



Joint Committee on Human Rights

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From the Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights

The Rt Hon. the Lord Hanson of Flint
Minister of State at the Home Office

[Delivered by Email]

22 January 2026

Dear Minister,

I am writing as Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights to ask for the Government's view on a potential amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill to improve the tackling of child criminal exploitation.

As it stands, the Bill would introduce both a new offence of child criminal exploitation and also the power for the courts to impose "child criminal exploitation prevention orders". The JCHR welcomes attempts to protect the rights of children by tackling child criminal exploitation. We can see, however, that achieving results will be difficult without accompanying practical mechanisms to ensure that children who are being exploited can be identified at an early stage and supported in their engagement with the authorities. Strong legislation can be undermined by ineffective implementation.

In this regard, the JCHR notes a proposal from Professor Michelle McManus, co-Director of the Institute for Children's Futures at Manchester Metropolitan University¹ for the introduction in statute of Independent Child Exploitation Advocates (ICEAs).² According to Professor McManus, ICEAs would be: *"a statutory, independent advocate for children experiencing any form of exploitation: criminal, sexual, online, trafficking-related or contextual. The role would be triggered at the first point of concern, whether that concern emerges in policing, education, health, youth services or the voluntary sector."* She explains that ICEAs would *"ensure that when exploitation is identified: the child is treated first and foremost as a victim; safeguarding action is coordinated early; [and] protection does not depend on disclosure, criminal thresholds or agency thresholds."* We understand that the proposal to introduce ICEAs has received support in principle from the National Police Chiefs Counsel lead for Child Protection and Abuse Investigations.

The proposal is for ICEAs to be modelled on the existing statutory advocate role of Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (section 48 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015). This existing role, as well as those of child-specific Independent Sexual Violence

¹ <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/institute-for-childrens-futures>

² See Children and Young People Now, ["The case for an independent child exploitation advocate"](#), 14 January 2026



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Advisers and Independent Domestic Violence Advisers set out in guidance issued pursuant to section 16 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024, indicate that the principle of child-specific advocacy is already well recognised. They provide examples of how independent advocates can help victims, including vulnerable children, engage with the authorities and receive the support intended, but they cover only specific categories of harm. Currently, the many exploited children who do not fit neatly into those categories, especially where exploitation overlaps categories or presents initially through behaviour rather than disclosure, may be left without that help.

We would be grateful if you could inform us, before the Bill moves on to its report stage in the House of Lords, whether the Government has considered the proposal to introduce ICEAs and whether it has considered doing this by way of a late amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill? If so what is the Government's view on this proposal?

Yours,

Lord Alton of Liverpool

Chair, Joint Committee on Human Rights