:eally
1922 difficult. But you can get (.) not
1923 everyone, but you do get, you know,
1924 social workers and things that, that go
1925 'well, you know, we have h:eard that
1926 bit before but it doesn't make sense',
1927 or 'there's h:oles in that story' or
1928 'they can f:abricate things', and it's
1929 like (.) .h it's not that, which is why
1930 (.) it's about, <you know>, always
1931 documenting e:verything that we see,
1932 cause hopefully e:ventually it'll be a
1933 picture for the kind of the
1934 p;rofessionals to be able to see, but
1935 as well as the young áperson can then
1936 (.) work out, 'oh yeah, that did happen
1937 and this is the s:equene of things'.

1938 Moderator: I think, um, a lot of kind of what (.)
1939 you're s:aying here that there's some
1940 d:ifferences in the ásystems (.) um,
1941 [Participant D] also mentioned e:arlier
1942 about some of the l:anguage in reports
1943 and [Participant B] you spoke about how
1944 sometimes t:hings are omitted from,
1945 from paperwork and from meetings (.)
1946 and I was áwondering if um, first, you
1947 know, we could talk a bit more about,
1948 you know, what are, what, how are, talk
1949 a bit more about [Participant D], about

1950 some of the language that's used in
1951 reports (.) um, but also thinking about
1952 more w:idely, what what's the impact
1953 of, of these things we're s:peaking
1954 about? How does it impact children?
1955 (3.1)

1956 Participant D: I think when it comes for us, when it
1957 comes to kind of their referral
1958 d:ocuments or just in, you know, their
1959 general documents, they can be such a
1960 n:egative view of the person, and áthey
1961 get sight of all of this is, its talked
1962 about in all their ámeetings and things
1963 >as well<. Um, you know, and, and even
1964 for us, we, we have tried to c:ome away
1965 from that where we (.) you can have
1966 incidents with a y:oung person, but we
1967 also call them p:ositive intervention,
1968 so where (.) so say for example, before
1969 you could say, 'right, this young
1970 person's had 30 incidents', and then
1971 you're in a meeting and the young
1972 person's going, <'oh my god, 30
1973 incidents'> and the the social worker's
1974 going, <'oh my god, 30 incidents'>. But
1975 when you b:reak it down, cause we were
1976 just d:ocumenting them as incidents (.)
1977 it could be that they've had 10
1978 incidents but they've actually had 20
1979 p:ositive interventions. So we change
1980 it now so that it's, you know, kind of
1981 your near misses. So, you know, they've
1982 been able to regulate themselves r:early
1983 well, whereas before they would maybe
1984 assaulted staff, they've taken time out
1985 and you know, gone to their r:oom to
1986 calm down and you know, they've áreally
1987 been able to kind of manage their
1988 b:ehavior, they're working well with
1989 s:taff. So when you look at it in that
1990 sense, then it's about, trying to (.)
1991 paint it in a more p:ositive light for
1992 the young p:erson, because I think (.)
1993 they, they they do, it comes across
1994 v:ery negative. It does, you know, when
1995 you're looking at a referral document
1996 and it can, you know, be 30 assaults on

1997 s:taff, um, I dunno, s:exualised
1998 behaviour, um, c:arrying a weapon and,
1999 and you know, the young person gets
2000 sight of all this and it's just v:ery
2001 negative. And if that's the, o:pinion
2002 that they have of that y:oung person,
2003 then they, they just think, 'I'll just
2004 be that person then, because, you know,
2005 you don't think, you know very h:ighly
2006 of me'. It can, it, it's very n:egative
2007 in t:erminology and the way that it can
2008 be spoken as well. °I don't know if
2009 anyone else (.) agrees? °

2010 Participant B: Yeah, I agree with that [Participant
2011 D]. I think what our, what our
2012 experience is here as a service, we are
2013 very child f:ocused. Um, so it's 'child
2014 first, offender second'.

2015 Participant D: [in overlap] Yeah.

2016 Participant A: Whereas a lot of other agencies we
2017 BATTLE with because of t:erminology
2018 that they use, it is very much about
2019 >blaming the kids<.

2020 Participant D: [in overlap] Yeah.

2021 Participant A: Which to me is victim blaming when it
2022 comes to some of the c:oncerns. But
2023 like you said, the terminology, it kind
2024 of (.) they're a:lready got a lot of
2025 issues, a lot of trauma, a lot of
2026 l:earnt behaviour, which is (.) you
2027 know, based on the self-fulfilling
2028 prophecy, in the sense of (.) these
2029 kids are products of the e:nvironment
2030 that they've been brought up in, and
2031 a:ll of that appears to be f:orgotten
2032 about when they're (.) t:alking about
2033 these kids and not a:ctually

2034 Participant D: [in overlap] Yeah.

2035 Participant A: f:ocusing on that and that that's,
2036 that's the reason why these children
2037 are behaving. No child is born bad. No

2038 child wants to be in a s:ituation that
2039 they potentially are in. And I think
2040 that kind of resonates a lot, as a
2041 frustration with, um, based on what
2042 y:our are saying as well [Participant
2043 D] (.) it's the n:egative, it's
2044 >continuously negative<. And we try and
2045 build that approach with these kids of
2046 being (.) positive and, and, 'well what
2047 have you achieved? How can you go about
2048 it? What can you do? How can we support
2049 you to make sure?'. So it's always
2050 going back to what t:heir needs and
2051 t:heir wants are to make >their life
2052 better<. And I think if you take it
2053 from that point of view, you do see a
2054 (.) significant difference in how they
2055 engage with you as well. You know, then
2056 they're not f:eeeling judged and you
2057 know, and o:bviously (.) as
2058 professionals they s:houldn't be
2059 feeling like that. No professional
2060 should be there to judge a child, but
2061 you can see that they a:lready (.) and
2062 I think a lot of it is based on (.) the
2063 e:xperiences of p:arents as well. So if
2064 the p:arents have felt judged by
2065 c:ertain professional and then they
2066 kind of pass it on. 'Oh, you've got
2067 such and such, they're h:orrible,
2068 they're gonna, <you know, the way <th
2069 th th they> speak about you'll be
2070 horrible'. You know, and the kids are
2071 kind of, you know, know c:onstantly
2072 being s:hared that message, which is
2073 (.) is negative in itself. So, I think
2074 how we as professionals a:ddress issues
2075 with young people that, you know, the
2076 language, um, °like [Participant D]
2077 said°, they've got access to all of the
2078 information, it's t:heir file, it needs
2079 to reflect that they h:ave access, it
2080 needs to be in, in c:hild terminology,
2081 chil, you know, c:hild focused for them
2082 (.) .h in terms of h:ow can they take
2083 responsibilities to help t:hemselves
2084 m:oving forward and how can we work
2085 with them to do that (.)

2086 Multiple: (unclear)

2087 Participant D: [in overlap] its like when I mentioned
2088 earlier, sorry, its like when I
2089 mentioned e:arlier, but when we get
2090 them in on a welfare basis or a YCS
2091 basis (.) um, you know, they can be
2092 s:een then as (.) you know, 'oh they're
2093 there on the c:riminal basis, they're
2094 on a c:riminal bed. When r:eally when
2095 you look at the b:ackgrounds, they're
2096 all the same and they need the same
2097 s:upport, they've got the same n:eds,
2098 which is why we don't, (.) um, s:eparate
2099 our y:oung people between welfare and
2100 YCS. They a:ll are on mixed units,
2101 because r:egardless of what they're
2102 there f:or, um, you know, the needs are
2103 still the same. They still need the,
2104 the same work, and the ásame support
2105 (.)

2106 Participant A: Some of our students, um, I mean, there
2107 are a few that are s:cared as to what
2108 we all know because they might be in
2109 trouble with, w:hoever their gang
2110 leaders áare, for example, or whoever's
2111 exploiting them. And then on the other
2112 side as well, some of them are
2113 e:mbarassed (.) We find that when we
2114 a:pproach them and we talk to them,
2115 they, they blush, they, they get
2116 áuncomfortable. They wonder how we know
2117 what we áknow (.) and then they're
2118 embarrassed (.) because they know what
2119 they're doing is wrong, but they don't
2120 wanna admit that. And there's a lot of,
2121 '<oh my god, I've just been caught'>,
2122 almost like a parent c:atching you and
2123 g:rounding you. <Do you know what I
2124 mean?> It's one of them where they
2125 think, 'oh my god, how do you know
2126 this? This is quite embarrassing. I
2127 don't want this'. So it can affect 'em
2128 all in different ways I suppose (4.1)

2129 Moderator: Okay. Um, we're, we're b:eginning to
2130 come to the end of our t:ime together.

2131 We've had some r:eally rich
2132 c:onversations, which has been
2133 fantastic and I think we could probably
2134 go on for a:nother hour, couldn't we?
2135 (.) Um, but is there any other kind of
2136 f:inal comments and r:eflections (.) or
2137 things that you think are, you know,
2138 r:eally important for us just to
2139 a:cknowledge about some of the
2140 complexities around County Lines?

2141 Participant B: I think we've all kind of touched on <i
2142 i>, you know, even though we come from
2143 kind of d:ifferent professions, I think
2144 what we >h:ave agreed< in terms of what
2145 I've heard, is there is (.) a need to
2146 i:dentify p:reventative kind (.) of
2147 m'easures to, to begin with. We know
2148 what happens when they've gone past a
2149 certain point. And ápart of our team,
2150 is we do have a prevent, um, and an out
2151 of c:court side, as opposed to the
2152 s:tatutory to try and kind of mitigate
2153 some of the incidences that these
2154 y:oung people can potentially be
2155 involved in. Um, you know, whether it
2156 be possession of an offensive w:eaapon,
2157 or an a:ssault or <something serious
2158 that would've normally gone to court>.
2159 We're trying to give them the
2160 o:pportunity and get that prevention
2161 kind of side in before um, o:bviously
2162 it goes through the court arena, but
2163 (.) if we get get a áyellow c:ard, or
2164 something like that through, <which is
2165 for antisocial behaviour>, we offer our
2166 s:ervice as a prevent if we feel the
2167 need in terms of (.) looking b:eyond
2168 the wider picture, going out and doing
2169 a visit and doing (.) you know, a very
2170 small a:ssessment áreally to kind of
2171 (.) look at what the needs are for this
2172 young person and is there a need for us
2173 to kind of offer that i:ntervention and
2174 offer that support, try and get them
2175 d:eterred out of the criminal j:ustice
2176 system, um, which could h:appen at a
2177 l:ater day. And the youth justice board

2178 are um, bringing out new KPIs and new
2179 resources, a lot more funding and
2180 things available at the m:oment, which
2181 are looking at p:reventative measures,
2182 um, to try and o:bviously target this
2183 specific c:ohort and these kids. So I
2184 think t:hat's (.) a p:ositive moving
2185 forward. In terms of the criteria (.)
2186 they've not been very clear in terms of
2187 what they're saying that that criteria
2188 should be. So I think again, we might
2189 become, come a:cross a bit of a sticky
2190 wicket there m:aybe, um, in terms of
2191 need because it might only (.) you
2192 know, service the n:eds of certain
2193 groups as o:pposed to a a, a wider
2194 group that we know we k:ind of need to
2195 be kind of looking at. But I águess as
2196 well it's, it's about us kind of being
2197 (.) creative in our, in ourselves with
2198 how we can u:tilise that, that funding
2199 to >make projects available< and things
2200 like that. But I guess (.) you know, I
2201 think, I think the issues for me are,
2202 ob:viously if we are <targeting
2203 preventing>, we, we then need to have
2204 the resources still not just from our
2205 point of view and our s:ervice, to
2206 f:all back on as áwell. And I guess
2207 that's gonna take a hell of a lot more
2208 m:oney and a hell of a lot more t:ime
2209 that I >don't think we have< when it
2210 comes to trying to deal with the risks
2211 that these young people have. It n:eds
2212 to be, it does need to be immediate as
2213 far as I'm concerned. And I don't think
2214 it's gonna happen I;mmediately. And
2215 again, that's kind of another
2216 professional f:rustration I think I
2217 feel. (.)

2218 Participant C: I think my, my concern on that is cuz
2219 our project's kind of a fixed term (.)
2220 funded project, which absolutely love
2221 the work and we (.) kind of p:rovide,
2222 we've got kind of a ápanel with Youth
2223 Justice, so we l:ook at y:oung people
2224 and then, uh, the Youth Justice

2225 service, often, r;efers into like the
2226 youth service and we kind of deliver, a
2227 a programme of activities, ásimilar to
2228 the 'My Futures', but, we've not, we've
2229 not got that process. So it's just a
2230 youth work approach. So, we've kind of
2231 not got this f:ormal, ,got to do this
2232 issue based stuff with this> y:oung
2233 p:erson. We do do that and we do
2234 educate around the i:ssues and stuff.
2235 But, for me, cuz, I think it's going
2236 back to that ápositive kind of mindset
2237 about how we, we treat young p:ople.
2238 So, although I offer young people kind
2239 of >go karting, quad biking<, whatever
2240 a:ctivity they want to do, actually,
2241 it's just (.) it, the biggest s:uccess
2242 is, is just my time. So it is not kind
2243 of what we're offering cuz a lot of, a
2244 lot of young people go, 'oh I don't
2245 want to do go carting today, I'm not,
2246 I'm just not bothered to be honest' And
2247 uh, it's actually, the fact that I turn
2248 up, e:very week when I say I am gonna
2249 turn up, a:nd that I'm w:illing to
2250 spend time with a young áperson. So I,
2251 I think for me that's, for
2252 professionals (.) other professionals
2253 just, don't have that l:uxury. But, I
2254 have the l:uxury of actually (.) um (.)
2255 turning up, waiting for a y:oung person
2256 who probably won't come out for kind of
2257 (.) half an hour, an hour it could be
2258 before he kind of d:ecides to get up
2259 and, and and want to do an activity.
2260 But I, I've actually got that, luxury
2261 of just, spending time with a y:oung
2262 áperson and I think that's, that's the
2263 key (.) for a lot of these young people
2264 is that, having adults who are
2265 i:nterested in áthem and kind of not
2266 interested in the áprocess (3.1)

2267 Participant C: I think fo, from like m;aybe my point
2268 of view as b:eing (.) the s:ecure
2269 setting, I find that we can be bit of a
2270 standalone ásometimes. So I think
2271 people maybe think that, you know, oh

2272 we've got the, we've got the s:ervices
2273 so they come into us to do what they
2274 need to do and then they, they l:ease
2275 out into the community. So I think from
2276 k:ind of, from our point, it would be
2277 really nice for us to be able to (.)
2278 work alongside different services a lot
2279 b:etter so that we can, we can help in,
2280 in the t:ransition back into the
2281 community or you know, if we know that
2282 there's a young person c:oming in kind
2283 of (.) the kind of the, the g:etting
2284 them into s:ecure as well. Cause that's
2285 a big, that's a big step for a y:oung
2286 person that can be >really really<
2287 s:cary. Then sometimes we're v;ery
2288 s:tandalone. Um, you know, because I
2289 think (.) for us working (.) with, with
2290 d:ifferent s:ervices to be able to
2291 resettle them back into the community,
2292 <you know>, would be r:eally useful.
2293 Cuz you know, we've got staff like
2294 [Participant C] that, they're just,
2295 i:nvaluable and they, they'll probably
2296 k:now more about the y:oung persons and
2297 than (.) than you know, a:ny other
2298 social worker, p:otentially, because
2299 they get to spend that time with the
2300 young person and, and that's what the
2301 young person will always áremember. Um,
2302 so some of our st:aff probably know our
2303 young people better than a:nyone at
2304 that point. So we're w:orking with the
2305 services better would be for us. Cause
2306 we're very kind of ásecluded sometimes

2307 Participant C: {in overlap}, I think (.) cause my role
2308 is often kinda an a:dvocate as áwell
2309 for young, y:oung people (.)

2310 Participant D: [in overlap] Yeah.

2311 Participant C: And cuz, cuz I had a young person who
2312 was m:oved out of the county (.) to a
2313 foster placement (.) and, and u:sually
2314 that would mean that I'd close with
2315 that young áperson. But I actually
2316 s:tayed with him cuz I, I was like,

2317 'this placement's not gonna work'. Uh,
2318 we h:oping that it will work, and so I
2319 just met him I think e:very couple of
2320 áweeks just to, to catch áup with him.
2321 And it was only a brief c:onversation,
2322 but then he came back into our a:rea
2323 and it wasn't as though I'd abandoned
2324 him or just left him, I could (.)

2325 Participant D: [in overlap] yeah, yeah.

2326 Participant C: I could actually (.) I could phone him
2327 up and and say, 'oh, you're back now.
2328 How are you? How are you g:etting on?'.
2329 And I met him for a couple of times and
2330 then he actually s:ettled down, but (.)
2331 I think sometimes we're we're, I know
2332 we're all quick to áclose kind of
2333 cases. 'It's it's gone someone else,
2334 it's not our problem'.

2335 Participant D: Yeah. Cause we've even o:ffered
2336 sometimes to um, you know, visit a
2337 y:oung person when they're back out in
2338 the c:ommunity, whether it be in, you
2339 know, in their care home or whatever
2340 placement they're in (.) Maybe take
2341 them out for a day and, and do it kind
2342 of like a s:low transition. And we've
2343 been refused that, you know (.) um, and
2344 then (.) yeah and the young person does
2345 get that kind of sense of abandonment
2346 when you've been a big part of their
2347 life for like six months. Some young
2348 people we can get up to two years,
2349 which is s:uch a big chunk of, you
2350 know, of their life at that time. .H
2351 um, and, and we've, you know, we've
2352 been refused that to be able to do
2353 that. And that, that's a s:hame I think
2354 (.) because it's u:ltimately, it's, it
2355 would be what what's best for the child
2356 and that's not a:lways at the forefront
2357 sometimes.

2358 Participant A: Yeah. And I think as well, a big one
2359 that we take away, uh, with this sort
2360 of thing is >listen to the child<,

2361 listen to the young person because
2362 there's a reason they're doing what
2363 they're doing. Um, and it's almost like
2364 they think that they're in trouble when
2365 we find out (.) So they close down. Um,
2366 but it's actually a case of, there are
2367 r:asons behind the behaviours you are
2368 presenting. There are, there's always
2369 like, um, [Participant B] said earlier,
2370 you're not born that way (.) You're not
2371 born into that. So, they've l:earned
2372 these behaviours and I think it's
2373 building up that trust with the young
2374 person, because then whoever that that
2375 person is with the trust has got the
2376 biggest part of the jigsaw piece is to
2377 r:really try and (.) stop it or prevent
2378 further, you know, áharm. And they will
2379 then p:robably come to you and say, 'I
2380 felt this way, this is what I've done
2381 because of'. And I think that that's
2382 the biggest thing, but it is the, the
2383 trust building the experience of the
2384 s:taff member or the a:gency worker,
2385 um, and not just b:asically
2386 >t:arnishing them with the same brush<.
2387 'Oh, you are, you are into CCE, you are
2388 into County Lines, that means you're
2389 this sort of person and wash my hands
2390 of you', because like I said e:arlier
2391 in our school, we've got, students that
2392 you would never think would be
2393 i:nvolved in anything like that. And
2394 then the ástereotypical ones, and I
2395 don't like to say that, but (.) are
2396 sometimes not involved in it. So you
2397 sort of, it is the idea of just talk to
2398 the young person (.) like before you,
2399 you know, some agencies put, um, like I
2400 say, >tarnishing them with same brush<
2401 (.) don't work. And I think that m,
2402 main bit is to get to know the young
2403 person (.) and build that trust up,
2404 because you're not gonna get anywhere
2405 because they'll just shut down, not
2406 attend school, not talk to the parents
2407 or carers, and you've lost them (2.5)

2408 Moderator O:kay. So I'm, I'm gonna finish it
2409 there. I'm just gonna, uh, turn the
2410 recording áoff.

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Appendix K: Example of stage two analysis

Describing the data and identifying what was said, how it was said, and when it was said.

emphasis!

809 three weeks is a long time because
 810 when these are so vulnerable and
 811 description of CI → involved in something so dangerous (.)
 812 who knows what will happen. And
 813 slowed speech → there's a lot of (.) <do you know what
 814 I mean> the last thing we all want is
 815 emphasis → (.) the worst-case scenario, a fatality
 816 or (.) <do you know what I mean?> And
 817 showed speech → we've done everything as we can up
 818 until to our limit. And then you
 819 know, staff will always think, you
 820 rhetorical question → know, 'could we have done more?' (.)
 821 topic shift to blame → you know it's the blame game if
 822 something gonna happen that whose
 823 pause → fault is it? (.) 'Da da da'. And it (.)
 824 emphasis → it is just a messy thing. And I do
 825 stretched and → think, um, you know, the agencies and
 826 everybody are working very well. It's
 827 descriptions of → budgets, it's resources, it's staffing.
 828 Participant B: [in overlap] Yeah. Overlapping talk
 829 Participant A: There's so many things (.) that (.)
 830 make it slow down.
 831 Participant B: [in overlap] Yeah. Overlapping talk
 832 Participant A: And we always want it to just speed
 833 Pause → up (.) like, 'oh he is at risk (.) SAVE
 834 him' (LAUGH). laughter
 835 Participant B: [in overlap] Yeah. Overlapping talk
 836 Participant A: Like 'Save him tomorrow' (LAUGH) soft speech
 837 Participant B: [in overlap] And it (.) and it is that,
 838 <you've hit the nail on the head there>
 839 as well in terms of, you know, you
 840 topic shift to duty → said it before', ev it's everybody's
 841 need to → duty in terms of safeguarding and
 842 safeguard → we're raising them concerns (.) but
 843 again, we know nationally this is a
 844 Pause → problem (.) and nationally we are
 845 emphasis → seeing funding cuts. Um, I'm sure
 846 (Participant D) you are seeing it
 847 topic shift to resources → yourself (.) in terms of secure units
 848 emphasis → We knew obviously that um (.) there was
 849 talk of cuts → a lot of decommissioning (.) in terms
 850 of a lot of the beds at the YJB were
 851 in resources of → using, 'the youth justice board', were
 852 services → using, um, in relation to not only
 853 criminal beds but welfare beds. And (.)
 854 stretched and → we are identifying significant risks in
 855 relation to a lot of these young
 ↓
 emphasis

KEY {
 ——— WHAT
 ——— HOW
 ——— WHEN

(Photo of annotated transcript)

Appendix L: Descriptions of discursive devices

Taken from Wiggins (2017, p. 123 - 125) for stage three analysis

Device	Description	Possible function	Level of skill required from researcher
Affect displays	To display emotion (e.g. crying)	To express emotion and manage psychological business.	Intermediate
Agent-subject distinction	To make known the speaker's level of agency.	To manage the speaker's sense of agency.	Advanced
Assessments	To pass judgement or make an evaluation.	To state the speaker's account of an event.	Basic
Category Entitlements	To make known certain aspects of an individual's characteristics to make inferences about them and their ability.	To infer something about an individual such as their level of power.	Advanced
Consensus and Corroboration	To agree with what is being said (consensus) and to share an independent witness that supports the original source (corroboration).	To build up support and to manage the speaker's accountability.	Intermediate
Detail or Vagueness	To describe an account with additional information (detailed) or to talk about an account in a way that is unclear and lacking specific detail.	To present the account as being accurate and reliable (detailed) or to downplay the speaker's level of investment in the account (vague).	Intermediate
Disclaimers	To add a statement which contradicts or denies what is being said.	To deny responsibility or manage how others may perceive the speaker's identity.	Intermediate
Emotion Categories	To refer to an individual's emotional state.	To communicate, achieve, or do something through that interaction.	Advanced
Extreme Case Formulations (ECFs)	To use extreme language when giving an account.	To strengthen an account, add credibility to an argument, or manage how others may perceive the speaker's identity.	Basic
Footing Shifts	To switch between the author, animator, or principal of the talk.	To shift agency.	Basic

Hedging	To use language or utterances that suggests doubt.	To manage the delicacy of an issue, especially when there is a disagreement about what was said.	Basic
Hesitancy	To have elongated phrases or gaps or pauses in the talk.	To suggest doubt or uncertainty.	Basic
Lists and Contrasts	To provide a list of specific examples (lists). To use contrasting language to provide alternative viewpoints (contrasts).	To strengthen an account or to manage accountability.	Basic
Metaphor	A figurative comparison to describe an event, action, or person rather than a literal description.	To share assessments of the world and to explore delicate issues.	Intermediate
Minimisation	To treat something as minimal through using descriptions or language such as 'just'.	To downplay the significance of something.	Basic
Narrative Structure	To provide an account through using narrative techniques to 'tell the story'.	To strengthen an account or to manage accountability.	Intermediate
Modal Verbs	To infer abilities, likelihood and obligations.	To manage accountability.	Advanced
Pauses or Silences	To have short or elongated gaps in speech.	To suggest uncertainty or indicate trouble in the interaction.	Basic
Pronoun	To use pronouns to suggest the relationships between the speaker and the account.	To suggest where an accountability lies.	Basic
Reported Speech	To report words as if directly spoken from someone.	To strengthen an account or to manage accountability.	Intermediate
Script Formulation	To present an account as something normal or something that should be expected.	To suggest that an account is normal.	Intermediate
Stake Inoculation	To defend against claims that the speaker has a stake in what they are saying.	To help manage accountability.	Advanced

Example of stage three analysis:

105 that's that's where it comes from that
 106 they're (...) you know, um, they, they
 107 can't afford the trainers *Script formulation*

108 Participant B: [in overlap] Yeah *Script formulation of course*

109 Participant A: or they can't afford the jewellery, and
 110 call that sort of thing isn't it? so
 111 they (...) and if we was to say that
 112 person's negative, they're gonna be
 113 sort of (...) well that's my friend you
 114 are talking about *Reported speech of VP indicating*

115 Participant B: [in overlap] Yeah

116 Participant A: And then they're going to straight
 117 away not like ya.

118 Participant B: [in overlap] Yeah *suggest VP with other participants*

119 Participant A: And no matter what you say to them
 120 they're not gonna (...) take any notice
 121 whatsoever and then in particular, <a
 122 lot of our teenagers don't listen to
 123 the> parents (...) unfortunately. Um, and
 124 then when they do listen to us and if
 125 we're all singing off the same hymn
 126 sheet (...) who are they going to (...)
 127 disclose things to? How are we gonna
 128 find out more information? Cause we've
 129 lost that trust (...) So it is difficult
 130 how to, to, you know, talk to the young
 131 people. Um, <some of 'em have got their
 132 head screwed on> and they know exactly
 133 what's going on. *Script formulation*

134 Participant B: [in overlap] Hmm. *Shows how may affect display agree*

135 Participant A: But they are scared to come out with
 136 that (...) because of the repercussions
 137 from the friends or, you know, the
 138 association of negative peers. *Script formulation indicate behavior cycle*

139 (Enter Participant C)

140 Participant A: Um, but then you've got others <like I
 141 said> (...) who think it's cool. *show categories happy/peers*

142 Participant B: [in overlap] Hmm.

143 Participant A: Who want to then get other students
 144 involved (...) Um, it's (...) and
 145 unfortunately because they're getting
 146 rewarded, um <money, jewellery>
Script formulation to reinforce belief that CL involves 'grounded in exchange'
Pause & hesitation purposeful with delay of intonation indicating risky situation

Pause & hesitation indicating tension

Vague account that parents further questions

Script formulation indicates usual response of young metaphor construction arena of reality that individuals work together 'lost' suggests some tension

metaphor for young person's sense of agency

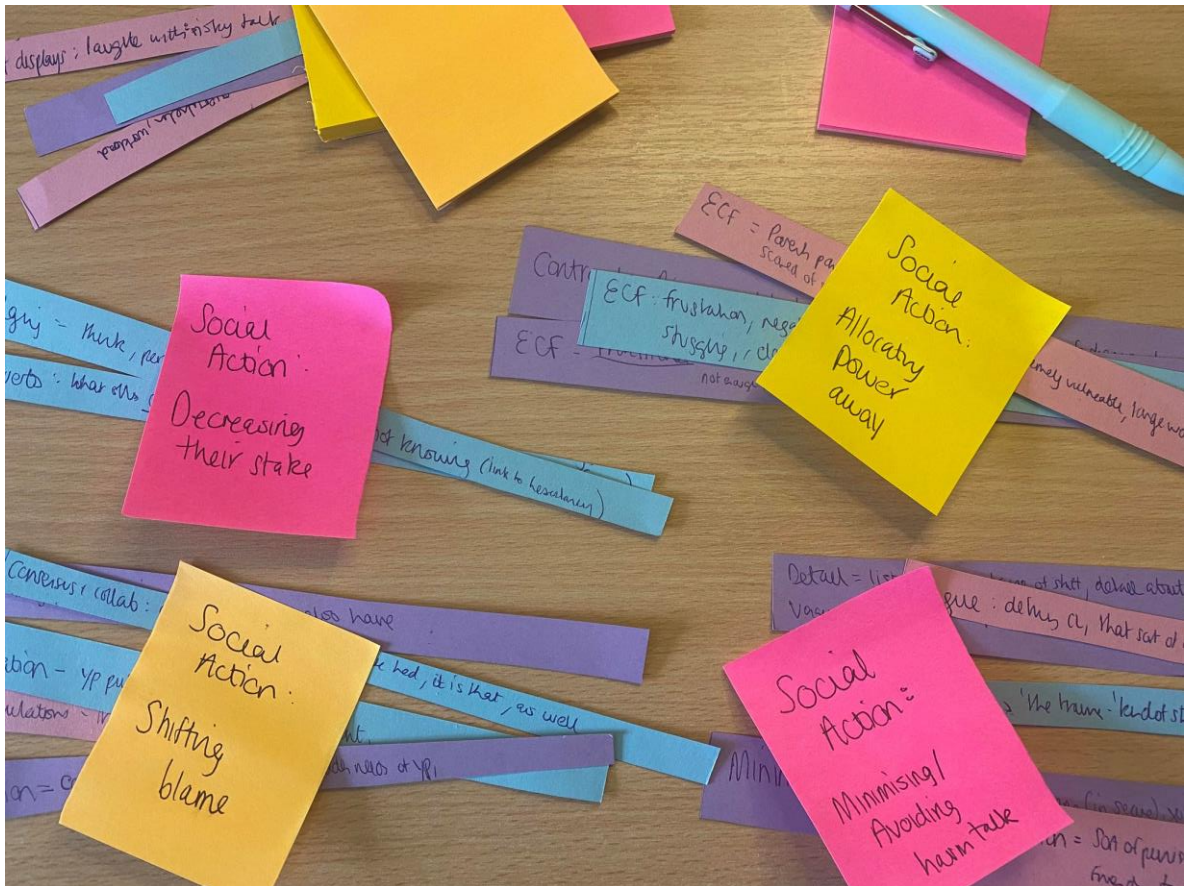
minimisation of the role of the 'friend'

compare / contrast to show different possible motivations of CL

(Photo of annotated transcript)

Appendix M: Example of stage four analysis

Identifying emerging analytical issues and choosing which issues to focus on.



(Photograph to show the process of identifying emerging key issues)

Please see Appendix R for further information about the process of choosing the analytical issues

Appendix N: Example of stage five analysis

Collecting instances of key analytical issues:

20-26	A	in my experience, the young people think it's a good thing, um, and they think they're making money by doing <whatever it is> they're asked <to do> in exchange for >whatever it is< they're getting.
632-640	A	But again, it's sort of (.) the vulnerable ones, if they do something as silly as carry for somebody cause they've been asked to hold (.) cannabis or they've been asked to hold something (.) and they're f:ound with it (.) it's sort of like they're getting punished for d:oining something for a friend.
20-26	A	in my experience, the young people think it's a good thing, um, and they think they're making money by doing <whatever it is> they're asked <to do> in exchange for >whatever it is< they're getting.
50-59	A	<I mean> it's alright giving them educational slides and saying 'this is County Lines <X, Y, and Z>', (.) but then they're just gonna go 'well, I'm making money (.) so what's the problem?' Or 'I'm getting really good friends, or I've got protection or' (.) °do you know what I mean° (.)
101-107	A	Yeah, it's, it's also sort of (.) if their, um, being offered anything that their families or friends can't offer them in (.) <you know its normal cuz that's that's where it comes from> that they're (.) you know, um, they, they can't afford the trainers

(Screenshot of document organising extracts)

Appendix O: Example of stage six analysis

Refining analysis of analytical issues.

Analytical Issue One: Problematic Victims

Main Social Action	No.	Extract	Lines	Discursive Devices	Suggested constructs of children exploited through County Lines	Implications
Positioning children as beneficiaries	1	<p>Participant A: (.)<I think it> I think <u>personally</u> as, uh, working in a ° school°, I think, um, describing it to students in a (.) is better in a different way than it would be to the <u>parents</u>. Um, because you don't wanna sort of <u>scare</u> them <too much>, but you also wanna make them <u>understand</u> what it is because in <u>my</u> experience, the <u>young</u> people think it's a <u>good</u> thing, um, and they think they're making <u>money</u> by doing <whatever it is> they're <u>asked</u> <to do> in <u>exchange</u> for >whatever it is< they're <u>getting</u>. Um, whereas parents (.) you >mention< County Lines and the <u>panic</u> (.) the <u>sheer panic</u> in their <you know> in their faces.</p>	13 - 29	Pronoun shifting Vagueness Reported Speech Pauses	<p>Some children believe County Lines is a good thing and some children are choosing to get involved in County Lines as they are getting something in exchange, such as money.</p> <p>Some children are unaware of the dangers of County Lines.</p>	<p>Promotes the notions of exchange and agency.</p> <p>It may put blame on the victims.</p> <p>It may impact how willing professionals are to treat the children as victims.</p> <p>Doesn't acknowledge harm.</p>

2	<p>Participant A: Um, so (.) the way that I've described it to students is actually (.) it, <it's a difficult one> where you sort of (.) you try and e:explain it where it's <u>bad</u>, but not in a way that they're gonna <u>rebel</u> and <u>do</u> it more (.) . So it's, <it's quite> actu there is <u>no</u> >set way< I don't think <u>personally</u>. <I mean> it's a:lright giving them educational <u>slides</u> and saying 'this is County Lines <X, Y, and Z>', (.) but then they're <u>just</u> gonna go '<u>well</u>, I'm making money (.) so what's the problem?' Or 'I'm getting really good friends, or I've got protection or' (.) °do you know what I mean° (.) áit's, it's quite a difficult one (.) <to be fair></p>	42 - 59	<p>Pauses Minimalisation Vague</p>	<p>Some children are choosing to get involved in County Lines in order to 'rebel'. Some children are benefiting from County Lines.</p>	<p>Promotes the notions of exchange and agency. It may put blame on the victims. It may impact how willing professionals are to treat the children as victims. Doesn't acknowledge harm. Minimises abuse.</p>
3	<p>Participant A: So it is difficult how to, to, you know, talk to the young people. Um, <some of 'em have got their head screwed on> and they know <u>exactly</u> what's going on.</p>	129 - 133	<p>Assessment Footing shift Metaphor</p>	<p>Some children are choosing to get involved in County Lines. Some children are 'street wise'.</p>	<p>Reduced empathy.</p>
4	<p>Participant B: They don't <u>recognise</u> it, do they?</p>	150 - 169	<p>Assessment Pronoun</p>	<p>Some children are benefiting greatly from County Lines</p>	<p>Promotes the notions of</p>

	<p>Participant A:</p> <p>[in overlap] No.</p> <p>Participant B:</p> <p><A lot of them> they don't, they don't say, again, it's <u>because</u> °they're getting something in return that they want°, They don't <u>think</u> it's an issue, they don't see it as <as professionals as parents would> see it <u>being</u> an i:ssue. <u>They don't</u>.</p> <p>Participant B:</p> <p>And <u>then</u> o:bviously they get to see <u>different</u> ácities.</p> <p>Participant A:</p> <p>[in overlap] Yep.</p> <p>Participant B:</p> <p>And they, you know, <u>different</u> e:plorations that they've never <u>been</u> before</p> <p>Participant A:</p>		<p>Minimalisation Construct</p>	<p>such as being able to 'explore new cities'.</p> <p>Some children don't see the negative side of County Lines and they think it is a 'wonderful world'.</p>	<p>exchange and agency.</p> <p>It may put blame on the victims.</p> <p>It may impact how willing professionals are to treat the children as victims.</p> <p>Doesn't acknowledge harm.</p> <p>Minimises abuse.</p>
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		<p>[in overlap] Exactly.</p> <p>Participant B:</p> <p>Because they think it's a wonderful world out there, <which it is> (.) ° But not in that, in that respect° (1.9).</p>				
Shifting Blame	5	<p>Participant A:</p> <p>But <you know what teenagers are like>, they go <u>off</u> and <u>do</u> their own thing, but within school there's (.) it's very very <u>rare</u> that <u>something</u> happens, i.e. they are (.) °dealing or anything like that° because we, we <u>get them</u> straight away. And <u>unfortunately</u>, if we <u>do</u> see anything like that, if they <u>do</u> manage to <u>sneak</u> something on (.) they get a permanent exclusion from us (.) because it's <u>zero tolerance</u> (.) But again, it's sort of (.) the vulnerable ones, if they do something as <u>silly</u> as <u>carry</u> for somebody cause they've been asked to <u>hold</u> (.) cannabis or they've been <u>asked</u> to hold something (.) and they're found with it (.) it's sort of like they're getting <u>punished</u> for doing something for a friend.</p>	621 - 640	<p>Contrast</p> <p>ECF</p> <p>Minimalisation</p>	<p>Some children should be punished.</p> <p>Some children are vulnerable and they make 'silly decisions'.</p> <p>Some children are exploited by 'friends'.</p>	<p>Suggests there should be zero tolerance for some children.</p> <p>Minimises abuse.</p>

Allocating Victimship	6	Participant B: I:nterestingly (Participant A) I d:eal with those, who o:bviously <u>are</u> (.) kind of (.) or h:ave been (.) um, punished, <shall we say>, as a r:esult of obviously being i:nvolved in something. .H and what's quite (.) f::rustrating >I think< is the p::rocesses that kind of <u>lead</u> to that for these y:oung people, in that (.) <u>yes</u> there is a m:echanism to i:dentify that these are v:ulnerable victims and they c:an't consent to (.) um, being t:rafficked or, or, or b:eing, <you know> <u>exploited</u> °in that sense°.	652 - 665	Hesitation Minimisation	Some children are vulnerable victims. As victims, the children cannot consent to being exploited. Some victims are being punished.	Some professionals cannot do anything to stop victims being punished. Promotes notion that victims cannot consent to being abused.
	7	Participant B: Um (1.8) but then (.) there's the other side of it w:here (.)if they <u>are deemed to be vulnerable</u> , there's the >NRM áprocess<, the national referral mechanism <u>process</u> . So (.) <u>depending</u> upon, um (.)h which o::fficers, um (.) have <you know> obviously <u>dealt</u> with this situation, the <u>officers</u> can <u>put</u> in, um, an âNRM, which is to the Ministry of Justice to say that >these are <u>kids</u> < who are potentially (.) .h um, <you know>, v::ictims of exploitation (.) and then that they can use the >section 45 defense< when they <u>do</u> go to ácourt (.) .H But again, not <u>all</u>	743 - 764	Pauses Detailed Script Formulation Modal verb	Some children are deemed as being vulnerable and some are not.	Support is not available to all children. Support is dependent on: - Whether a child is deemed as being vulnerable -The knowledge

	<p>of the ápolice officers are using it, not all the ápolice officers are putting the <u>NRM</u> áin. Not all the <u>social workers</u> are <u>doing</u> it. So (.) there's d::isparity in terms of the (.) <u>service</u> that is being <u>provided</u> for these <u>kids</u>.</p>				and skills of the professionals.
8	<p>Participant B: Sorry. I I was g:onna say, I think it depends on what <u>area</u> they're c:oming from. I think <u>police</u> can be very (.) 'they're a <u>criminal</u>' (.) <you know what I mean?> And I I I I, and kind of they're, they're causing a <u>nuisance</u>, uh, 'there doing this, they're doing <u>that</u>'. <Do you know what I mean?> Whereas professionals, like <u>YOT</u> workers, <u>social</u> workers, um, <u>specialised</u> p:olice officers who are in what we call here in [Name of County], we have got the [<u>NAME</u>] áteam, um, who obviously <u>deal</u> with young people and try and get them on <u>board</u> to kind of, um, <u>safeguard</u> them where p:ossible, but also to kind of obviously put them in touch with the <u>right support</u> from the police perspective as victims as opposed to being (.) <u>problematic</u>, °how neighborhood policing teams might see them°.</p>	995 - 1016	<p>Pauses</p> <p>Reported speech</p> <p>Script Formulation</p> <p>Contrast</p>	<p>Some professionals view the children as criminals.</p> <p>Some professionals regard the children as being a nuisance or problematic.</p>	<p>Some children may be punished or treated as a criminal.</p> <p>Suggests that there are some professionals who are not as supportive towards some children as other professionals would be.</p>

9	<p>Participant D: [in overlap] its like when I mentioned earlier, sorry, its like when I mentioned <u>e:arlier</u>, but when we get them in on a <u>welfare</u> basis or a <u>YCS</u> basis (.) um, you know, they can be s:een then <u>as</u>, you know, 'oh they're there on the <u>c:riminal</u> basis, they're on a <u>c:riminal</u> bed. When <u>r:eally</u> when you look at the <u>b:ackgrounds</u>, they're <u>all</u> the same and they need the <u>same</u> s:upport, they've got the <u>same</u> n:needs, which is why we don't, (.) um, s:eparate our y:oung people between <u>welfare</u> and <u>YCS</u>. They a:ll are on <u>mixed</u> units, because <u>r:egardless</u> of what they're there f:or, um, you know, the <u>needs</u> are still the same. They <u>still</u> need the, the <u>same</u> work, and the <u>ásame</u> support (.)</p>	2088 - 2106	<p>Reported speech</p> <p>Script formulation</p>	<p>Some children are seen as criminals.</p> <p>All children have the same needs.</p>	<p>Suggests that some children may be treated as criminals.</p> <p>Suggests that professionals are addressing the underlying needs of children.</p> <p>Suggests that professionals are challenging narratives around victimhood.</p>
10	<p>Participant A: And I think that that's the <u>biggest</u> thing, but it is the, the <u>trust</u> building the experience of the s:taff member or the a:gency worker, um, and not just <u>b:asically</u> >t:arnishing them with the same brush<. 'Oh, you are, you are into <u>CCE</u>, you are into County Lines, that means you're <u>this</u> sort of person and <u>wash</u> my <u>hands</u> of you', because like I said e:arlier in <u>our</u> school, we've</p>	2382 - 2397	<p>Reported speech</p> <p>Assessment..</p> <p>Metaphor</p> <p>Disclaimer</p>	<p>There is a stereotypical profile of a child who is exploited through County Lines .</p> <p>Not all children fit the stereotypical profile of a victim.</p>	<p>Professionals are deciding who is and who is not a victim.</p>

		got, <u>students</u> that you would never <u>think</u> would be i:nvolved in <u>anything</u> like that. And then the <u>ástereotypical ones</u> , and I <u>don't</u> like to <u>say</u> that, but (.) are sometimes not involved in it.				
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Analytical Issue Two: Losing Hope

Main Social Action	No.	Extract	Line	Discursive Devices	Suggested constructs of children exploited through CL	Implications
Relinquishing power	11	Participant A: it's a:lright giving them educational <u>slides</u> and saying 'this is County Lines <X, Y, and Z>', (.) but then they're <u>just</u> gonna go ' <u>well</u> , I'm making money (.) so what's the problem?' Or 'I'm getting really good friends, or I've got protection or' (.) °do you know what I mean° (.) áit's, it's quite a difficult one (.) <to be fair> but it's huh it's £really sort of (.) you've <u>got to</u> really <u>determine</u> , um, what they understand and and <u>their</u> level of understanding and how far (.) far in they are(.) <u>into</u> >possible< exploitation <as well>	50 - 70	ECF Reported speech Assessment	Some children are benefiting from County Lines. Some children are 'too far gone'.	Relinquishing the children to County Lines gangs and groups. Promotes the notion of exchange and rewards.

		because if they're <u>too far gone</u> (.) and °there is such thing as too far gone° (.) <u>unfortunately</u> it's >really< difficult to <u>get</u> them âback. So, <I mean> I've done enough t(h)alking I think huh .h.				
12	Participant D And a:gain, you know, when they <u>come</u> in with us, when we try and do some work with them or get them to attend e:ducation (.) um, it sometimes f:eels like a <u>losing battle</u> because of the <u>things</u> that they <u>get</u> , what they <u>earn</u> and their <u>status</u> when they're <u>out</u> in the c:ommunity. It's just (.) u:nless you have them for maybe a <u>long</u> period, <which is very r:arely>, it's quite difficult to (.) to get <u>through</u> to them (.)	240 - 251	Pauses Assessment Metaphor	Some children are benefiting from County Lines. Some children need intensive support over a long period of time. Some children don't engage with support because the pull factors of County Lines are so strong.	Relinquishing the children to County Lines gangs and groups. Promotes the notion of exchange and rewards	
13	Participant A And he was a:ctually <u>removed</u> from (.) p:arents care (.) and t:aken <u>out</u> of county to be in a s;ecure áhome (1.8) So (.) u:nfortunately we <u>lost</u> that student, but then in <u>my head</u> it was sort of like a <u>win</u> because he could have, he was at risk of (.) like s::ignificant <u>harm</u> in the city center. So, um, you know, we have had <u>updates</u> that he's a:ctually gone	579-592	Pauses Metaphor ECF	Some children are at risk of significant harm. Some children are in an unreachable 'danger zone'. Some children can be 'saved'.	Relinquishing the children to County Lines gangs and groups. Belief that success may be possible.	

		to college now (.) where he lives (.) So there are s:uccess stories, but it's g:etting them <u>out</u> of that <u>danger zone</u> (.) which is a difficult, difficult thing to do.				
14	Participant D:	<p>Áthere <u>are</u> p:ositives in the sense of because they're <u>so</u> entrenched, once we can kind of <u>get them</u> on <u>board</u> an and, <u>earn</u> their <u>trust</u> and they start d:ivulging i:nformation (.) the information we get is is kind of r:eally r:eally (.) um, <u>vital</u> then for, for police and, and the l:ocal a:uthority. Um (.) or we get young people in, um, on, on a <u>risk to life</u>, um, <u>basis is</u>, is what it's <u>classed</u> as through the r::eferral panel w:here um, they they <u>feel</u> that there is a <u>serious risk</u> to that <u>young person's</u> life if they're <u>in</u> the community. So then they <u>come in</u> with us for a p:eriod of time then to keep themselves safe (5.6)</p>	528-544	<p>Assessment</p> <p>ECF</p> <p>Script formulation</p> <p>Silence</p>	<p>Some children are at risk of significant harm and have had threats to life.</p> <p>Some children need to be safeguarded.</p> <p>Some children hold 'vital' information that professionals need to tackle criminal activity.</p>	<p>Some children may be used to gain intel.</p> <p>There is a need to safeguard children.</p> <p>Professionals may feel a sense of fear themselves.</p>

	15	Participant D we get like y:oung people in with us, from say from <u>anywhere</u> from you know, [Geographical Location] way and they're e:ntrenched in this <u>culture</u> that, you know, <like [Participant B] said> they have been <u>shot</u> , they have been <u>stabbed</u> (.) Wasn't l:ong ago, we had one boy in that had been (.) <u>hacked</u> outside a <u>train station</u> with <u>blunt m::achetes</u> because they couldn't get to his <u>o:lder b:rother</u> <because his brother was high up in the< (.) chain. °He was still quite low down°, but they couldn't <u>reach</u> his brother so they kind of (.) just seen him outside the <u>train station</u> and <u>got</u> to him <u>first</u> . And he was in with us as a <u>risk to life</u> , and <he just seen it as>, 'it is what it is, my b:rother will get them when they leave', and to (.) <u>change</u> that t:hought of p:rocess when they're <u>so entrenched</u> is, is really ádifficult. (2.8)	955-976	Narrative structure ECF Reported Speech	Some children are at risk of significant harm. Some children have normalised youth violence and gang culture.	Need to safeguard. Need to address the youth violence culture. Professionals may feel a sense of fear themselves.
Managing roles	16	Participant A: Even a <u>week</u> , >a two weeks three weeks< is a <u>long</u> time because when these are <u>so</u> (.) v:ulnerable and <u>involved</u> in something so <u>dangerous</u> (.) who <u>knows</u> what will h:appen. And there's a <u>lot</u> of (.) <do you know what I mean> the l last thing we all	808 - 834	Script formulation ECF Reported Speech	Some children are vulnerable. Some children are at risk of significant harm. Some children need to be saved.	Need to safeguard. Some professionals feel like they don't have the power to

		<p>want is (.) the <u>worst-case</u> scenario, a <u>fatality</u> or (.) <do you know what I mean?> And we've done e:everything as we <u>can</u> up until to our <u>limit</u>. And then (.) you know, <u>staff</u> will always áthink, you know, 'could we have done <u>more</u>?' (.) Ya You k:now its the <u>blame game</u> if something gonna happen that '<u>whose</u> fault is it? (.) Da da da'. And it (.) it is just a <u>messy</u> thing. And I do think, um, you know, the <u>agencies</u> and everybody <u>are</u> w:orking <u>very well</u>. It's <u>budgets</u>, it's <u>resources</u>, it's <u>staffing</u>.</p> <p>Participant B: [in overlap] Yeah.</p> <p>Participant A: There's so many things (.) that (.) make it <u>s:low</u> ádown.</p> <p>Participant B: [in overlap] Yeah.</p> <p>Participant A: And we a::lways want it to just <u>speed up</u> (.) like, 'oh he is at risk (.) <u>SAVE</u> him' (LAUGH).</p>				<p>make a change.</p> <p>Some professionals feel at risk of being blamed and being held accountable.</p>
17	Participants D:		1466-1497	Disclaimer Assessment	Some children present as having complex needs and	Some professionals may feel like

	<p>And <u>even</u> with <u>us</u>, so if we have a young person that's <u>16</u> nearly <u>17</u>, and they've already been in <u>two</u> <u>secures</u>, and they've <u>bounced</u> from <placement to placement>, and they're quite <u>complex</u> or they are <u>r:really aggressive</u> and violent, for example, >we <u>would</u> turn them <u>down</u>, we <u>would</u><, because (.) you <u>do</u> look at (.) 'what <u>difference</u> are we gonna make in three, six months?'. Um, <you know>, we're p:robably just gonna <u>get</u> them in. <You know., we, <you know>, we <u>have</u> tried it and we <u>faced</u>, <you know>, <u>a:ssaults</u>, <u>i:ncidents</u> and <u>unsettled units</u> then where we see an <u>increase</u> of, of kids with <u>self-harm</u> because they can't <u>deal</u> with the <u>c:haoticness</u> of the homes. Um, so it's <u>not</u> like we <u>haven't</u> tried it. We <u>have</u> but <u>unfortunately</u>, you know, even, even I'll admit, we, we, we ><u>do look</u>< at that age between 16 and almost 18 and you think, 'oh can, <u>can</u> we make a <u>difference</u> here? <u>Don't</u> think we're the <u>right</u> placement'. So it <u>does</u> make you <u>think</u> 'where, where are that <u>age gap</u>?'. (.) They're almost in a worse position than <u>anyone</u> else <u>r:really</u> because what, <you know, if we're probably not the <u>only</u> place that <u>thinks</u> that <u>either</u>. Um, and</p>		<p>Script formulation</p> <p>Reported speech</p> <p>Detailed</p>	<p>being aggressive, reactive, dysregulated.</p> <p>Some children could negatively impact other children.</p> <p>Some children are in need of intense support.</p> <p>Older children are at risk of being missed by services.</p>	<p>they don't have the power to make change.</p> <p>Suggests there is a need for more resources.</p>
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		where does that <u>leave</u> them? Isn't it? (.)				
Questioning Capacity	18	Participant B: And you know, the <u>pressures</u> are coming from them because of their resources, their <u>funding</u> (.) and they are then saying, right ' <u>close</u> that case, <u>close</u> that case'. And we're saying 'there's a <u>safeguarding issue</u> . <u>Why</u> are you <u>closing</u> the case? You <u>cannot close</u> a case'. And so we are t:rying to <u>argue</u> and there's multi-agency strategy meetings, we are saying, 'NO, it's not <u>appropriate</u> '. <Do you know what I mean?> 'We can't <u>do</u> that. There's still an, there's still an <u>issue</u> here around safeguarding' (.) and a:lthough we are saying 'safeguarding is (.) <u>everybody's business</u> ', <u>ultimately</u> it would <u>fall</u> to the <u>local</u> a:uthority, in terms of the s:ocial services side to <u>safeguard</u> these <u>young</u> people. Um, and I think that they're (.) <u>o:verwhelmed</u> (.) by (.) this current <u>cohort</u> , <should we say>, in terms of (.) <u>safeguarding</u> . And I think that they are <u>really, really, really struggling</u> . They're s:truggling to <u>recruit</u> , they're s:truggling in terms of the <u>resources</u> . They're s:truggling to <u>retain</u> the staff that		Modal verbs Reported speech ECF	Some of the children are at risk. Some children are at risk of being let down by services.	Need to safeguard. Some professionals feel like they don't have the power to make a change.

		they <u>have</u> got because (.) <u>stress</u> levels are <u>high</u> because of the <u>risks</u> , because they don't wanna (.) let young people <u>down</u> .				
19	Participant A:	I <u>wish</u> that sometimes the <u>one</u> (.) the <u>one</u> or <u>two</u> s:ocial workers that are <u>r:eally</u> hands on, I wish they could do all, all our kids and, and deal with all of them, but it, like I say, <resources, budgets, overwhelm>. I mean there was <u>one</u> social worker I was talking to and I think she had <u>200</u> (.) <u>kids</u> on her case and I was thinking, 'how can you DO that? (.) How can you <u>sleep?</u> ', (LAUGH), 'Where's <u>your</u> life?' <Do you know what I mean? So it depends>. (.) And I r:eally do think it <u>depends</u> (.) on (.) um, their, their <u>workload</u> as well.		Pauses Reported Speech Detailed	Some children are at risk of being let down by services.	Promotes the notion of the good and bad professional. Suggests there is a need for more resources.
20	Participant B:	But I águess as well it's, it's about us kind of being (.) <u>creative</u> in our, in <u>ourselves</u> with how we can u:tilise that, that funding to >make <u>projects</u> available< and <u>things</u> like that. But I guess (.) you know, I <u>think</u> , I think the <u>issues</u> for me are, ob:viously if we <u>are</u> <targeting		Modal verbs Stake inoculation ECF Emotion Category	Some of the children have high level needs and are vulnerable. Some children are at risk of services 'missing' them.	Some professionals may feel like they don't have the power to make change. Suggests there is a

	<p>preventing>, we, we then need to have the <u>resources</u> still not just from <u>our</u> point of view and <u>our</u> s:ervice, to f:all <u>back</u> on as áwell. And I guess that's gonna take a <u>hell</u> of a lot more m:oney and a <u>hell</u> of a lot more t:ime that I >don't <u>think</u> we have< when it <u>comes</u> to trying to deal with the <u>risks</u> that these young people have. It <u>n:needs</u> to be, it does <u>need</u> to be <u>immediate</u> as far as <u>I'm</u> concerned. And I <u>don't</u> think it's gonna <u>happen</u> I;mmediately. And again, that's kind of another professional <u>f:rustration</u> I think <u>I</u> feel. (.)</p>				<p>need for more resources.</p>
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Analytical Issue Three: Shifting Narratives

Main Social Action	No.	Extract	Line	Discursive Devices	Suggested constructs of children exploited through CL	Implications
Highlighting Needs	21	<p>Participant A</p> <p>See in o:ur school, we've got (.) a, um, a s:pectrum. So <it's we've got> a ástudent °at the moment° who is the <u>most v:ulnerable young person</u> you'll ever see, he <u>looks like</u> <butter wouldn't melt> r:eally <u>sweet, r:eally naive</u> about (.) <u>life</u> in g:eneral, and <u>he's</u> being e:xploited by (.) <u>others</u> <because he's been a victim of> ábullying in áschool. And <u>his way</u> of b:eing (.) <you know> the <u>cool</u> p:erson is to get <u>in with</u> <the gangs and the County Lines>. So <u>now</u> when it comes to áschool (.) he's actually (.) gone áup the, the food chains, °so to speak° and in, in <u>his head</u> that's r:eally <u>positive</u> and we're trying to sort of <u>squash that</u> because we're, he's been <exploited really bad>. And then on the opposite end (.) we've got the (.) <you know> the a:rea these are from, uh, °their brothers have been in prison°</p>	292- 332	Minimisation Modal verbs Metaphor ECF Contrast Detailed	<p>Some children are vulnerable and naïve.</p> <p>Some children have been victims of bullying.</p> <p>Some children are trying to be 'cool' to protect themselves from being victimised.</p> <p>Some children have family members who have previous experience of exploitation.</p> <p>Majority of children are male.</p> <p>Some children are looked after.</p>	<p>Some children are vulnerable and need protecting.</p> <p>Perspectives on children could contribute to assumptions, expectations, and biases towards certain groups of children.</p>

		<p>they've got >fathers or mothers< in, you know, in the <u>system</u> of that. Uh, they're <u>known</u> <to be in a> (.) a <u>drug</u> sort of area. Um, so it's the <u>t:ypical stereotypical</u>, um, <you know> <u>OT County Lines</u> °sort of thing°. So it is r:eally broad in <u>our</u> school (.) Um, so it could <and, and> b:ut it's <u>all</u> >boys<. We haven't had any <u>girls</u> so far off <to touch £wood>. £Um, but <u>30%</u> of our <u>boys</u> <are at risk> (.) of (.) um <u>CCE County Lines</u> <that sort of thing> which is a quite <u>high</u> ânumber °to be fair° because of the a:reas they're from and because of f:amilies, f:riends (.) um, just being l:ed into that <sort of thing> So it's, it's quite <u>quite</u> s:ad. And then a (.) <you know> a few of the v:ulnerable looked after children as well.</p>				
22	<p>Participant B:</p> <p>Y:eah, I think my experience is very s:imilar to <u>yours</u>, [Participant A], in the sense that (.) a <u>lot</u> of what we see is the (.) <u>vulnerabilities</u> <irrespective of kind of> w:hat kind of a:rea be it in t:erms of (.) their own <u>emotional and mental</u> health, the n:umber of <u>ACEs</u> that <u>they've</u> been <u>subjected</u> to as</p>	338 - 348	<p>Vague</p> <p>Pronouns</p> <p>Consensus</p> <p>Listing</p>	<p>Some children have hidden needs such as ACES, trauma, social and emotional needs, mental health needs.</p>	<p>This may impact the willingness of professionals to help some children.</p> <p>This may impact the type of support</p>	

		c:hildren, the t:rauma, <you know that kind of stuff> whether they are <u>LAC</u> (.)				provided for children.
23	Participant D: And <u>we</u> get, when <u>we</u> get the <u>r:eferral documents</u> and we <u>look</u> at them and, and they <u>do</u> sound, you know, they <u>sound h::orrendous</u> Participant C: [in overlap] yeah. Participant D: on, on <u>paper</u> , but which a par, a part you <u>get</u> that they've gotta put <u>e:verything</u> in <u>there</u> to be a:ble to <u>get</u> to court and <u>get</u> a <u>court order</u> and t:hings to be able to get them in <u>secure</u> . But then (.) when they come in with us, we <u>don't</u> , (.) <like, we don't see, not saying we don't see it <u>all</u> the time>, but we don't see that (.) <u>behaviour</u> , that > <u>violent</u> behaviour, <u>aggressive</u> behaviour<, ábecause you (.) we're <u>t:rying</u> to say when they're <u>out</u> in the community, you know, and it's <fight, flight, or freeze. or they're in a > <u>point</u> of crisis< or (.) there's, you know, they, >it's just c:haotic, their life is just	1408 - 1451	Assessment Script formulation ECF Pauses	Some children are very heightened and dysregulated and are in survival mode.	Some children need to have their basic needs met and be supported to feel safe and soothed.	

	<p>c:haotic<, so they l:iterally <u>come in</u> with us and you just <u>put in stop</u> on e::verything for them and they're like, right, <they got somewhere to <u>sleep</u>, they got somewhere to <u>eat</u>, they can get up in the <u>morning</u>, they can go to <u>education</u>> (.) .h it's just that, that r:outine for them, just <u>bringing</u> them back down, r:egulating them. Um, so I think ás:ometimes, cuz they sound so <u>horrendous</u> on paper, then you don't get to, to see the <u>real person</u> or who they <u>are</u> and the <u>needs</u> behind, you know, what, what they <u>need</u>, the v:ulnerabilities, the <u>support</u> that the f:amily <u>need</u>. Um, you don't get to <u>see</u> all that because you look at them on paper and you think (.) 'geez, they sound h:orrendous' um, but they're <u>just</u>, <they're just in a>, in a >c:haotic lifestyle< áreally. Um, and they just s::urviving (.) ásome of them <u>out</u> there.</p>				
24	<p>Participant C:</p> <p>So I've got <u>one</u> young person who's (.) just <u>never</u> engaged in education (.) uh, maybe through (.) uh an undiagnosed (.) <u>barrier</u> to learning (.) Uh, and then (.) what what <u>hope</u></p>	474 -487	<p>Pauses, silences</p> <p>Modal verb</p> <p>ECF</p>	<p>Some children have unidentified needs which are acting as barriers to learning.</p> <p>Some children feel that County Lines is</p>	<p>There is a need to identify some of the children's hidden needs.</p>

		has he got? Cuz he <u>wants</u> to do a c:ollege course <u>but</u> can't actually, he's <u>not got</u> the s:ocial skills to do that c:ollege course, cuz he's been been out of <u>education</u> for <u>so</u> long.			an alternative way to make money.	There is a need to showcase alternative pathways to education and employment.
Challenging Practice	25	<p>Participant B:</p> <p>I:nterestingly (Participant A) I d:deal with those, who o:bviously <u>are</u> (.) kind of (.) or h:ave been (.) um, punished, <shall we say>, as a r:esult of obviously being i:nvolved in something. .H and what's quite (.) f::rustrating >I think< is the p::rocesses that kind of <u>lead</u> to that for these y:oung people, in that (.) <u>yes</u> there is a m:echanism to i:dentify that these are v:ulnerable victims and they c:an't consent to (.) um, being t:rafficked or, or, or b:eing, <you know> <u>exploited</u> °in that sense°. And that whole <u>process</u> in <u>itself</u> I think .h kind of needs to be (.) a::mended (.) b:ecause <u>my experience</u> with that is, is °we've dealt with° a <u>number</u> of young people who have either been m:oved out of ácounty (.) and we've dealt with some who <u>have</u> come up from (City Name) (.) H Um, and o:bviously where we are r:urally is,</p>	652 -697	<p>ECF</p> <p>Disclaimer</p> <p>Narrative structure</p> <p>Metaphors</p> <p>Hesitation</p>	<p>The children are victims and as victims they cannot consent to being exploited.</p> <p>Some children are punished for being 'involved' in County Lines.</p> <p>Some children are being seen as dangerous</p>	<p>There is a need to safeguard children.</p> <p>Perspectives on children could contribute to assumptions, expectations, and biases towards certain groups of children.</p> <p>There is a need to promote the rights of victims</p>

	<p>is e::xtremely small compared to the bigger cities where these young people are u:sed to kind of (.) áfrequenting (.) and h <you know>, um, based on the e:xperiences of the young people (.) you know, you're moving them from a city (.) Um, a l:ot of them, um, ar are fro from a °m:inor m:inority background° and you're p:lacing them within <very very> s:mall villages (.) in Wales (.) where (.) for them <you know> and I'm, I'm u:sing their t:erminology (.) 'they stick out >like a sore thumb<' (.) do you know what I mean (.) and >people kind of like< do you know what I mean? And that's not (.) to be (.) racist >in any way, shape or form<, but (.) your m:oving young lads (.) who have got three to one c:arers potentially who are (.) in the middle of nowhere (.) h:oping that they're not gonna be (.) s:avvy enough to get themselves back on the train, back down to (City Name).</p>				
26	<p>Participant B:</p> <p>(.) N:othing had been done (1.6) And I just thought, 'o:h my G::OD'.</p> <p>Participant B:</p>	1631-1673	<p>Narrative Structure</p> <p>Pauses</p> <p>ECF</p>	<p>Some children may be being let down by some services despite being at risk.</p> <p>These children need to be safeguarded.</p>	<p>Professionals feel like they will be blamed.</p> <p>There is a need to</p>

	<p>[in overlap] °J::esus°.</p> <p>Participant B:</p> <p>And there were <u>more c:oncerns</u>. So <u>then</u> a multi-agency strategy meeting got <u>áreconvened</u>, then it got <u>cancelled</u>, then it got <u>reconvened</u> a:gain and the social w:orker was kind of saying, 'I <u>know</u> I'm <u>public enemy number one</u>'. I said, 'can I just <u>stop</u> you there?' I said, 'it's not about being p:ublic enemy number o:ne', I said, 'we've all got a <u>duty</u> to safeguard'. I said, 'and I (.) <u>took</u> the <u>time</u> out and <u>gave</u> you the <u>g:uidance</u> and a:dvice that you <u>needed</u> (.) <u>to</u> complete that referral. Had <u>a:nything</u> happened within this period of time (.) with this young <u>person</u> (.) as <u>agencies</u>, we would <u>a:ll</u> have been u:nder <u>scrutiny</u>, <u>not</u> just one'. I said, 'and I would <u>hate</u> to think that any of my <u>c:olleagues</u> that I've had <u>i:nvolvement</u> with would be in that p:osition. So it's not about (.) <u>c:riticising</u> you, I'm just saying (.) this needs to happen NOW. ASAP. You need to go away. This is what</p>		<p>Reported speech</p>		<p>safeguard and some children may be slipping through the net.</p>
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		<p>you need to do'. And um, the responses from <u>m:anagers</u> were really <u>c:oncerning</u>, 'oh sorry, I'm not <u>a:ware</u> of this case. It was on a <u>chi care and support plan</u>'. 'I'm not aware of this case'. I was thinking, '>oh my <u>G:od</u><. And you knw you kind of (.) the <u>f:rustration</u> that the kind of, you don't wanna be <u>u:nprofessional</u> <like you were saying before [Participant A), but (.) you <u>k:ind of a:almost</u> just having to .hhh take a <u>b:reath</u> and <u>c:alm</u> yourself down because you're thinking, this <u>child</u> has <u>c::learly</u> been at <u>risk</u> and what's <u>h:appened</u> in the interim.</p>				
27	Participant C:	<p>The other thing with, with <u>professionals</u> as well is that (.) >things like <u>CAMHS</u> < (.) I don't think <u>any</u> of my <u>y:oung</u> people would be able to <u>access</u> CAMHS service cuz they <u>ain't</u> gonna <u>turn</u> up for a doctor's appointment or, and áeven just to get these young people <u>diagnosed</u>, it's, it's just (.) there's <u>loads</u> of young people <u>floating</u> around without like a</p>	1788 - 1819	ECF Metaphor Pauses Consensus	<p>Some children may have hidden needs such as neurodevelopmental conditions, trauma and other barriers to learning.</p> <p>Some children may be missed by professionals.</p>	Some children may be being missed because they don't fit in the system.

		<p>diagnosis of either <u>t:rauma</u>, <u>ASD</u>, or or some <u>other</u> (.) kind of <u>barrier</u> to, to life and stuff. And they're <u>just</u> (.) they're just <u>unnoticed</u>. And (.) to get (.) to get a <u>referral</u>, I think s:ometimes a young person has to be in <u>education</u> for, for <u>so</u> long for <u>that</u> to work or they've got to <u>make</u> their way to, to like an <u>appointment</u>. And it's just (.) it's just that, that part of the <u>system's</u> (.) <u>just</u> not <u>working</u>, cuz (.) the young people are having to g:o to <u>them</u> instead of <u>p::rofessionals</u> g:going to the <u>young person</u>.</p> <p>Participant B: I think you, you've <u>hit</u> the nail on the head there, [Participant C]. And even, you know, how they <u>run</u> the service. It's, it's very <u>c:orporate</u>. You know what a <u>child</u> is gonna wanna go to a °hospital° <u>environment</u> or you know, into a <u>separate</u> building, which is <u>v:ery</u> corporate.</p>				
Advocating	28	<p>Participant D: Um, and then we also have (.) <you know, like what [Participant A] was saying>, you <u>do</u> get the <u>good</u> professionals out there that k:ind of <u>get it</u> and they <u>understand it</u>,</p>	1261-1304	Consensus Reported speech.	Some children are not a priority due to not being seen as high risk.	Some children may not be able to access services if they are not

	<p>but then you do get the <u>odd</u> >one or two<, .h you know, where we are r:aising s:afeguarding concerns about the t:hings that they're <u>saying</u>, that they're <u>likely</u> to be <u>exploited</u> into these, you know, into this <u>kind of</u> stuff.(.)but they're saying, <you know, and it can be what [Participant B] said>, you know, we've got like the l:ittle villages and they're like, 'oh he's from Wales Like he's <u>not</u>, you know, he's not <u>high up</u> on the <u>list</u> to be <u>exploited</u>', and I just think if you <u>catch him #now</u> and we get that <u>work</u> in now and w:ork with them now, then you know, you <u>won't</u> catch him up in, I dunno, [Name of Location] or somewhere in England, you know, a year down the line, because they (.) you know (.) they get <u>exploited</u> so <u>fast</u> and they can <u>move up</u> the c:hain so fast, and we can <u>see the vulnerabilities</u> now they're <u>already</u>, you know, <u>getting involved</u> in certain <u>peer groups</u> now let's <u>get</u> the work <u>done now</u> before it's <u>too late</u>. (.) but <u>u::nfortunately</u>, they're just not a <u>priority</u> on their <u>list</u> because then on the other hand their <u>workload</u> and you've got <u>kids</u> that are <u>higher</u> risk (3.6)</p> <p>Participant A:</p>		<p>Script formulation</p> <p>Metaphor</p> <p>Silence</p>		<p>regarded as being at risk.</p> <p>There is a need to challenge what is regarded as a 'risk factor' and what is a 'protective factor'.</p>
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	<p>I have <u>found</u> as well, <just to add>, <u>add to that</u>, <u>some</u> agencies think that if they're in <u>school</u> (.) they're <u>safe</u>.</p> <p>Participant D: Y(h)eah</p> <p>Participant A: They're n(h)ot a <u>priority</u>, so <u>just</u> because they're here from <u>nine</u> till <u>three</u>, that means they're <u>totally</u> safe and they're not on the priority list.</p>				
29	<p>[In overlap] And I think (.) cuz (.) cuz a lot (.) cuz some of, some of my <u>young</u> people have come from (.) kind of, <u>not</u> m::iddle class, but <u>fairly middle class</u>, <u>nice home</u>, uh, <u>mum's r:eally keen to</u>, to kind of <u>engage</u> with, with <u>professionals</u> and stuff. And then I think (.) they're <u>more likely</u> to get (.) <u>ásometimes</u> (.) more l:ikely to get <u>closed</u> to social care cuz I think, 'o:h w:ell, they're from a .) g:ood <u>family</u> and stuff'. And (.) .h s:o I <u>think</u> that's, that's a (.) <u>bit</u> of a problem.</p>	1331-1334	<p>Pauses</p> <p>Hesitation</p> <p>Pronoun use</p> <p>Reported speech</p>	<p>Some children are not a priority due to not being seen as a high risk.</p> <p>Some children may not fit the stereotypical profile.</p>	<p>Some children may not be able to access services if they are not regarded as being at risk.</p> <p>There is a need to challenge what is regarded as a 'risk factor' and what is a 'protective factor'.</p>

						Perspectives on children could contribute to assumptions, expectations, and biases towards certain groups of children.
30	Participant D:	its like when I mentioned <u>e:arlier</u> , but when we get them in on a <u>welfare</u> basis or a <u>YCS</u> basis (.) um, you know, they <u>can</u> be s:een then <u>as</u> , you know, 'oh they're there on the <u>c:riminal</u> basis, they're on a <u>c:riminal</u> bed. When <u>r:eally</u> when you look at the <u>b:ackgrounds</u> , they're <u>all</u> the same and they need the <u>same</u> s:upport, they've got the <u>same</u> n:eeds, which is why we don't, (.) um, s:eparate our y:oung people between <u>welfare</u> and <u>YCS</u> . They a:ll are on <u>mixed</u> units, because <u>r:egardless</u> of <u>what</u> they're there f:or, um, you know, the <u>needs</u> are still the same. They <u>still</u> need the,	2089 - 2106	Script Formulation Reported speech.	Some children are seen as a 'criminal' and some are seen as a 'victim'. All children need support.	Some professionals are addressing the underlying needs of children. Some professionals are challenging narratives around victimhood.

		the <u>same</u> work, and the <u>ásame</u> support (.)				
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Appendix P: Copy of ethical approval email

24/06/2022 1:27 PM

Dear Jessica,

The Ethics Committee has considered your revised PG project proposal: A discourse analysis of how multi-agency professionals talk about children who are exploited through County Lines in the UK (EC.22.06.14.6584R).

Your project proposal has received a **Favourable Opinion** based on the information described in the proforma and supporting documentation.

Conditions of the favourable opinion

The favourable opinion is subject to the following conditions being met:

- You must retain a copy of this decision letter with your Research records.
- Please note that if any changes are made to the above project then you must notify the Ethics Committee.
- Please use the EC reference number on all future correspondence.
- The Committee must be informed of any unexpected ethical issues or unexpected adverse events that arise during the research project.
- The Committee must be informed when your research project has ended. This notification should be made to psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk within three months of research project completion.

The Committee reminds you that it is your responsibility to conduct your research project to the highest ethical standards and to keep all ethical issues arising from your research project under regular review.

You are expected to comply with Cardiff University's policies, procedures and guidance at all times, including, but not limited to, its Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research involving Human Participants, Human Material or Human Data and our Research Integrity and Governance Code of Practice.

Kind regards,
XXXX

School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee
<https://cf.sharepoint.com/teams/InsidePsych/Ethics/>

Appendix Q: Summary of deviant cases

Analytical Issue	Extract	Lines	Key reflections
<p>Problematic Victims</p>	<p>Extract I</p> <p>Participant B</p> <p>If they <u>are</u> deemed to be <u>vulnerable</u>, there's the >NRM áprocess<, the national referral mechanism <u>process</u>. So (.) <u>depending</u> upon, um (.)h which o::fficers, um (.) have <you know> obviously <u>dealt</u> with this situation, the <u>officers</u> can <u>put</u> in, um, an âNRM, which is to the Ministry of Justice to say that >these are <u>kids</u>< who are potentially (.) .h um, <you know>, v::ictims of exploitation (.) and then that they can use the >section 45 defense< when they <u>do</u> go to ácourt (.) .H But again, not <u>all</u> of the ápolice officers are using it, not all the ápolice officers are putting the <u>NRM</u> áin.</p>	<p>744-761</p>	<p>In extract I, Participant B is talking about the national referral mechanism process (NRM). Within this extract, Participant B begins to follow similar patterns of interaction. For example, Participant B's description of victims is punctuated with hedging, hesitancy and pauses. This is seen in other places of the data and possibly suggests that Participant B is avoiding committing to the label of victim.</p> <p>However, in this extract, Participant B begins speaking articulately about the NRM system and provides detailed information about the process. This is noticeably different from other instances within the data and does not fit the pattern of using hesitancy and vague and tentative language. This could suggest that Participant B is more comfortable talking about systems than the experiences of children who are exploited through County Lines.</p>

<p>Losing Hope</p>	<p>Extract II</p> <p>Participant C</p> <p>And then like, 'what's he gonna ádo?' He c:an't <u>get</u> a j:ob. So he is kind of (.) the <u>only</u> way he can <u>earn money</u> in the s:hort term is (.) is to do <u>that</u> °really° (1.8)</p>	<p>483 - 487</p>	<p>In extract II, Participant C is talking about how some children have to get involved in County Lines to make money. Similarly to other areas of the data, Participant C uses a rhetorical question of 'what's he gonna do?' to express that the child's situation is seemingly hopeless. Like other instances within the data, this rhetorical question may be used as a point of reflection or as a way of indirectly sharing an assessment that other members may disagree with.</p> <p>However, Participant C then goes on to directly make the assessment that 'the only way he can earn money' is through County Lines. This is different from other instances in the data as Participant C directly assesses this situation without using any form of hedging, metaphors, vague language.</p> <p>This assessment is then met with a pause, which could indicate that Participant C is apprehensive about how the participants will respond to what has been said. This extract could also suggest that the participants are hesitant to share their thoughts and feelings due to concerns about how the group will react.</p>
<p>Shifting Narratives</p>	<p>Extract III</p> <p>Participant B</p>	<p>375 - 393</p>	<p>In extract III, Participant B talks about what happens to children who are exploited through County Lines. This extract follows a similar pattern of using</p>

<p><But obviously during lockdown> (.) we kind of seen a massive <u>shift</u> (.) in that they <u>weren't</u> u:sing people out of <u>area</u> because obviously (.) the issues around <u>trains</u>, um, <u>you</u> know, o:bviously traveling on <u>trains</u> (.) young people t:raveling became more ánoticeable. So they were then l:ooking <to kind of> <u>recruit</u> more <u>in-house</u> within the k:ind of <u>areas</u>. And áthat's when we n:oticed the <u>broader</u> kind of look in terms of (.) they w:ere <u>identifying</u> the kind of <u>vulnerable</u> kids l:ooked after kids (.) Um (.) <you know> and it's (.) the process is (.) <u>extremely</u> c:lever <how they kind of> <u>pinpoint</u> these kids and how they do <u>GROOM</u> them into °this kind of activity° (.)</p>		<p>a narrative structure to talk about the experience of children who are exploited through County Lines.</p> <p>However, Participant B then begins to break away from previous patterns of interaction and uses a metaphor to talk about the grooming process. In particular, Participant B likened grooming to a business looking into recruit in-house. This type of language does not fit similar patterns within the data as it has been criticised for 'dehumanising' abuse.</p> <p>This use of language could indicate that Participant B wants to avoid talking about some of the harmful aspects of County Lines by using 'jargon'.</p>
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Appendix R: Selecting analytical issues

The following analytical issues were identified in the data and were judged on how relevant they were to the following two research questions:

RQ1: How do professionals construct children who are exploited through County Lines through their language and dialogue?

RQ2: What are some of the potential implications of these constructions?

Please find below details of the analytical issues.

No.	Analytical Issue	Relevance to research questions	Decision
1	Children being constructed as being 'problematic victims'.	<p>RQ1: Shows the opposing constructs of children who are exploited through County Lines.</p> <p>RQ2: Explores the disparity in how different children are supported.</p>	Chosen in order to explore the opposing views of professionals.
2	Professionals are losing hope.	<p>RQ1: Considers how the culture of youth violence impacts professionals' perceptions of children.</p> <p>RQ2: Considers whether professionals feel like they have the power to make a difference.</p>	Chosen in order to explore how feelings of hopelessness can impact how professionals see and talk about affected children.

3	Shifting the narrative to explore children's needs.	RQ1: Explores different narratives about the needs of children. RQ2: Supports understanding of social, emotional and behavioural needs.	Chosen in order to explore new narratives about children who have been exploited through County Lines.
4	Attempting to define County Lines.	RQ1 Focuses more on exploring County Lines definitions rather than what happens to children. RQ2: Explores possible implications for the definition of County Lines.	Not chosen due to the focus on defining the County Lines drug supply model.
5	Exploring the role of professionals and the hero narrative.	RQ1: Considers how professionals are framing their role. RQ2: Highlights implications for the role and responsibilities of professionals.	Not chosen due to focusing more on the role of professionals.
6	Highlighting the hidden nature of County Lines and what happens to children.	RQ1: Highlights the unknown nature of County Lines. RQ2: Highlights the need for further research.	Not chosen due to the focus on defining and County Lines and the exploitation that can take place.
7	Promoting the need for positive relationships.	RQ1: Explores best practice for supporting vulnerable children. RQ2: Implications for professional practice.	Not chosen due to focusing more on how affected children can best be supported.

8	Highlighting the duty to safeguard children.	RQ1: Highlights that children are at risk of significant harm. RQ2: System level implications.	Not chosen due to focusing more on the challenges of safeguarding children who are at risk of extra-familial harm.
9	Demonstrating the need for joint working.	RQ1: Highlights the benefits of working jointly with other professionals. RQ2: Builds a case for better joint working.	Not chosen due to focusing more on multi-agency working.
10	A call for training.	RQ1: Explores professional's skills and knowledge. RQ2: Explores areas of development for professionals.	Not chosen due to focusing more on the role of professionals.
11	Exploring the blame culture amongst professionals	RQ1: Focuses more on the experiences of professionals rather than children. RQ2: Explores the impact of blame on the workforce rather than children.	Not chosen due to focusing more on the role of professionals.

Eight analytical issues were discounted from this current study due to not being specifically relevant to the research questions. However, these analytical issues are helpful insights into the overall topic of County Lines, and they highlight possible areas for future research. Therefore, future areas that researchers may wish to explore can be seen below:

Possible area of future research	The relating analytical issues
Learning about the experiences of children who have been exploited through County Lines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Understanding what County Lines is. - Highlighting the hidden nature of County Lines and what happens to children.
Exploring how children who have been exploited through County Lines can best be supported.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promoting the need for positive relationships. - Demonstrating the need for joint working. - A call for training.
Exploring the role and responsibilities of professionals who support children who are exploited through County Lines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exploring the role of professionals and the hero narrative. - Exploring the blame culture amongst professionals. - Highlighting the duty to safeguard children.

End of document