

Pathways to Impact Guidelines: Metadata

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Childlight Global Child Safety Institute

Pathways to Impact Guidelines

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1. Introduction

Impact matters to Childlight and sits at the heart of everything we do. Our overarching purpose is to safeguard children across the world from sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA), with our vision to have CSEA treated as a global health issue that can be prevented and treated.

To achieve this, our mission is to:

- Make available data that drives sustainable, coordinated action to safeguard children across the world
- Improve CSEA data quality, integrity and reproducibility
- Be recognised as the leading independent authority for global CSEA data

Childlight knows our strength lies in our data and our research – and in bridging the gap between research outputs and real-world use that improves child safety. We concentrate on catalysing long-lasting sustainable change by reducing data gaps and improving information systems so that CSEA is treated as a public health issue. For this to happen, our work must have a clear purpose, be useful, and be used.

Everything Childlight does must be traceable back to our vision and mission. We have split out our three mission statements into specific goals against which we hold ourselves accountable. Each mission has a set of key activities and points to a tangible, desired impact, so that Childlight can describe how we are directly creating or catalysing positive change in the world for children. Further information on these missions and goals can be found in Childlight's Code of Conduct.

2. Scope and Application

These guidelines apply to all Childlight activities that seek to achieve impact, including:

- Research projects (primary and secondary research, data analysis, and publications);
- Events and conferences (including workshops and roundtables);

- Technical advisory deployments (C-TAP);
- Annual impact reporting and evidence logging.

3. Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to:

- Hold ourselves and be held by others to account for not just what we do but why we do it
- Ensure our activities align with and are prioritised by our vision, mission and goals
- Describe what we mean by impact, and the different forms this may take
- Describe the controls and processes put in place within Childlight to maintain a focus on impactful activity

4. Our Definition of Impact

Childlight defines “Impact” as the way in which our research outputs, data, and activities translate into tangible change for children and young people. This is described as our “Pathways to Impact”.

A common framework and ways of working ensure that all Childlight staff and partners consider Impact in the same way and use the same tools available to us.

5. Principles

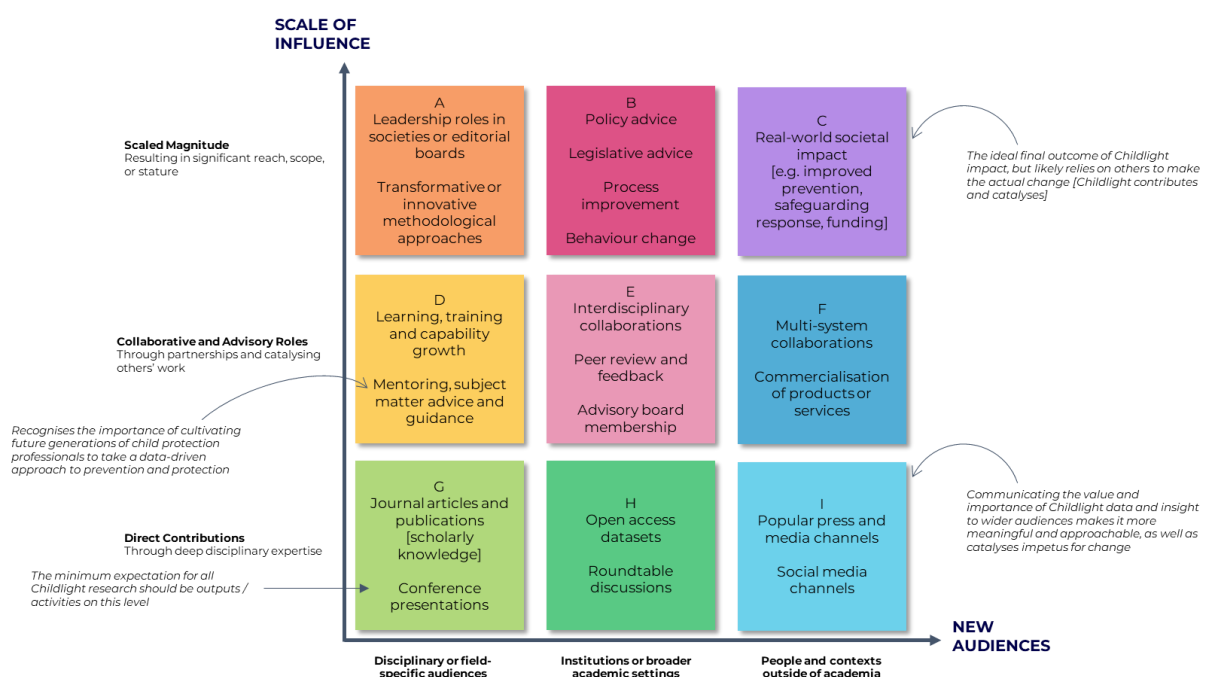
The following principles describe how we approach Pathways to Impact and empower our people:

- **Integrated** – embedded into our research workflow to connect research into practice and tangible change;
- **Proportionate** – the expected impact and benefit of our work must outweigh the risk or effort required;

- **Holistic** – focused on prevention of CSEA, whilst recognising possible negative or unintended consequences;
- **Practical** – grounded in what is feasible and achievable, including how Childlight can support others for the benefit of children.

Impact may occur in many forms, across different people and places, and may take months or years to become visible. It includes not just producing research and publications, but ensuring they are used to change policy, legislation, funding, practice, and capabilities.

As such, Childlight has adopted the Building Blocks of Impact, originally designed by Project TARA under the Declaration for Research Assurance (DORA). All Childlight areas of impact are linked back to these building blocks to demonstrate both the depth and reach of impact across specialist CSEA stakeholders and the real-world change for children globally.



Adapted from *Building Blocks for Impact*, Schmidt, R. (2022).

Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7249187>

Developed with DORA under Project TARA

6. Process

6.1 Research Projects

Childlight research projects are only approved and undertaken if there is a clear pathway to impact as a result of that research. A hypothesis on the potential impact is set early on, and this is tracked against and reviewed through the project lifecycle so that any risks to impact can be mitigated, but also additional opportunities for impact can be identified and captured early.

Initiation Meeting

The first formal review of potential impact happens after a project has been approved through Tasking & Coordination governance. The Lead Researcher is responsible for completing the Project Initiation document, as described in the Project Set-up and Initiation policy document.

As part of this action, the Lead Researcher and Pathways to Impact Manager meet to identify the key areas of potential impact expected as a result of the research project. These are linked to the relevant building blocks of impact and recorded in the Project Initiation Document.

Pathways to Impact Planning

Once the research project has been approved at the Initiation Checkpoint, the Lead Researcher and Pathways to Impact Manager work together to develop a Pathways to Impact Plan. This plan sets out high level timelines and suggested activities that to both identify impact and create impact from the research project. Some Pathways to Impact activities may occur during the research project lifecycle itself, for example targeting specific organisations to be a member of an advisory committee or attending a conference to share early findings or insight into innovative research methods. It also starts to identify stakeholders or partners who will be the users or recipients of the research. This Pathways to Impact Plan is a living document that is referred to and updated throughout the research project workflow as the research progresses.

Progress Checkpoints

The Pathways to Impact Manager and Lead Researcher review the Pathways to Impact Plan throughout the research project lifecycle. There is a minimum of one checkpoint at the mid-point of the research project, typically towards the end of the analysis phase to review emerging insight and findings. Additional checkpoints may be held for example if the project has a long duration.

The Pathways to Impact Plan is updated at each checkpoint, to record any changes or additions to the plan. Any significant deviation or risk to planned impact is reported through the Risk Management processes for mitigation. If a research project deviates substantially from the initiation document and planned impact, there may be a decision to stop or pause that research project and divert resources to other projects with a greater level of impact.

Closure

At the end of the research project, the Pathways to Impact Manager and Lead Researcher review the final Pathways to Impact Plan. This happens before the research is published via Searchlight or the Global Index. The Pathways to Impact plan is further refined, with clear action owners, timelines and prioritisation. Planned impact is mapped to the Pathways to Impact building blocks, for example publications, stakeholder meetings, workshops, briefings etc. The Pathways to Impact Manager reviews the final plan to ensure that intended impact action is within Childlight scope, available resources and budget - any exceptional activity that is outside of current Childlight scope or budget is flagged through Tasking & Coordination governance for review. This closure stage also includes a check on whether additional best practice, how to guides and methods papers can be created as outputs for the Lighthouse Learning Log.

Lessons Learned

As a minimum, every Lead Researcher completes a Lessons Learned output to reflect on both positive and challenging aspects of the research project. This Lessons Learned reflection is shared externally on the Lighthouse Learning Log.

12-month Review

The Pathways to Impact Manager undertakes a review 12 months after project closure, assessing progress against the Pathways to Impact Plan. Outcomes are recorded in the evidence log and may be presented as a case study. This review recognises that impact can be evidenced in diverse ways and may take many

months or years to come to fruition, particularly in areas of policy, legislation or societal change.

6.2 Events, Conferences and Workshops

Childlight representatives may attend events, such as conferences and roundtables, as well as organise them for an external audience.

Pre-event Planning

The Pathways to Impact Manager and Communications Manager support the attendee or organiser to set key outcomes and objectives for the event. These outcomes and objectives are documented before the event and may form part of event approval and planning.

Post-event Reporting

After the event, the Pathways to Impact Manager works with the attendee/s or organisers of the event to create a briefing document. This briefing document captures highlights from the event, including both actual impact as well as other potential areas for impact. The briefing document is shared with the Childlight Senior Leadership team for review and reflection. New Pathways to Impact activities that require a change to Childlight scope or additional budget are referred to the Tasking & Coordination governance for review.

Follow-up Actions

Where appropriate, the Pathways to Impact Manager may also log and track any actions that resulted from the event, to ensure they are completed.

6.3 Technical Advisory Deployments (C-TAP)

The Childlight Technical Advisory Programme (C-TAP) includes a focus on working with country stakeholders to improve best practices in how CSEA data is accessed, analysed and used. A specific Pathways to Impact process is applied to C-TAP in-country deployments.

Pre-deployment planning

The Pathways to Impact Manager to work with the nominated lead Technical Advisor for a country to set key outcomes and objectives for the deployment, to aid planning for the deployment. These are documented and shared with the Senior Leadership team.

Post-deployment briefing

Once the deployment has concluded, the Pathways to Impact Manager works with the Technical Advisor to create both a long-form and executive summary briefing note back to the Senior Leadership Team as a record of both activities and outcomes from the deployment.

Country action plan

The Pathways to Impact Manager works with Technical Advisor to create an individual country plan. This captures both Childlight activities that are relevant to that specific country, as well as where Childlight may catalyse or hand over activities to other organisations. The country plan allows C-TAP to keep track of how a country is improving in its ability and capability to access, analyse and use CSEA data. The Pathways to Impact Manager undertakes periodic checks that Childlight activities on the country plan are within Childlight scope, available resources and budget. Any exceptional activity that is outside Childlight scope or budget is referred to the Tasing & Coordination governance for review.

Impact statement

Where appropriate the Pathways to Impact Manager and Technical Advisor may prepare a public-facing case study or statement that describes the activities undertaken and the impact that occurred as a result. If there is a risk of aiding of facilitating offenders in further harm, this information will not be published externally.

7. Impact Reporting

It is important for Childlight to evidence the impact from its activities, not that it has just been busy. As such, there are multiple points where Childlight impact is reported to an external audience.

7.1 Evidence log

The Pathways to Impact Manager maintains a central log of impact evidence. This records the source and date of any impact, and categorises it by evidence type (e.g., citation, reference, policy change, legislative change, increased resources, increased capability, testimonial). The evidence log informs:

- Reporting to funders;
- Childlight's balanced scorecard;
- Steering Board reporting;
- Research Excellence Framework (REF) submissions.

7.2 Annual reports

Each year Childlight releases an annual report and a year in review document. Taken together, these reports provide a look back at Childlight's activity over the previous 12 months, and a reflection on the types of impact directly achieved – or contributed to – by Childlight. These reports draw on the evidence log, and provide both qualitative, narrative descriptions of impact as well as quantified outputs and outcome where applicable.

7.3 Quarterly Updates

The Pathways to Impact Manager provides quarterly updates to the CEO, COO and Director of Data, highlighting examples of impact, opportunities, risks and outstanding issues.

8. Policy Review

The Pathways to Impact Guidelines are subject to regular review. Amendments are made to reflect changes in local practices, national and international policies, and professional guidelines. This policy will also be reviewed and updated as necessary by the Quality and Compliance Manager, based on findings from internal audits and feedback from stakeholders. Any such amendments require the approval of the Childlight Senior Leadership Team.

This policy must be reviewed every two years. The review may result in one of three outcomes:

- Approved The policy has undergone changes which have been accepted by the Childlight SLT. Results in a change of version number.
- Renewed The policy was reviewed with no necessary changes identified. Does not result in a change of version number.
- Discontinued The policy was found to no longer hold relevance for the organisation, either as a result of content integration with other policy documents, or a change in operational need.

This policy was approved on 23rd September 2025

This policy is due for review on 22nd September 2027