

# CREATING STABLE FUTURES: Positive Outcomes Framework



## CREATING STABLE FUTURES: Human Trafficking, Participation and Outcomes for Children

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Every Child Protected  
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# Summary

The Creating Stable Futures Positive Outcomes Framework is the result of a 12-month participatory research study into understanding how to ensure protection, support and positive outcomes for children and young people who have arrived in the UK and have experienced modern slavery or human trafficking. The study was conducted by a partnership formed by the Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice at Sheffield Hallam University, the University of Bedfordshire and ECPAT UK (Every Child Protected Against Trafficking). The overarching aim of the project was to understand what positive outcomes might look like from the perspectives of young people subjected to human trafficking, modern slavery and/or exploitation, and what pathways towards these positive outcomes might look like in practice.

The Creating Stable Futures Positive Outcomes Framework was devised following a thematic analysis of what young people who participated told us in participatory workshops from their knowledge and experiences about what positive outcomes might look like in a UK context. It is a tool which could be used:

- at individual practice and policy levels with populations of young people who have arrived in the UK and who have experienced modern slavery or human trafficking;
- by frontline social workers in individual cases to assess the progress of looked after child reviews and safety plans for individual children;
- by children's services in case-audit reviews to determine if the population of children who have migrated to the UK and been identified as trafficked are achieving the positive outcomes set out by this group of young people;
- at a policy level, it could be used for determining the impact of specific policy initiatives.

In this document we also share the findings of the study which are structured around the four General Principles of the United Nations Convention relating to Children – non-discrimination (Article 2), the best interests of the child (Article 3), the right to life, survival and development (Article 6) and the right to participation (Article 12) – and what these mean for young people in their everyday lives. Overall we found that a focus on outcomes for children and young people affected by modern slavery, human trafficking or exploitation is absent and that outcomes discussed by young people were rarely linear or confined within short, medium or long-term framings. Instead, young people discussed how outcomes changed over time alongside their needs and in response to their experiences of the systems, people and services they encounter and that the achievement of outcomes is relational and situationally contingent on the structures, systems and processes in which they enjoy those rights.

The full report and recommendations can be found on our websites.

# Findings

## Non-discrimination



- Barriers to positive outcomes were identified by young people as structural, systemic and discriminatory, such as their experiences of the immigration and asylum systems, the criminal justice system and support in care. They considered the ways in which structural inequality can shape professional practices and attitudes across agencies.
- The emphasis young people gave to the negative impact of immigration procedures is immense – they often highlighted the distressing nature of asylum decision making and some described waiting in immigration 'limbo' as being worse than experiences of exploitation. They say these procedures undermine the recognition and realisation of rights, and place young people at risk of further exploitation.
- Young people placed a significant emphasis on the need for good quality, well-trained interpreters and, where possible, interpreters with child protection training.
- It was clear from this study that young people felt transitioning into 'adulthood' in the UK made them feel and be less safe and posed numerous barriers to achieving positive outcomes in the long term, particularly for those within protracted immigration processes.
- Young people directly highlighted equality and freedom as important outcomes. They linked freedom to equality of opportunity – being able to build a future and make positive contributions to society. Both these outcomes identified by young people as important are thematically linked to inclusion.

## Best interests of the child



- High quality legal advice in the fields of immigration, asylum, public and criminal law was identified by young people as a defining factor in the outcomes as this related to their gaining status and having a foundation for their lives, hopes, aspirations and contributions in the UK. This also included legal advice on family reunification.
- Young people with independent guardians felt listened to and heard, facilitating better child protection. They also outlined how being kept informed about what is happening helps.
- Published literature on human trafficking focuses overwhelmingly on the negative outcomes and consequences of exploitation. Available evidence on the impact of policies and interventions following identification is limited, with some notable exceptions.
- The predominant focus on negative outcomes in the literature lies in contrast to how young people within this study envisaged their futures. Young people discussed the search for safety and protection, drawing on their strengths and capabilities, as well as their endurance of complex and often protracted social care, immigration, and criminal justice processes in the UK.

## Right to life, survival and development



- Young people directly highlighted safety – being safe and feeling safe – as an important outcome, recognising the importance of safety as a contingent foundation for the realisation of other outcomes. Physical safety was expressed through having a safe home and place to live as key to feeling and being safe. They saw having trust in professionals and systems as a key factor in achieving physical and relational safety and told us a lot about the default of disbelief in professional responses, which makes them feel frightened and unsafe.
- There is a lack of evidence on how experiences of trafficking and exploitation affect physical, emotional and social development for this population of children and young people. However, young people stated that the factors that promote healthy development relate to trusting relationships with sensitive and caring adults, feeling safe, valued and loved in nurturing environments, and a sense of belonging and community. The responses of disbelief and distrust and the victim-blaming that young people told us about can have long-term impacts, as children face increasingly hostile age assessments which have a direct impact on their futures and long-term outcomes.
- Young people directly highlighted stability and peace as important outcomes. They conceptualised peace as recovery, including psychological recovery and the recovery of ordinary life, identifying a clear relationship between protection and inclusion outcomes.
- Young people had a broad conception of what protection means for them which included aspects relating to safety, faith and belief, trust and confidence, knowing their rights and entitlements, having positive relationships in a safe and secure home and community and accessing education and learning opportunities.

## Participation and the right to be heard

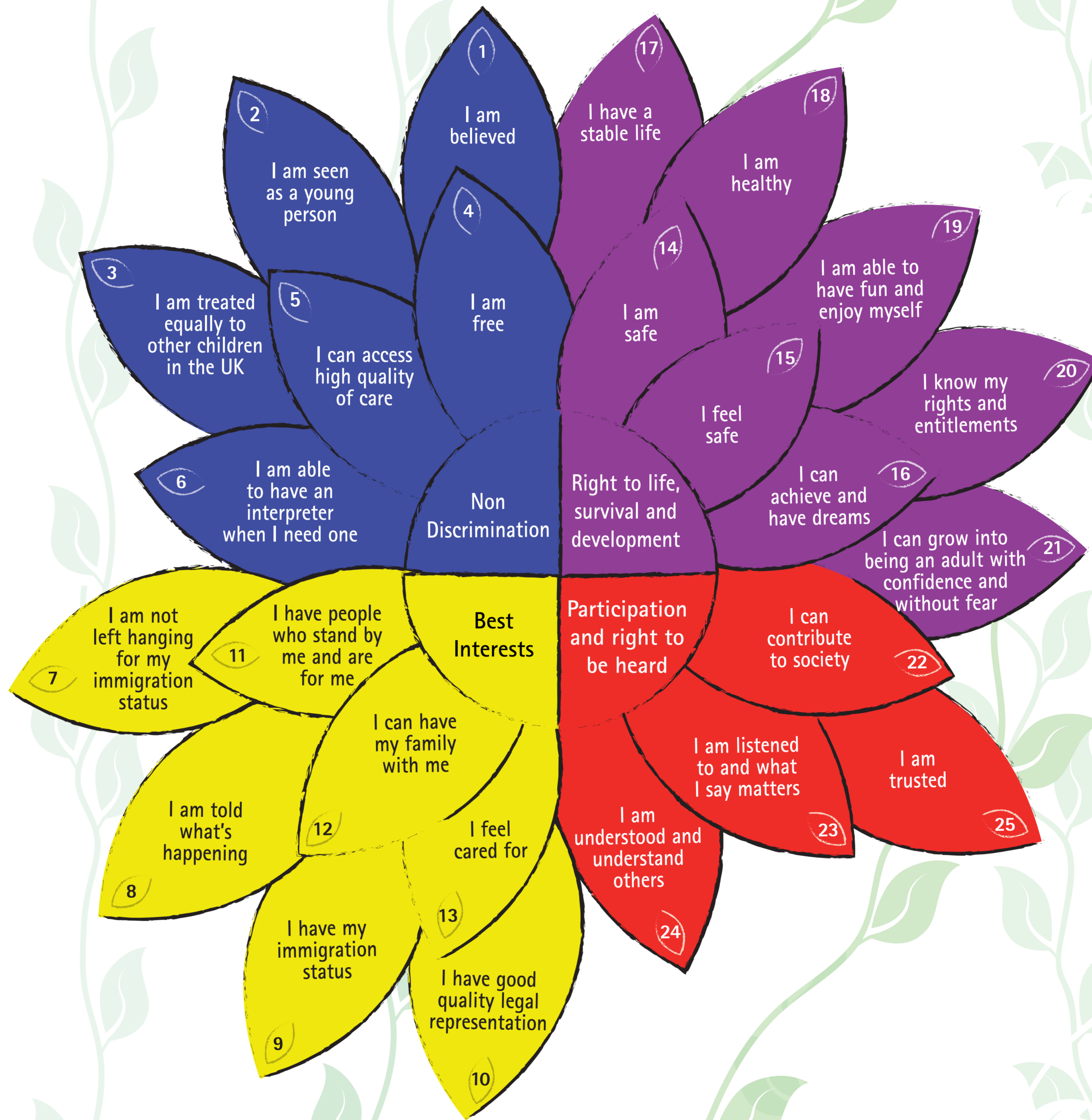


- The views of children affected by human trafficking, modern slavery and/or exploitation are rarely sought and included in literature about them, even those pertaining to children's rights.
- A specific focus on outcomes for children and young people affected by exploitation, trafficking and/or modern slavery is absent from literature in the UK.
- A 'survivor turn' has occurred across other topics and is now being welcomed within human trafficking and modern slavery debates. There are cognate topics such as Violence Against Women (VAW) that hold insights relevant to trafficking, including their approach of working 'with' rather than 'on' or 'for' survivors as an understood aspect of interventions.
- Pathways to positive outcomes are contingent on ensuring work with children and young people is participatory, child-centred, and has a rights and entitlements approach that is underpinned by relational approaches built on trust. The quality and timing of support were found to be key factors influencing these pathways
- In this study, young people responded well to having their thoughts, views, needs, hopes and aspirations included. Young people outlined how they wanted to contribute to society, be asked what they think and feel, be understood, trusted, listened to and have what they say matter.



# Creating Stable Futures: Positive Outcomes Framework

- Non-Discrimination**
- 1 a. Children report their age is accepted unless there is a significant reason not to  
b. Children report their account of exploitation is believed
  - 2 a. Children say they are not expected to fend for themselves  
b. Children report they are given appropriate independence but also support  
c. Children say they are treated as children first
  - 3 a. Children say their treatment from professionals such as police and social workers is equal  
b. Children report not being blamed for decisions made by adults
  - 4 a. Children report they are not afraid of being exploited again  
b. Children report they can enjoy their rights without fear
  - 5 a. People working for the services around children are well trained  
b. People working for the services around children understand where they are coming from  
c. People working with children are friendly and respectful  
d. Children say professionals work together  
e. Children report their privacy is respected  
f. Children know how they can complain if there is a problem
  - 6 a. Children say interpreters speak their language and dialect  
b. Interpreters are well trained  
c. Interpreters are child-friendly  
d. Children are asked if they are comfortable with the interpreter



- Right to life, survival and development**
- 14 a. Children report not being sought by the people who trafficked them  
b. Children report not being afraid about debts  
c. Children and young people report feeling safe from future exploitation  
d. Children and their families are protected from harm  
e. Children say they live in safe communities  
f. Children say they have trusting relationships that protect them  
g. Children say professionals understand the risks they have or are facing
  - 15 a. Children report being able to sleep safely in their accommodation  
b. Children say their accommodation is appropriate to their age  
c. Children report knowing where to go when they don't feel safe and who to turn to  
d. Children receive quality care  
e. Children say they are informed about the communities they live in
  - 16 a. Children can attend school promptly  
b. Children report having access to additional educational support if needed  
c. Children say their talents are known and supported to grow  
d. Young people can attend college or university  
e. Young people can undertake vocational training and ESOL simultaneously  
f. Young people report being able to concentrate on their studies  
g. Young people report being able to move on from their experiences in positive ways  
h. Children report they have confidence in their future
  - 17 a. Children report they can begin to recover from their experiences  
b. Children say they can plan for their future and make decisions  
c. Children say they feel at peace
  - 18 a. Children are promptly registered with a GP  
b. Children have access to appropriate mental health services  
c. Children can access specialist medical advice  
d. Young people report they can access the food they enjoy
  - 19 a. Children report they can play and participate in sports  
b. Children have access to leisure and entertainment activities  
c. Children and young people report they are able to form healthy friendships
  - 20 a. Children report they have support to learn about their rights and entitlements  
b. Children say their rights are upheld and they can access their entitlements
  - 21 a. Children report they are not afraid of approaching age 18 and have been supported for this  
b. Children say they feel confident they will be supported when they turn 18  
c. Children report they are able to do stage-appropriate activities  
d. Children report they are able to take on stage-appropriate responsibilities

- Best Interests**
- 7 a. Children are given clear information about the immigration process in child-friendly ways  
b. Children report receiving timely decisions
  - 8 a. Children report knowing where to find information and who to contact for help  
b. Children report they received sufficient communication from officials regarding the status of their application  
c. Children are appointed an independent legal guardian
  - 9 a. Children receive a decision which is based on their best interests as the primary consideration
  - 10 a. Children receive advice from a solicitor who can represent them appropriately in complex legal situations  
b. Children can access solicitors who understand trauma
  - 11 a. Children have foster carers and support workers who understand their needs  
b. Children say they have someone who takes responsibility for checking in and making sure they are OK  
c. Children say they have access to independent advocates or guardians
  - 12 a. Children report feeling able to create a family in the future  
b. Children state they feel protected from their family if they pose a risk of harm  
c. Children can access procedures for family reunion without undue burdens
  - 13 a. Children report feeling cared for  
b. Children report not feeling alone

- Participation and right to be heard**
- 22 a. Young people report feeling they are able to 'give' to society
  - 23 a. Children report feeling they are being listened to and respected  
b. Children can access help to communicate if they need it  
c. Children report being asked what they think, feel and want  
d. Children are included in research about them  
e. Children report being asked their thoughts and listened to in the development of policy that affects them
  - 24 a. Children can access appropriate materials in their own language and dialect  
b. Children can get a trained interpreter when they need one  
c. Children report their cultural and religious needs are provided for and respected  
d. Professionals working with children understand the impact immigration procedures have on their well-being  
e. Children say they are asked if they understand the processes they are involved in  
f. Children say they are asked if they understand the decisions that are made about their lives
  - 25 a. Children report feeling trusted  
b. Children report they can trust professionals

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