

CHILDLIGHT

Global Child Safety Institute

CHILDLIGHT ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2023



Letter from Childlight Chief Executive Officer, Paul Stanfield

There is a hidden global pandemic, one which could affect up to one in eight of the world's children. It is widespread, touches all sections of society and discussion of it is constrained by stigma and underreporting.

This pandemic is Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA). Those who seek to fight it face innumerable challenges. The stigma that keeps abuse and exploitation hidden in the shadows also impedes research and hampers policy development.

This, and other factors, conspire to mean that reliable data showing the scale of the problem is lacking and almost certainly, underestimates the true scale of this abuse. Meanwhile, the lightning speed of technological advancements and a global explosion in internet users have created new ways for abusers to perpetrate.

Childlight, Global Child Safety Institute, has been established by the Human Dignity Foundation to try and address some of these complex issues. Before we can tackle CSEA we first need to understand it. That means improving access to good-quality prevalence data.

Childlight is anchored within the University of Edinburgh, supported by a global network of academics and professionals who seek to show the scale and nature of CSEA globally. We take a data-driven, evidence-based approach to understand the prevalence and nature of CSEA. Using, our analysis and the insights it generates to drive strategies and policies that protect children.

The complexity of overlapping issues that need attention to make the world safer for children can be overwhelming. However, Childlight has the scientific expertise and the on-the-ground knowledge from frontline practitioners and policymakers to make a significant, evidence-based contribution towards safeguarding children from sexual exploitation and abuse globally by:

- Establishing a global index that clearly articulates the prevalence and nature of CSEA globally
- Creating an annual flagship report and supporting dashboard which showcases our research into specific aspects of CSEA
- Using data to not just advocate for change, but take urgent action to safeguard children

At our core – our mission is to safeguard as many children as possible from sexual exploitation and abuse. We know we cannot deliver this alone. We need partners who can provide access to relevant data, knowledge, and resources.

Childlight is working in collaboration across all sectors including health, technology, policing, government, NGOs, and more. We seek to work collaboratively with anyone who can support our strategy and believes in the same values.

We already have relationships that span countries, sectors, and disciplines, and are always looking to create more, proactively seeking new partnerships or support where there are gaps. These are not simply transactional relationships. They have been developed over time and work because we have built up a level of mutual respect and understanding, with a desire to help the most vulnerable in all our communities.

At the centre of our work and values are children, and we will not stop until we know that children are safer in this world.

Thanks,



Paul Stanfield | Childlight Executive Director

ABOUT US

Childlight is a new global data institute based in the University of Edinburgh, which brings together academics and a multi-sector team to harness the power of data and achieve real impact for children and young people at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.

OUR VISION

A world where the illumination of global CSEA data accelerates action and shines the lights of protection and pathways to safety for all children.

OUR MISSION

Our vision is to establish a world-leading, independent data institute that gathers and visualises the prevalence and nature of child sexual exploitation and abuse across the world.

We plan to do this through the creation of platforms that activate and make accessible that data to inform policy and drive sustainable, coordinated action to safeguard children across the world.

Through this, we hope to be recognised as the leading independent authority for CSEA knowledge and a catalyst of enduring change across the child protection system.

CHILDLIGHT'S VALUES

We expect all Childlight staff and researchers to adhere to these core organisation and research values and to represent Childlight externally with these values.

- We will be open, transparent and inclusive,
- We will be representative of the global community,
- We will act with the highest levels of integrity, treating people fairly and with respect,
- We will report data without fear or favour,
- We will follow the strategy (and the threat), not the money,
- We will make the University of Edinburgh a global centre of excellence for tackling CSEA,
- We will always act in the interests of children, and
- Children can't wait so we will act with speed, balancing the needs of research and action.

YEAR ONE FOCUS

The first year of Childlight has been focused on building a multi-sector team with a global footprint. With a full Senior Leadership Team recruited, as well as 24 Global Data Fellows from all over the world, Childlight is in a strong position to achieve meaningful impact for children at risk of CSEA.

Essential research is already underway and key partnerships are being developed across law enforcement, academia, administrative data sources, the private sector, NGOs and policy leaders.

CHILDLIGHT’S SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM



Paul Stanfield – Chief Executive Officer

Before helping establish Childlight, Paul worked as a senior law enforcement officer in the UK and overseas. As the UK lead for serious and organised crime across Africa, and subsequent Director of Organised and Emerging Crime for INTERPOL, he was responsible for developing bespoke capabilities to combat a wide range of transnational threats, including child sexual exploitation and abuse.



Professor Deborah Fry – Director of Data

Debi is passionate about using complex and disparate data sources to understand the magnitude, patterns and determinants of CSEA globally. Debi leads the data strategy at Childlight driving a vision of creating and curating rigorous and robust data to safeguard children now and prevent violence from ever occurring in the future.



Zoe Lambourne – Chief Operational Officer

Zoe comes from a background working with governments and agencies globally to improve public safety, specifically designing and building new multi-sector organisations. She is responsible for making sure that Childlight meets our strategic vision and mission, becoming more impactful over time.



Kelvin Lay MBE – Associate Director of Engagement and Risk

Kelvin has significant experience in UK and international law enforcement. While with the UK National Crime Agency (NCA) in Kenya, Kelvin set up Africa's first dedicated child exploitation and human trafficking units. Before this, he was a Senior Investigating Officer within The Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre specialising in extra-territorial prosecutions relating to child exploitation across the globe.



Gemma Gillie – Head of Communications

Gemma has worked in the humanitarian sector in communications, advocacy and community engagement roles and numerous humanitarian and emergency contexts, many of which had a strong protection element. Before her work with NGOs, she worked in political research for a government minister and is a qualified Primary Teacher

CHILDLIGHT'S LAUNCH

Childlight held its official launch event in March 2023, in the historic Playfair Library of Edinburgh University.

To mark the occasion we heard from Dr John Climax who, through his foundation The Human Dignity Foundation, founded and has significantly funded Childlight, as well as Sir Iain Livingstone the Chief Constable of Police Scotland, and Sir Peter Mathieson the Principal of Edinburgh University, where Childlight is based.

This was followed by a panel discussion with the following contributors:

- Stephen Kavanagh – Interpol Executive Director of Police Services
- Mama Fatima Singhateh – United Nations Special Rapporteur for the Sale and Exploitation of Children
- Sophie Otiende – Chief Executive Officer of the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery
- Professor Deborah Fry - Childlight Director of Data
- Sean Litton – Executive Director of the Technology Coalition

It was a fascinating and lively discussion on the current ecosystem of CSEA and the challenges we face across sectors in challenging this abuse.



YEAR ONE RESEARCH

Data matters because it forms the foundation of a robust child protection sector – without which we cannot keep children safe or prevent violence from occurring in the first instance. Yet this sector is characterised by multiple data sources, differing definitions and lack of data access, especially relating to child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA).

This is a major inhibitor to developing more effective and evidence driven prevention and response strategies and policies. Without data and analysis, programmes are more difficult to design, deliver and evaluate; evidence is difficult to generate and credibly defend; narratives and definitions that frame the issue are difficult to construct; policy is difficult to advocate for and funding is difficult to access. Without high-quality data that can guide policy and programmes, children continue to be at risk for child sexual exploitation and abuse and perpetrators have impunity.

Childlight will enhance the knowledge and understanding of the prevalence and nature of CSEA globally, providing policy makers and practitioners with reliable, relevant, and current data by which to make better informed and focused decisions to safeguard children. While prevalence data will answer the questions around the magnitude of the problem, nature data will help us understand the who, what, when, where, why and how around child sexual exploitation and abuse. Data insights will be informed by young people and adults with lived experience – so that children are always at the centre of all data and system improvement efforts.

We know that we have only just started, and have a lot more to do. However, we believe that bringing the strength of Childlight's data and research insight to the wider child protection systems will better safeguard children. Working with partners from across the child safety space, global academic institutions, international law enforcement, NGOs and others, collaboration is at the heart of our research and analysis, and we are excited at the journey that we are now on.

OUR IMPACT

Childlight's first year has predominantly focused on building our core people and capabilities, but we have also recognised the need to balance both long-term system change with short-term, tangible impact. As we have built the organisation and partnerships, we have identified opportunities to make that short-term impact.

Earlier this year, Childlight (Kelvin Lay - Childlight Director of Risk & Engagement) met with the Kenyan Anti-Human Trafficking & Child Protection Unit (AHTCPU) and supported the data analysis of their NCMEC (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children) referrals, which had not been reviewed for 18 months prior. During this analysis, we discovered that technology and process problems that were stopping safeguarding. Two individuals who appeared to be both active and prolific in creating and sharing CSEA material were identified during this collaborative review.

Childlight's impact was not just in providing specific data analysis capability and capacity, but also in brokering connections across the system to make sure that data insight was acted on to safeguard children from abuse. We worked with existing partners and local community organisations, to avoid duplicating effort and building sustainable change. Although two perpetrators have been apprehended and face trial, more importantly, ten children between the ages of 11 and 18 (plus older individuals who have been abused for many years whilst they were children) have been immediately removed from harm. We also expect additional victims to come forward and disclose previous abuse. A wider network of abuse has been identified and a further four perpetrators have been identified: interventions are underway to apprehend those individuals and safeguard any further children at risk.

Although we are proud of our impact, even in a small way, we also know that we can learn from everything we do, to have a greater impact next time. This learning has informed our revised

strategic ambition and plans, specifically a growing focus on technical data advisory with our partners, to help them boost short-term capacity, increase data analysis and research capability, and make the case for long-term, sustainable funding. For example, we learnt that:

- Childlight has a role in brokering support across organisations, helping local law enforcement to understand what support and capability is available to support them from children's services and other law enforcement agencies
- There is a fundamental need to get the basics right e.g. access to the ICSE (International Child Sexual Exploitation) database, ensuring data is uploaded, and there is capability and capacity to receive and action NCMEC referrals
- The need to build sustainable pathways, connections, and blueprints between organisations and sectors, so that holistic support is provided to better prevent abuse and protect children
- The likelihood of hesitation from some authorities and police liaisons when the perpetrator is a national of a different country
- The need for continued pressure on partners to be accountable for their role in the system

LOOKING FORWARD

Many exciting research projects are underway which will be showcased in the publication of our first Annual Flagship Report and supporting dashboard in November 2023. This will be followed in Spring 2024 by Childlight's first CSEA Global Prevalence and Nature Index.

Our current research projects are looking at whether policy is fit for purpose in the context of eXtended reality and child safety, as well as financial restitution. Survivor experiences and the role of peer-to-peer networks and the dark web in CSEA will also be featured in our analysis, alongside analysis into CSEA prevalence among specific groups including children living with disabilities and the early years. Of course, a significant part of our research is looking at prevalence modelling from multiple datasources.

As we enter our second year and beyond, we are focused on ensuring that everything we do can be translated into a tangible impact. To this end, we have reviewed our strategy against our ambition and identified the need for expanded data advisory and outreach capabilities within Childlight. These new capabilities will work alongside our research arm, with data and insight flowing between all three elements of Childlight. Our data insight will inform our impact and engagement strategies, and our work on-the-ground will inform our data focus, to bridge the gap between research and practice.

We have developed processes, tools and templates that help us to identify this "Pathway to impact" early on in our research process, and make sure that our outputs do turn into action. For example:

- A dedicated Pathway to Impact workflow to embed this capability throughout Childlight
- Consequence scanning and ethical impact toolkits to understand the extended and unintended consequences of our actions (or even inaction)
- A dedicated research ethics committee to provide a third-party review of our research project proposals, ensuring that we are not in turn exploiting others or causing additional risk and harm
- Impact realisation plans and templates to ensure Childlight can measure, track and evidence our impact across different lenses

As we become more established, we have also clarified how we will measure our impact, this includes identifying specific evidence points, and measures across four categories:

- Technical Advisory - children safeguarded, at-risk children identified, and CSEA prevented
- Data Insight - prevalence research & analysis, data quality, and standards
- Communications and Outreach - building awareness, advocating and empowering system change
- Operations & Integration - financial stewardship, progress against our plan, continuous improvement, and growing future data talent

