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# **Creating Stable Futures: Human Trafficking, Participation and Outcomes for Children**

## **Best Practice Responses to child trafficking**

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# Working against the tide

Conflict between child welfare and human rights legislation with immigration law and policy

Age disputes

Under-funding in legal aid sector

Lack of suitable placements

Lack of training for the work force

Criminal justice and victim criminalization

Economic factors impacting on service priorities

Systemic discrimination against migrant children

Lack of background information on children

Delay in responses

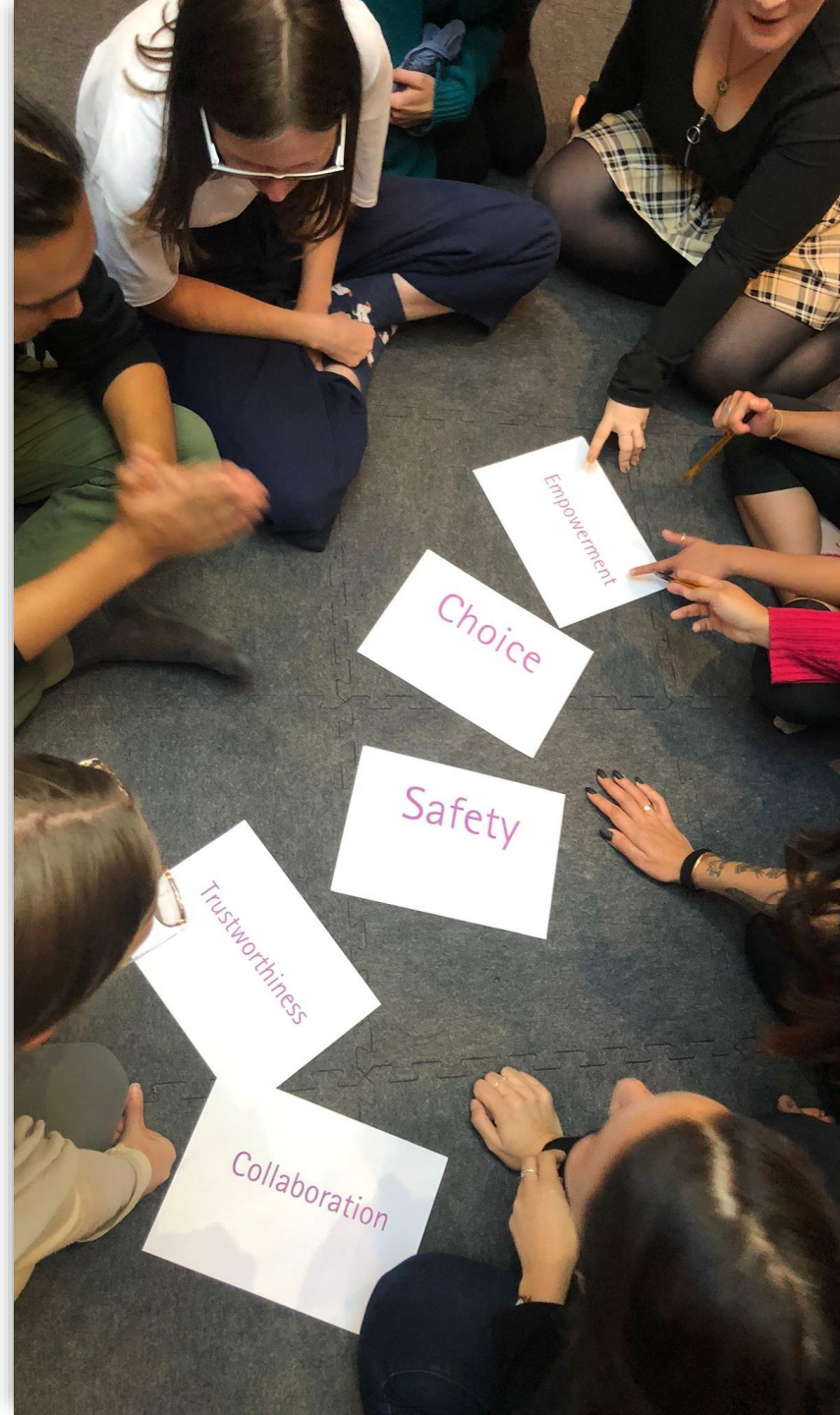
Transitions to adulthood

Challenges in community engagement

Limited resources, communication and coordination

Limited of family support services

# The critical role of frontline workers



# Developments

In the last 16 years since the UK ratified the Council of Europe Convention Against Trafficking (ECAT):

- Establishment of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in 2009 to meet UK obligations to proactively identify and support 'victims' of human trafficking
- Improved understanding and responses: development of regional and national structures, research, campaigns, statutory and third sector guidance and best practice guides, and the 2015 Modern Slavery Act.
- Concepts such as extra-familial harm, contextual safeguarding, trauma-informed approaches and transitional safeguarding brought into the mainstream child safeguarding and child protection arena.
- However, in recent years we've seen an erosion of the rights afforded to migrant populations including to child 'VoTs' seeking asylum in the UK – e.g. the passing of new immigration and asylum legislation such as the NABA and the IMA



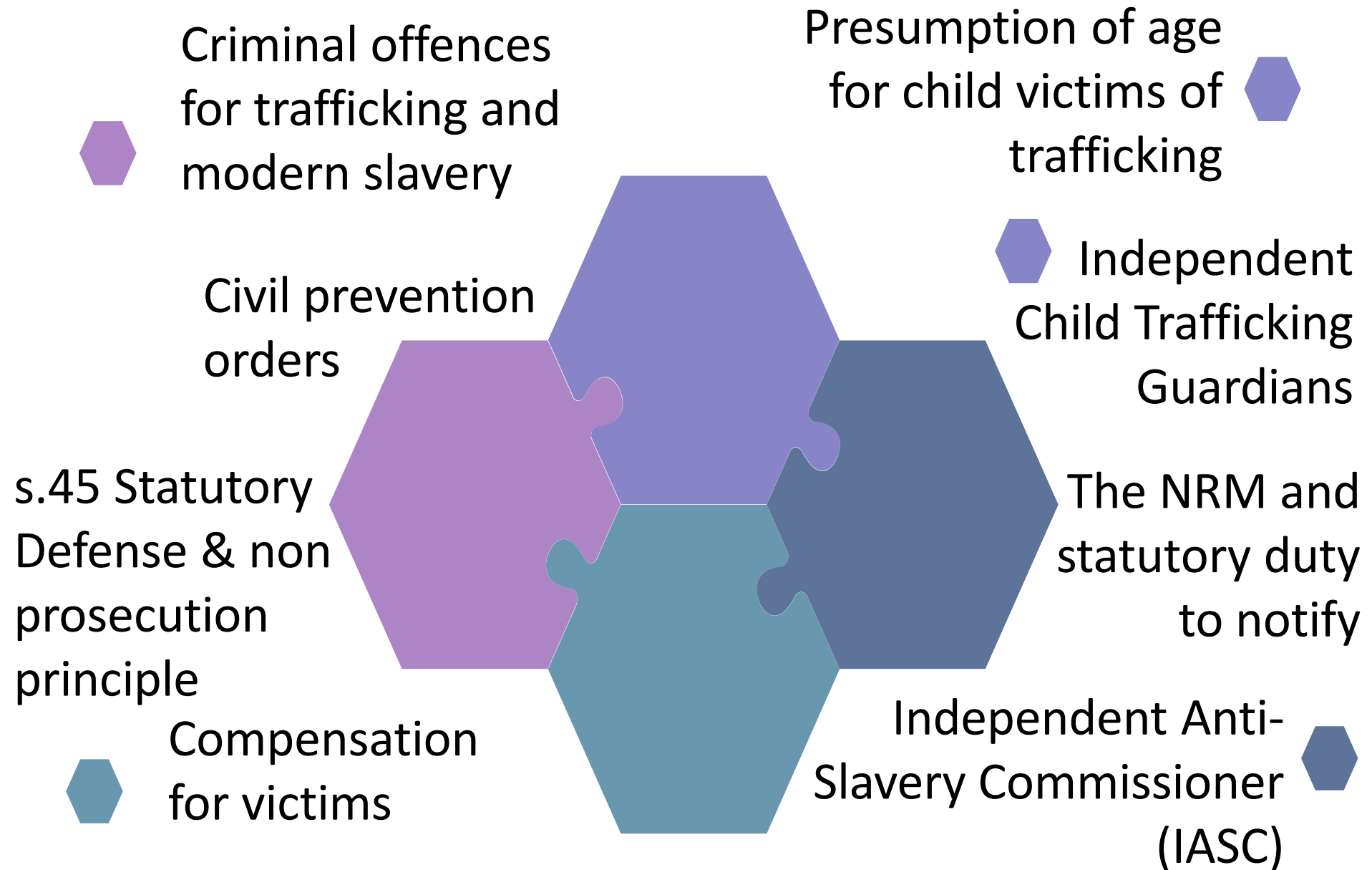
# Best practice responses



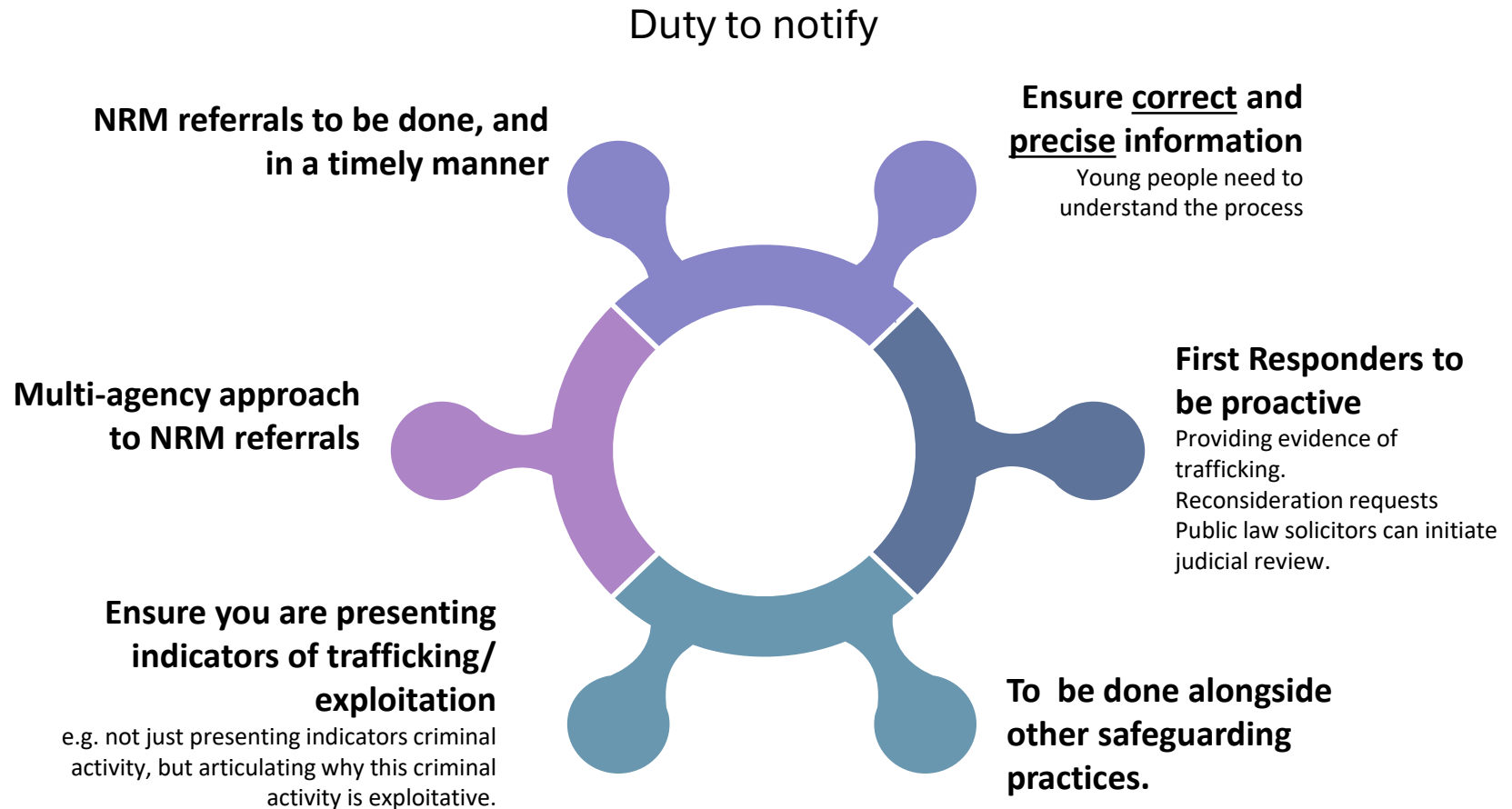
# Key Legislation and Guidance

- Children Act, 1989 and 2004
- Care of unaccompanied migrant children and child victims of modern slavery, 2017
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2023
- Modern Slavery: statutory guidance for England and Wales (under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) and non-statutory guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland (Updated 2024)
- The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

# Modern Slavery Act 2015

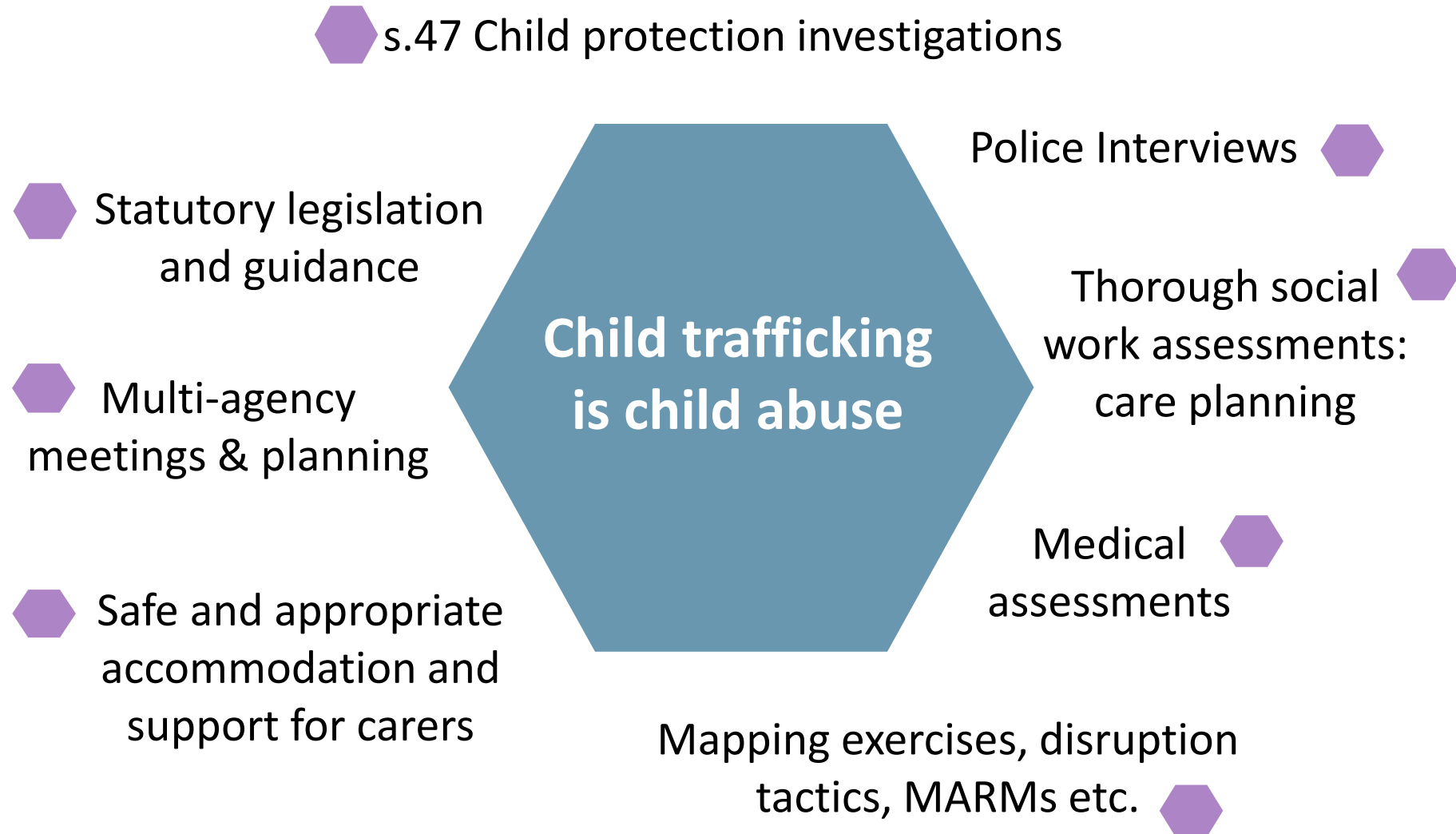


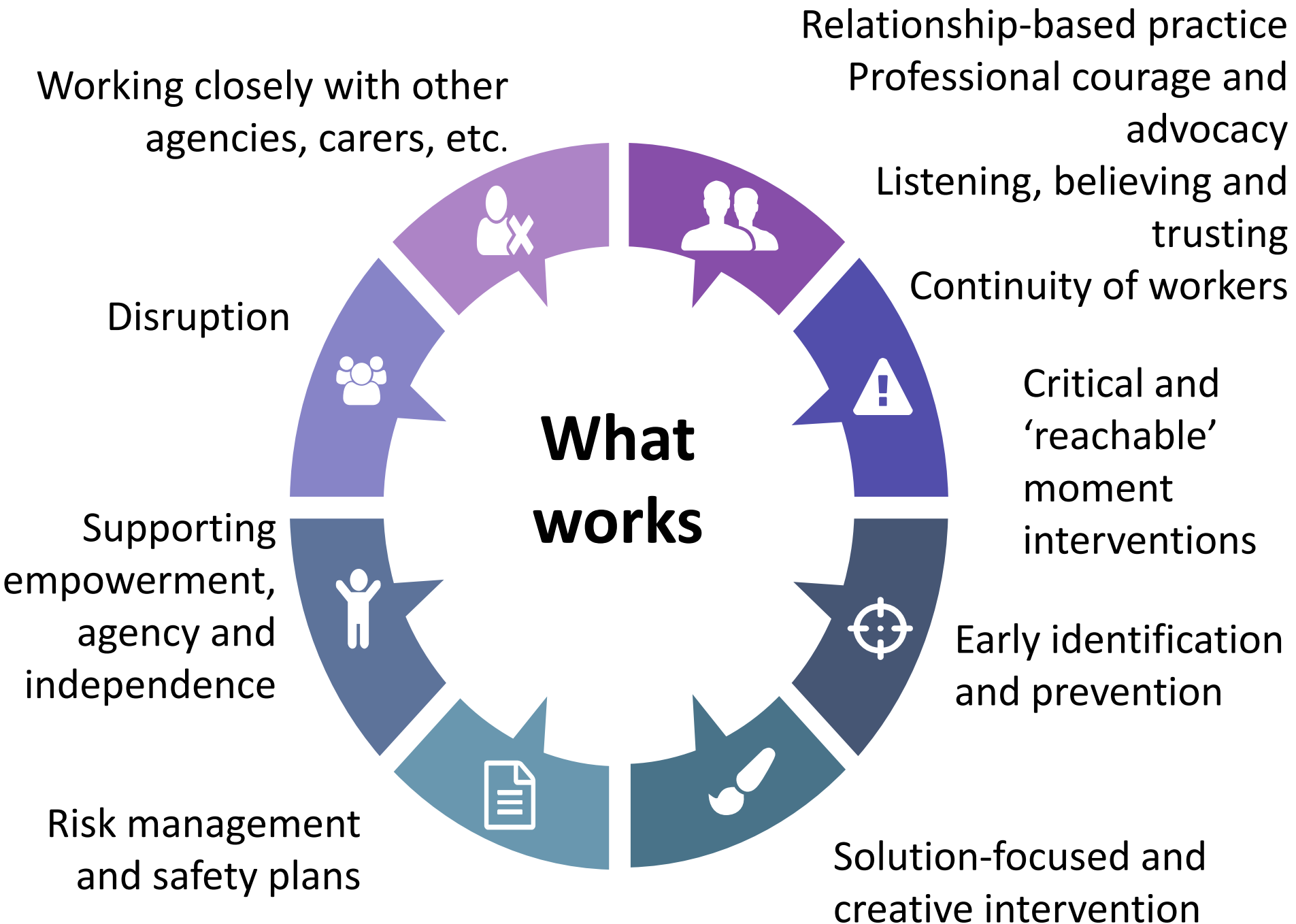
# The National Referral Mechanism





# Safeguarding First







# What works

## **1. Helping the young person feel safe and able to trust**

Dimensions of safety -  
Legal   Practical   Psychological

## **2. Building up protective factors, addressing vulnerabilities**

Solutions-focused working, e.g. building independence skills

Building horizontal (friends, family-like relationships) and vertical networks

## **3. Helping young people achieve alternative pathways**

Showing there's an alternative future to exploitation

# Adult words v child words



trafficking

abuse

risk

exploitation

modern slavery

victim



Feeling  
trapped or  
stuck

Feeling like  
they do  
not have a  
choice

Owing  
someone  
something

Bad things will  
happen if I don't

# Ways of being, ways of doing

## Ways of being 'the companion'

Slow conversations, slow questions.

Bringing rhythms of ordinary life: laughter, activities, fun & games.

*Cooking & eating with them, getting to know who they are, spending time with them.*

## Ways of doing 'the controller'

Knowing about things, guiding young people through systems.

Providing information and advice.

Being in control, being reliable

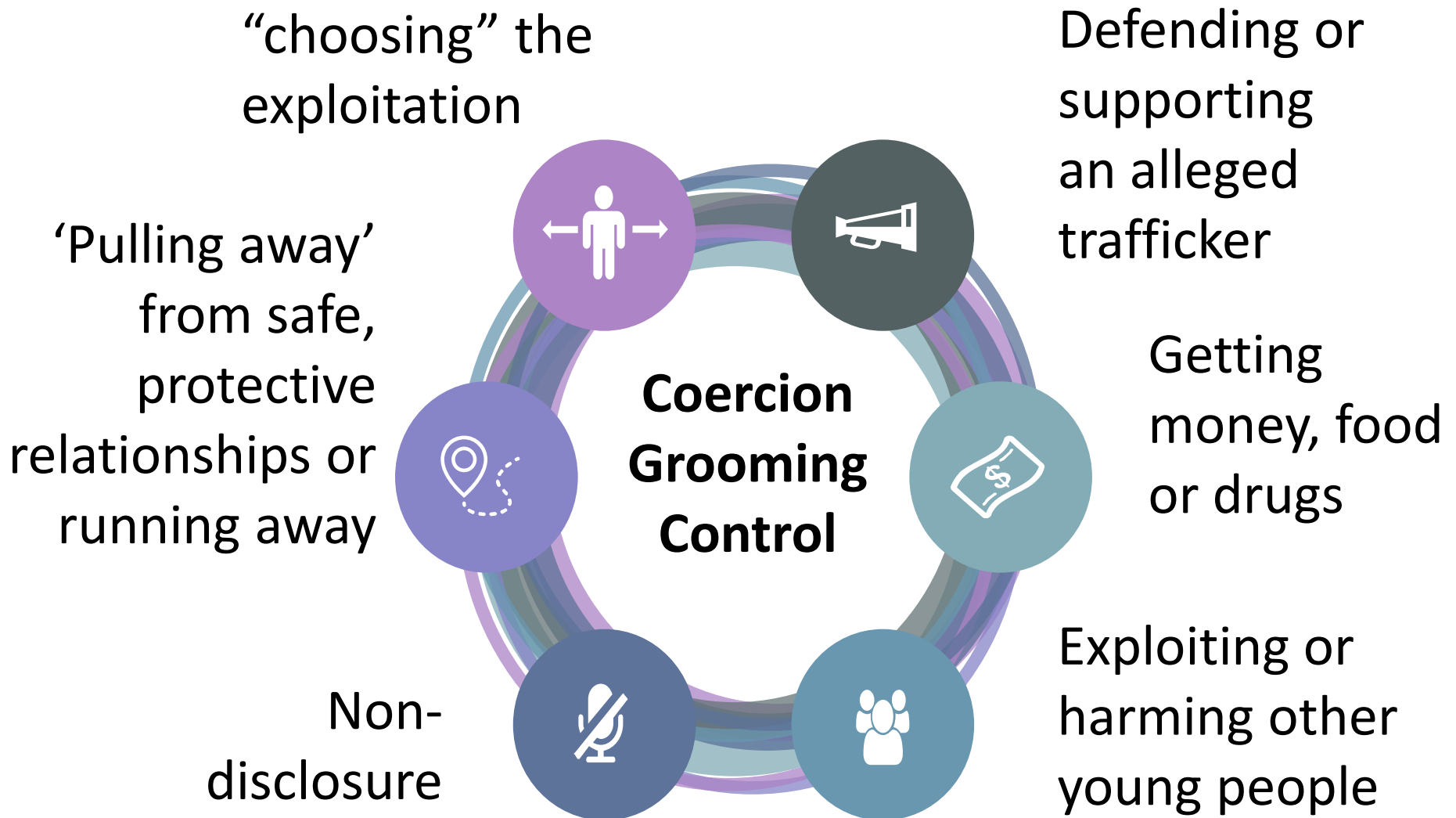
*Helping them navigate education, immigration and legal processes.*

# Interpreting behaviour

What we see	Common narrative	Trauma-informed
Going missing	They do not want/need help / choosing to go / making a 'lifestyle choice' / absconding	They have learnt staying still is dangerous / They survived trafficking by running away
Not disclosing / answering questions	They are hiding something / Not being truthful / They are resistant, difficult to engage	They find it difficult to trust people / They have disclosed to people before, and it led to bad things happening / Have been told threatening/untrue things about professionals / “mistrust is a functional aspect of existence” (Robinson & Segrott, 2002)
Well behaved / compliant/ people pleaser / overly helpful	Foreign children are easy to look after as they are brought up to respect their elders and not question things / They are okay and so do not need much attention	They are too fearful to ask questions or give opinions as they fear this could lead to abusive repercussions / They have always had to work and never experienced care or love / They need opportunities to open up



# **‘Believe us’ : Revisit arguments against considering a young person a victim of trafficking**



# Young People's advice to professionals

**“Be empathetic to young people and do the right thing by them.”**

**“Make sure young people have a good solicitor as they are the ones arguing for me”**

**“I was asked to check information in a support letter whilst on the bus. I couldn't read English well. I didn't realise my date of birth was wrong. This impacted my asylum claim. Make sure your information is correct before you share anything, make sure interpretation is correct.”**

**“In this country, they love paperwork. I may tell them something, but if a piece of paper does not say the same thing, they won't believe me. Just like with my traffickers, my voice doesn't appear to matter. This is why workers writing support letters for us is so important and I'm grateful, but I don't know why people just don't believe me.”**

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Thank you!

Training Pack jointly created by  
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