

Child Protection: Child Trafficking

The illegal movement of children into and within the country with the intent to exploit them

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Working together to safeguard
all Islington's children



What is Child trafficking?

Child trafficking is the term given to the illegal movement of children into and within the country with the intent to exploit them.

The majority of children who arrive in this way have been promised a good job, money or education. Sometimes their parents have been persuaded to entrust them to others for a better quality of life. Once here, they are almost always exploited for financial gain.

Some of the ways in which such exploitation can take place are:

- sexual exploitation and prostitution
- forced domestic work
- sweatshop and restaurant work
- drug dealing
- credit card fraud
- benefit fraud
- drug smuggling or decoys for adult drug traffickers
- forced marriage
- human sacrifice (ritual killings)

All children who have been exploited will suffer some form of physical and/or psychological harm. Government, police and other agencies have a duty to work together to safeguard them and promote their welfare. To do this effectively, we need to be able to recognise when children have been trafficked and to understand the particular vulnerabilities this makes them susceptible to.



What are the signs that a child may have been trafficked?

There are a number of circumstances that could indicate that a child may have been trafficked into and within the UK, and may still be under the control of the trafficker or the receiving adults.

These include situations in which the child:

- does not appear to have money but does have a mobile phone
- possesses money and goods not accounted for
- appears to be missing for periods
- has gone missing from local authority care
- has a history with missing links and unexplained moves
- is driven around by an older male or 'boyfriend'
- is withdrawn and refuses to talk
- shows signs of sexual behaviour or language
- shows signs of physical or sexual abuse and/or has contracted a sexually transmitted infection
- is pregnant
- is required to earn a minimum amount of money every day
- works in various locations
- has limited freedom of movement
- has responsibilities inappropriate for their age
- performs excessive housework chores and rarely leaves the residence
- appears to be neglected
- is malnourished
- evidence of drug, alcohol or substance misuse
- is unable/reluctant to give details of their accommodation/personal details

Some privately fostered children may have been trafficked.

Or situations where the child:

- is known to beg for money
- is being cared for by adults who are not the child's parents
- the quality of the relationship between the child and the carers is not good
- the presentation of a trafficked child is usually very different from other children living in the same household
- is treated differently from other children in the home
- has not been registered with or attended a GP practice
- has not been enrolled in school
- has to pay off an exorbitant debt, perhaps for the travel costs, before being able to have control of earnings
- hands over a large part of earnings to another person
- is excessively afraid of being deported
- has had their journey or visas arranged by someone other than their family
- does not have possession of their own travel documents
- is unable to confirm who is going to have responsibility for them
- has entered the country illegally
- has false documentation
- claims to have been exploited
- is located or recovered from a place of exploitation/criminality, e.g., brothel, cannabis factory, street crime
- claims to have been in the UK for years but does not speak English
- is one among a number of unrelated children at the same address

How are children brought into the UK?

Children come into the country either accompanied by adults or as unaccompanied minors. Very little is known about the accompanied children, many of whom come with adults who pretend to be their parents or who claim to have the parents' permission to bring them. More is known about the unaccompanied children who come to the notice of the authorities when they claim asylum.

As most children who are victims of trafficking are not aware of their rights or that they can claim asylum once they have entered the country, they are unlikely to come to the attention of asylum or immigration services. Often they will only come to the notice of statutory services when it is too late. Most trafficked children are invisible. Protecting them and promoting their welfare depends upon the awareness and co-operation of community groups and members of the public. Safeguarding trafficked children is very much everyone's business.



How are children trafficked within the UK?

Children are also trafficked within the UK. This includes teenage girls born in the UK who are targeted for internal trafficking between towns and cities for sexual exploitation. Girls may have been lured away from their families to perform sexual acts with groups of older men and threatened with violence if they refuse. The traffickers exert strong control over the girls who have no means of communicating with family or friends and often have no idea where they are in the UK. The girls comply with the sexual demands to avoid being further assaulted or their family or friends threatened. While the evidence so far relates to girls, there may be cases of boys being trafficked within the UK.

Children trafficked from abroad are also trafficked within the UK. They are trafficked internally for all the reasons previously listed. They are passed onto other traffickers for profit. The continuing exploitation of trafficking victims involves frequent use of violence and intimidation. They may have been kidnapped and held against their will. Organised criminals see human trafficking as a lucrative and relatively low risk crime, viewing the individual victims merely as another profitable commodity.

What to do if you are worried that a child has been trafficked

Any agency or individual who has a concern that a child known to them may have been trafficked should discuss their concerns with their Child Protection Advisor. Often a situation will be far from clear and the Advisor will be able to help identify the need to make an immediate referral to Children's Social Care referral and advice team or the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) Child Trafficking Helpline.

Child Protection contact numbers:

Children's Social Care, Islington Children's Services
Tel 020 7527-7400

Children Looked After Team 4 (formerly the Children's Asylum Team
for Unaccompanied Minors), Islington Children's Services
Tel 020 7 527-7938

Metropolitan Police Child Abuse Investigation Team
Tel 020 7421 0291

Child Trafficking contact details:

NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children)
Child Trafficking Advice and Information Line (CTAIL)
Tel 0800 107-7057

ECPAT (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking)
Tel 020 7233-9887 Visit www.ecpat.org.uk

Barnardo's Young Women's Project & Trafficking Service
PO Box 34727, London N7 8YQ Tel 020 7700 2253

UKHTC (United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre)
Tel 0114 252-3891 Visit www.ukhtc.org

CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) Centre
Tel 0870 000-3344 Visit www.ceop.gov.uk

UK Border Agency
Tel 020 7147 5554

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