



ANNUAL REPORT 2025



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

**HUMAN
DIGNITY
FOUNDATION**



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INTRODUCTION



As I reflect on the past year since our [last annual report](#), I am proud to share what has been a period of significant progress for Childlight, a time in which we have not only deepened our global impact but also sharpened our strategic focus on the future.

Our purpose remains unwavering: to safeguard children across the world from sexual exploitation and abuse. Over the past year, we have moved decisively from building the foundations to driving real-world impact. Through robust data, global partnerships and targeted outreach, we are increasingly shifting the global narrative, helping to reframe child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA), not as something we simply respond to, but as a global public health emergency that can be prevented and treated.

Our efforts continue to centre around three guiding missions: to make available data that drives sustainable, coordinated action to safeguard children worldwide; to improve CSEA data quality, integrity and reproducibility; and to be recognised as the leading independent authority for global CSEA data.

This past year, we have used our data and insight to push for CSEA to be recognised as a [global public health emergency](#), one that, importantly, can be prevented. Our second [2025 Searchlight](#) report followed this framing, taking a critical and often overlooked question: “*Who benefits from CSEA?*”. Through eight original research studies, *Searchlight* explored the economic and systemic enablers of abuse, spotlighting the individuals, industries and infrastructures that continue to profit. If the numbers in our [Into the Light global index](#) – over 300 million children being affected annually by technology-facilitated CSEA – weren’t shocking enough, *Searchlight* revealed the darker truth behind those numbers: the sexual abuse of a child livestreamed from the Philippines can be bought for less than the cost of a soft drink. Children are still treated as commodities – exploited and traded for others’ gain.

By illuminating the spaces, systems and incentives that allow CSEA to persist, we are building an evidence base that moves beyond prevalence. Together, *Into the Light and Searchlight* provide a clearer picture of both scale and structure – what is happening, where and why, and how it can be disrupted and prevented. As with any public health emergency, addressing CSEA requires coordinated action across borders, sectors and disciplines. That is why we are committed not just to generating research and data, but to strengthening the child protection system at its foundations. This year, we:

- Co-led the revision of the [Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#), to ensure clarity and consistency in how CSEA is defined and understood globally
- Partnered with organisations such as Child Rescue Coalition to help unlock and analyse previously inaccessible data
- Delivered targeted in-country technical support through our C-TAP (Childlight Technical Advisory Programme), providing experts to support governments to improve the response to CSEA through better analysis and use of CSEA data – with impactful pilots in Pakistan, Ghana and Madagascar

Another defining moment was the formal launch of our East Asia & Pacific Hub, hosted by the University of New South Wales, Sydney, and led by Professor Michael Salter. This marks a major step forward in building regional research, partnerships and support capacity, especially in areas at high risk but with limited existing infrastructure.

Thanks to the continued generosity of Human Dignity Foundation, Childlight has also entered a new phase of growth. Our team has expanded to support new country-specific prevalence estimates for our 2025 *Into the Light Index*, with focus on Western Europe and South Asia. We have strengthened our internal capacity for research and integrity, knowing that data is only valuable if it is rigorous, credible and trusted.

And we are proud to see our research being used, not just cited, by others. Over the past year, our work has:

- Informed global and regional policy through WHO, UN bodies, the US Senate, the Council of Europe, and the Financial Action Task Force
- Reached a global audience of over 3.5 billion for Searchlight through media coverage and briefings in 20+ countries


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- Been shared at the first *Global Ministerial Summit on Ending Violence Against Children*
 - Supported the growing success of our *Global Data Fellows* programme, which is cultivating a new generation of CSEA data leaders and contributing to initiatives such as a focused CSEA track at India's upcoming global conference on Artificial Intelligence and Cybercrime

We also co-hosted a landmark Global Symposium in Atlanta with Emory University and the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC). This event brought together leaders from public health, technology, government, policing and civil society. Crucially, it culminated in a formal declaration, signed by WHO, the Center for Disease Control, Emory University, Georgia State University, the European Parliament and others, calling for CSEA to be treated as a global public health emergency. This is not just rhetoric. It's a direct outcome of the data and evidence we are generating and sharing with the world.

Finally, we've made major strides in how we communicate. Our newly launched website reflects our values of **accessibility, inclusion and global reach**, making our research easier to find, easier to understand, and ultimately more actionable.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to producing high quality, replicable research and to sharing our methods through our [Lighthouse toolkit](#), so others can benefit from our learning and accelerate progress in their own contexts.

Childlight will continue to shine a light on CSEA, even as those who benefit from it seek to turn that light off. Thanks to all our partners and supporters in adding their light to this shared endeavour. Together, we will continue illuminating where meaningful change can happen, building a world where every child is safe, seen and valued. Children can't wait!



Paul Stanfield

Chief Executive Officer

STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

Childlight has continued to grow over the past year, with core teams in Edinburgh (30 people) and Sydney (7 people), supported by a network of 15 Global Data Fellows, and numerous partner organisations around the world. More information about our team and collaborators can be found on our [website](#).

Our Steering Board has also seen important changes. We extend our sincere thanks to Sean Litton and Sophie Otiende for their invaluable contributions over the previous three years as they step down at the end of their terms. We are especially grateful to Dr John Climax for his steadfast commitment to Childlight's vision and leadership as Chair of the Steering Board. The Chair of the board will transition to Sir Stephen Kavanagh, who will guide us through the next phase of our journey.

We are also delighted to welcome three new members to the Steering Board: Brendan Brennan, Dr Bernie Madrid and Karina McTeague. Each brings deep expertise and a shared commitment to our mission, and we look forward to the insight and leadership they will contribute as we continue to grow and evolve.

Steering board



Dr John Climax

Founding member and chair of the Human Dignity Foundation



Sir Peter Mathieson

Principal, University of Edinburgh



Sir Stephen Kavanagh

Secretary General, International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children



Dr Bernie Madrid

Executive Director, Child Protection Network & Clinical Associate Professor, University of the Philippines



Brendan Brennan

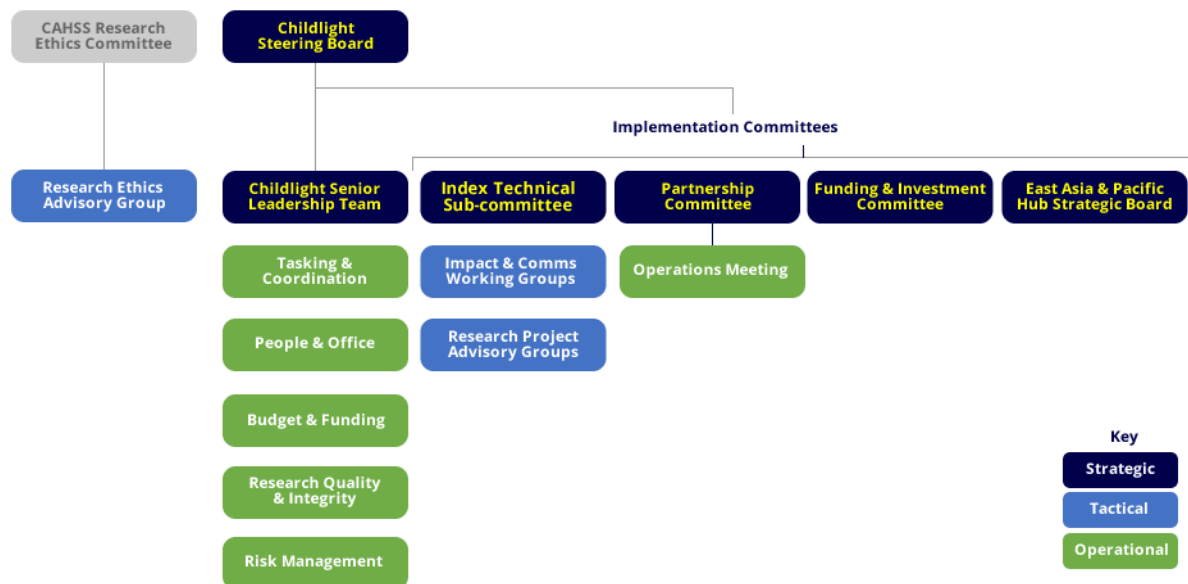
Chief Financial Officer, HBX Group



Karina McTeague

Financial Services Non-Executive Director

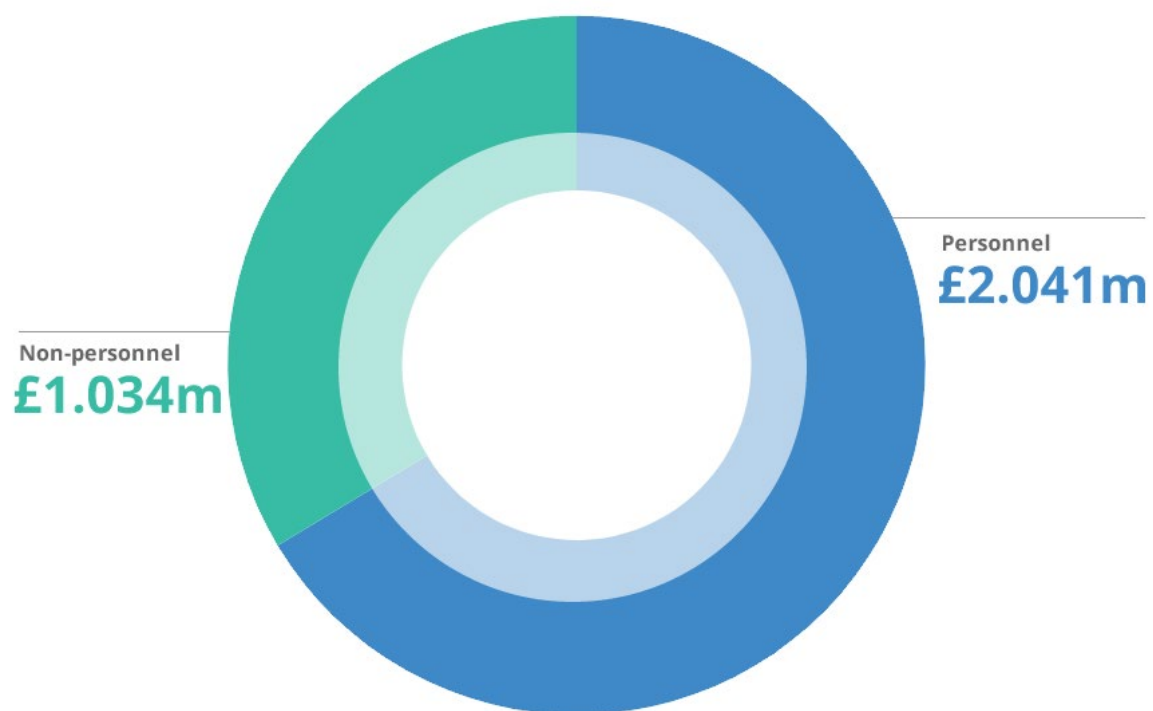
As our space for strategic oversight and guidance, the Steering Board is supported by four sub-committees, each focused on a key area of work: from research and partnership, through to finance and funding. These are complemented by a range of tactical and operational governance forums, shown below, which ensure we benefit from targeted input and advice from other key partners across our ecosystem:



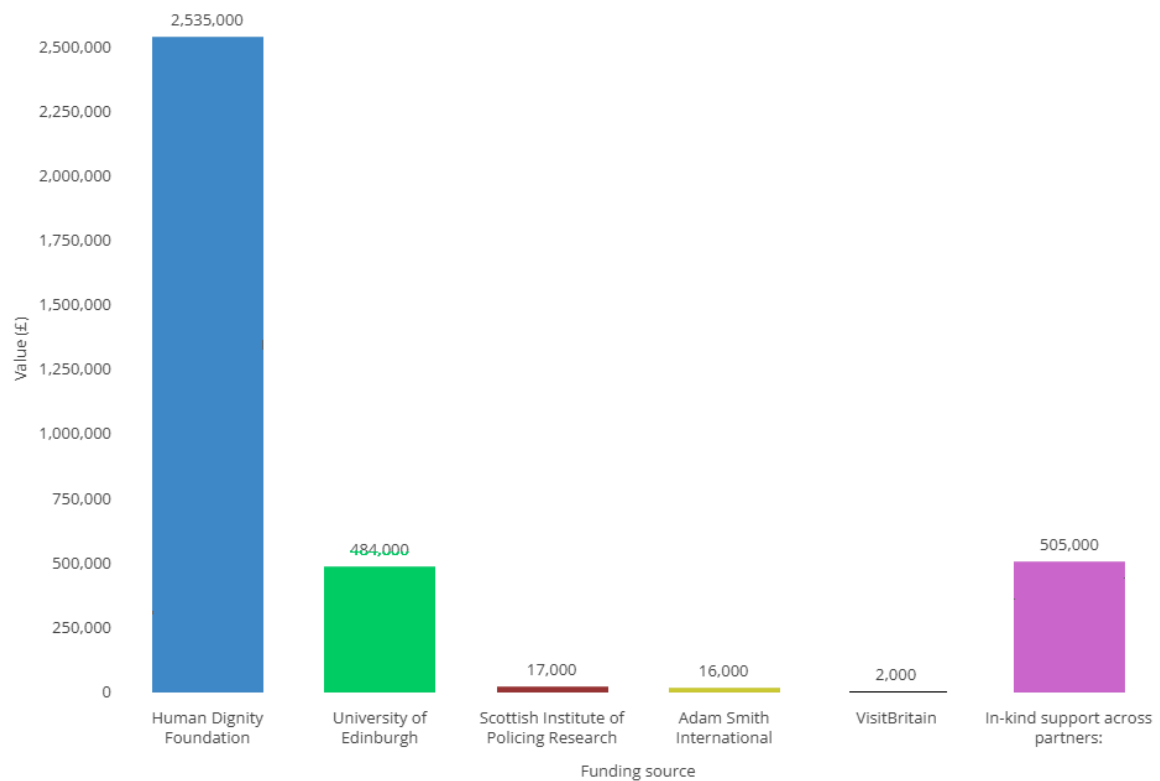
FINANCES AND FUNDING

Throughout the past year, Childlight has secured additional funding and in-kind support from a range of partners. This has enabled us not only to expand the volume and breadth of our work, but also to accelerate the pace at which we can generate data and insight to drive meaningful impact.

Our total spend for the year 1st May 2024 to 30th April 2025 was £3,075,000 across the following areas:



Our funding sources have continued to grow over the past year, as we work to diversity and strengthen our funding portfolio. We are deeply grateful to those who share Childlight's vision and have invested in, or otherwise supported, our ability to generate and share high quality data and insight that catalyse change for the benefit of children:





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