

Breaking the wall of silence

Practitioners' responses to trafficked children and young people

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Executive summary

Introduction

As set out in international law, all children have the right to be safe regardless of their immigration status. The trafficking of children and young people into the UK has become increasingly evident over the past decade. Trafficking of children and young people is child abuse and the responsibility for protecting children in the UK rests with local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs). The definition of trafficking of children used in this report follows the UN's Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (2000), which came into force on 25 December 2003 and states:

- (a) "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;
- (b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;
- (c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purposes of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;
- (d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

The definition notes that children under the age of 18 cannot consent to being trafficked. This report illustrates some practitioners' understanding of and responses to the trafficking of children. The overall purpose is to highlight good practice that can be shared between agencies involved.

The research was conducted by researchers at the University of Bedfordshire and the NSPCC, jointly managed by the University of Bedfordshire and the NSPCC, and principally funded through The Children's Charity. The proposal for the research met relevant ethical requirements and approval. A team of four researchers worked over a two-year period in three sites in the UK to:

- review international and UK literature on trafficking;
- conduct focus groups and interviews with a total of 72 practitioners from a range of children's services selected as the most experienced in working with cases of trafficked children and young people; and
- analyse 37 cases of children and young people: 27 who had been trafficked into the UK from abroad for various forms of exploitation; and 10 UK citizens who were trafficked within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

The research project was supported by a multidisciplinary advisory group and an independent academic consultant. The research is a qualitative project. It is not an overview of how many or why children are trafficked. It is an assessment of the complexities and problems faced by practitioners who are working with the cases.

1 Trafficking is a process, not an event

Practitioners noted that the trafficking of a child or young person can begin in one country, continue through and into a variety of others, and extend throughout the child's or young person's life. Similarly, they noted that identification and disclosure are rarely single events, but are staggered over time and usually only occur once trusted and secure relationships have been established between the practitioners and the children or young people. Within the process of the young person being trafficked, a range of complexities arose.

1.1 Practitioners noted the need for child protection concerns to override concerns about the age or immigration status of children and young people who are trafficked into the UK from abroad. That is, safeguarding the child is of paramount importance (see all recommendations at the end of this summary). They voiced concern that children trafficked from abroad might not receive the same rights and treatment as children born in the UK, even though they are entitled to do so by law. Multi-agency work between the UK Border Agency, police and children's services at the point of arrival, and focused on securing the safety of the

child, was seen as essential in efforts to engage with the child and to prevent them from being abducted or going missing. Good practice was to provide the child with a child protection keyworker (themselves supported through multi-agency work with police involvement) and accommodation in a place of safety, preferably in supported and supervised foster care. In addition, trafficked children and young people felt safer if they were provided with child-friendly instructions in different languages (written and verbal), including names, contact numbers and addresses of carers and professionals, and a basic overview of children's rights in the UK. There was evidence from interviews and case files of children and young people using these instructions if they were abducted or went missing.

1.2 Practitioners warned against the uncritical assumption that an interpreter from the same community as the child would necessarily be the best interpreter for that child (see recommendations 5 and 11). Rather than being welcomed by the child as familiar, they noted that an interpreter from the same or similar community may conjure fear, as they represent the very community responsible for exploiting the child. This should not necessarily deter the use of a good interpreter, but practitioners noted the need for the selection of the interpreter to be based on training, skills and experience rather than on cultural similarity.

1.3 Continuity with the same interpreter, keyworker or legal guardian was important. The child or young person is more likely to disclose information about their experiences of exploitation within a trusting, secure and supported relationship (see recommendation 5). Practitioners felt that, wherever possible, the trafficked child or young person should be protected from having repeatedly to reproduce their account of how and why they were trafficked. Indeed, in some cases this was seen as a continuation of the abuse, as the re-telling of traumatic and painful accounts added to the damage incurred by the child.

1.4 Practitioners advocated the use of an independent guardian, although they warned against using the existence of the legal guardian as a rationale for abdicating responsibility for the case (see recommendations 6, 7 and 12). They noted the benefit of LSCBs and other services allocating a trained and supported keyworker to form a secure and trusting relationship with the child or young person. This keyworker would help the child or young person to settle into using specialist and mainstream services.

1.5 Childhood and home were contested concepts (see recommendations 11, 22 and 23). The evidence from interviews showed that many children and young people might have been pushed into early adulthood. They might not have experienced "childhood" in the way that it is understood in the UK. Their "home" might have been destroyed by war or famine, or might

be dysfunctional and abusive. The child or young person may feel that they are making decisions for themselves about their future. As such, they would not understand that they were victims of abuse. Traffickers are skilled in using the child's or young person's desire for independence and autonomy to further manipulate and exploit them. Practitioners noted the need for sensitivity to the various histories and understandings of age, childhood and home as presented by trafficked children or young people.

1.6 Different forms of trafficking can be hidden under the dominant image of a girl or young woman trafficked for sexual exploitation (see recommendations 11–14 and 24).

Practitioners expressed concerns that this may overshadow awareness of trafficking for other forms of exploitation, including benefit fraud, forced marriage, domestic servitude, work in cannabis factories or nail parlours, as well as masking trafficking of boys and young men. Experience of working with cases improved both knowledge of and response to the issues concerned. There are still improvements to be made in work with sexually exploited boys and girls. However, knowledge and experience of this work is more advanced than with other forms of exploitation. Work with sexually exploited boys and girls should not be allowed to overshadow awareness of the needs of children and young people trafficked for a range of forms of exploitation.

1.7 There are different and additional pressures facing children trafficked into the UK from abroad than for UK nationals who are trafficked within the UK (see

recommendations 11–13 and 24). Without diminishing the need for improved services to prevent the trafficking of UK citizens for sexual exploitation and for improving services in this area of work, practitioners noted that those trafficked from abroad faced specific problems. These can include: displacement from their home and country of origin; language and communication barriers; their previous experiences of war, famine or poverty; the insecurity of their legal status in the UK; and their unfamiliarity with UK cultures, children's services and their rights and entitlements.

1.8 Trafficked children and young people frequently go missing at the point of arrival into the country and then again after being placed in local authority care. This

interrupts the process of disclosure (see recommendations 6–15, 17 and 22–24). Going missing is a problem with children and young people trafficked into the country from abroad, as well as with UK citizens trafficked within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The problems faced can be compounded for children and young people from abroad. Practitioners noted that the case of a missing child needed to be kept alive by trying to locate their whereabouts through active multi-agency work and record keeping. Practice improved

where designated keyworkers from different welfare and law enforcement agencies worked together. This ultimately supported both the child and the keyworkers concerned.

2 Trafficking can be hidden behind a wall of silence

On the one hand, practitioners noted that children and young people can find it hard to disclose information about their experiences or may be silenced by traffickers. On the other, practitioners may not identify cases, may not believe what they hear or be able to respond to the needs presented.

2.1 Practitioners noted that traffickers will use a range of methods to manipulate, coerce and force children and young people into being trafficked (see recommendations 3–7, 9–11 and 22–24). Both interviews and case files showed that traffickers use subtle manipulation and overt physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect as methods of control. Traffickers may make children believe that they owe them money or payment through other means. As a result, the child or young person may be injured, confused or traumatised. Invariably they are silenced by this abuse: through fear of repercussions for themselves, friends or family; through manipulation; or because the information is too painful to disclose. The child may have blocked out details as a means of coping. Breaking this silence can often only happen with time: through building a relationship of trust, engaging with the child and using language that they can understand and to which they can relate.

2.2 Disclosure is usually elicited (see recommendations 4, 6–8, 10, 11, 14, 18, 19, 21 and 22). Disclosure can be categorised as accidental (where the exploitation of the child or young person is found by default), purposeful (where the child or young person actively seeks help and support) or elicited (through prompting by professionals or support agencies). Practitioners noted that most disclosures are elicited over time within a trusting and supportive relationship with a keyworker.

2.3 Disclosures may not always be listened to or believed (see recommendations 5–7, 10–14, 18, 19 and 22). Practitioners noted concern that children and young people's accounts may be hard to understand, full of discrepancies and accompanied by challenging and difficult behaviour. If the services are not available to support the child, young person or, indeed, the worker, it may be easier to ignore or disbelieve the situation than to try to respond without adequate resources. While this is hard to acknowledge and discuss, some practitioners

wanted more opportunity to talk further about the difficulties involved with identifying and responding to these challenging cases.

2.4 Experience brings improved practice (see recommendations 10–13 and 20).

Practitioners' awareness of the indicators of trafficking is improved through their experience of working with the cases. As practitioners deal with the cases and face the problems presented, they begin to recognise indicators and emerging patterns that help to improve identification. Lessons can be learnt by referring to the practitioners engaged in the work and building these lessons into local training initiatives.

2.5 Experience can be used to ascertain patterns of those who traffic children and young people, from where and for what purpose. However, practitioners levelled caution against categorising or profiling these communities for fear of labelling them and overshadowing evidence of variation (see recommendations 11–15 and 18).

While patterns emerge of children being trafficked from specific countries for specific reasons, practitioners warned against profiling, as it can assume characteristics that might not be true in all cases and can limit practitioners' understanding of the complexities and diversities attached to individual cases. Practitioners need training to help them understand the distinction between trafficking and smuggling, and to work with the complexities that these differences involve.

3 Every Child Matters: the role of mainstream services

3.1 Practitioners from a range of different mainstream welfare and law enforcement services noted that they each have a role to play in supporting trafficked children and young people to work towards achieving each of the five outcomes specified in Every Child Matters (see recommendations 5–8, 10–14 and 17–22). Interventions should be centred on the child or young person. Practitioners noted that most of the children and young people concerned wanted to be seen just as any other child – as “normal” rather than solely as a victim. Sometimes practitioners have to make decisions with which the child or young person may not agree. They noted the complexities of working with children and young people who may be influenced by traffickers and/or who may, as developing adolescents, want to assert their own judgement. Mainstream services involved with decision making about the welfare and best interests of the child must be framed within child and young person centred approaches, while also being mindful of the impact of coercion, manipulation

and violence for those in exploitative relationships. The primary focus must be on protecting the child from further abuse and exploitation.

3.2 Staying safe: practitioners noted that multi-agency work was necessary to identify trafficked children and young people and to keep them safe (see all recommendations, but particularly 12 and 13). The LSCB has a central role to play in facilitating multi-agency work to safeguard trafficked children and young people. Practitioners noted improved safety for the child when this was formalised through: (a) a local protocol; (b) a subcommittee or specialist group focusing on trafficking issues within the borough; and (c) a designated safeguarding trafficked children and young people worker who could offer advice and consultancy on casework undertaken by keyworkers.

3.3 Staying safe meant co-ordinated information sharing and joint work between police and child protection workers (see recommendations 12–18). Practitioners from both law enforcement and children’s service providers recognised some of the difficulties in maintaining joint work, but noted that, where possible, this had enhanced the opportunity to gather intelligence for the prosecution of abusers, better protecting children and young people involved. Solicitors, youth workers, youth offending team workers, police and child protection workers and teachers were each involved in keeping the young person safe. Such joint work was best facilitated through an active LSCB subcommittee focused on trafficked children and young people, through shared training and data recording, and through experience of running police operations in the local area.

3.4 Practitioners noted concern that some young people might commit offences as a result of coercion, manipulation or force on the part of traffickers (see recommendations 11–13, 17 and 18). There was concern that some practitioners may not be trained to recognise the indicators of trafficking and that as a result the child or young person may be penalised for behaviours resulting from coercion and abuse. Certain police or youth offending teams identified a history of trafficking within a young offender’s trajectory. Such identification improved the opportunity for child-centred safeguarding interventions to support the child and to improve intelligence gathering about abusers.

3.5 Good practice to support trafficked children and young people to be healthy meant improving knowledge of and access to mainstream health service provision (see recommendations 11, 14, 19 and 20). Practitioners noted that the young people presented a range of different, and often extreme, mental, physical and sexual problems. Accident and emergency services played an important role in identifying trafficked children, including

those referred from the point of arrival in the UK. Addressing mental health problems took time, and needed a sustained and supported relationship with a trained child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) worker. Walk-in centres were particularly important resources for those who were not registered with a GP. Mainstream health services also had a key role in helping young people nearing adulthood to make the transition to adult mental health services.

3.6 Practitioners noted that many trafficked children and young people were not on a school roll, despite wanting to enjoy and achieve (see recommendations 11–13 and 19–21).

Practitioners noted the importance of the trafficked child or young person being on a school roll, so that they could be kept occupied, build positive peer group relationships and work towards achieving ambitions. Alongside training existing services in schools to be aware of the needs of trafficked children and young people, it was suggested that a worker should be designated within the school to support trafficked children and young people. This worker would help to ensure that the child was settling into the school routines. If extra English language classes were needed, it was in the child's interest for these to be run inside rather than outside the school. Practitioners felt that the more the child or young person was outside the school, the more vulnerable they were to further exploitation.

3.7 Making a positive contribution and achieving economic wellbeing (see

recommendations 20–22). Practitioners noted concern that the focus of children's services was directed towards the welfare of younger children and that the 16 to 18 age group could slip through the net and out of view. Cases where trafficked young people were becoming independent, achieving well at school and having high ambitions were noted alongside those who continued to feel vulnerable and insecure. Practitioners noted concern that, at the age when the young person could make a positive contribution to the economy, they faced additional insecurity about their legal status in the UK. This could have an impact on their mental health and on their continued ability to achieve. Additional support, delivered through the keyworker approach, is needed: to enable this age group to engage with the natural transitions taking place through adolescence; to maintain a focus on their own development, future training and career development; and to manage the changes that they face with their legal status.

4 Some specialist services are needed for trafficked children and young people

4.1 Practitioners advocated three types of specialist services to meet the specific needs of trafficked children and young people (see recommendations 5, 8, 10, 12, and 13). These are: trained and specialist interpreters for those trafficked from abroad; safe and supported accommodation with trained and supported foster carers; and a dedicated keyworker approach to service delivery underpinned by reflective practice.

4.2 The process of identification of children and young people who may have been trafficked could be improved or hampered depending upon the skill and training of the interpreters provided (see recommendations 5 and 11). Practitioners, including interpreters themselves, noted the additional strain placed on the child or young person and on the interpreter in cases where there were problems with the child's mental, physical or sexual health. This was particularly the case where the effect of traffickers' threats, manipulation or violence was ongoing. Interpreters who had been trained to understand and manage this were better able to support the child.

4.3 A conceptual shift was needed in the provisions of accommodation (see recommendations 8 and 9). The belief that the existing local authority accommodation for looked-after children or young people sufficed for trafficked children and young people should change to one that recognised the need for trained carers, supported by a multidisciplinary team, including children's safeguarding services, health and police.

4.4 Practitioners noted the need for arrangements for emergency placements for those who have arrived in the country or who have re-appeared following a period of going missing (see recommendations 8 and 9). These placements need to be covered 24 hours a day by staff trained to understand the dynamics facing a trafficked child or young person.

4.5 Practitioners advocated the need for a keyworker approach (see recommendations 10, 11, 14, 18 and 19). While allocating an independent guardian was to be encouraged, it was highlighted that mainstream services with a keyworker approach best supported the child through relationship-based thinking. It was argued that the child or young person was more able to disclose information and access and use mainstream services if they experienced a trusting and secure relationship with an adult who was not going to abuse them. Indeed, it was

argued that modelling a good relationship was, in itself, a means of breaking patterns of abuse and exploitation.

Chapter 1 Setting the scene: what we know about the trafficking of children and young people

Case study 1: Abina's story

Fifteen years ago, Abina was brought into the UK by her "aunt" from an African country that was in the throes of a civil war in which domestic human rights abuses occurred with impunity. Historically rich with natural resources, the civil war had left the country beset by devastating socio-economic circumstances, creating further conflict and resulting in several thousand people fleeing persecution and seeking asylum in countries such as the UK.

Prior to her arrival, Abina had witnessed first-hand the death of her mother, her maternal grandmother who had subsequently looked after her, and other members of her family. Later in her life she came to blame herself for these bereavements.

On her arrival in the UK she was four years old and was initially looked after by her maternal aunt, who was her designated private foster carer. Her aunt became ill and she was then moved around from one extended family member to another. She was not encouraged to attend school regularly, and experienced a protracted period of instability. Her experiences during this time are not known, although it later became clear that she was working within the extended family, providing cleaning and child care during school hours. At the age of 10, she became looked after by children's services in a London borough and, after a series of placements in local authority fostering, broke down she was ultimately transferred to a children's home and then to the leaving care service.

During the years between her arrival and today, she has gained a history of being sexually exploited, and concerns about her mental health and history of self-harming have been ongoing throughout. She had disclosed accounts of rape on two occasions; and on neither occasion had these rapes led to any prosecutions. By the age of 15 she had miscarried, been excluded from school for truancy, gone missing for days at a time, self-harmed and was associating with older men. She had also been referred to mental health services and CAMHS for a behavioural programme in a residential or secure unit, but a shortage of beds made this impossible.

By 2007 she had a boyfriend who was giving her gifts and financial support. Also by 2007 professionals were describing her as needy, attention seeking, aggressive, abusive and

“someone who sabotages relationships”. Children’s services were increasingly concerned about her behaviour and, in particular, allegations of her involvement in inciting other minors to engage in sexual activity. Questioning whether she was looking for vulnerable young girls to exploit them herself or whether she was being led by others, children’s services were conscious that, as she was now a 19-year-old “adult”, this was a matter for the police. She now has convictions for theft, criminal damage and drink driving, and investigations continue into the incitement allegations.

Introduction: listening to the child protection concerns within the child’s account

1.1 This case, like all those referred to within this report, is a fictitious composite of a number of different actual cases identified in the research. Pseudonyms are used throughout the report and information blended so that a geographical area cannot be identified. All cases used as the basis of the composite scenarios were actual cases involving children and young people.

The case above illustrates some of the complexities involved in identifying and working with cases of trafficking. Although some young people are trafficked into the country in their teens, others might be brought in when younger and hidden within private foster care arrangements. The use of private foster care arrangements has been overhauled and better scrutinised in recent years. However, traffickers have sophisticated ways of avoiding contact with police or children’s services, and the exploitation of the child can continue unnoticed. The experience of exploitation, either through domestic servitude, or rape, abuse and organised sexual exploitation, continued through Abina’s early years and teens. By the time Abina was 15, she needed intensive support by trained and experienced practitioners who were able to understand and engage with the impact on her current behaviour of this history of abuse. As illustrated throughout this report, this is no easy task. It needs an awareness of the process through which trafficking can continue during a lifespan (chapter 3), and of the ways that the exploitation and abuse can silence the child and be met by disbelief (chapter 4). It is one that requires sensitivity from universal mainstream providers (chapter 5) and dedicated services by a few specialist facilities (chapter 6).

1.2 Children and young people who have been trafficked may have arrived from situations of poverty, social exclusion, discrimination, persecution or international or civil war. There is no typical profile of a trafficked child or young person – identification occurs as a result of agencies understanding the issue and gaining the trust of the child in order to hear what has

happened to them. Although the trafficked child or young person may have known that some risks may be involved, they would probably be unaware of the exploitation they faced. It is important to note, however, that not all children experience abuse before arriving in the UK. They may be persuaded into believing that they are being taken to a “better life”. They may see the trafficker as their agent and friend and are not abused until they arrive. Previous research has proposed that this may be one of the reasons they go missing at the point of arrival, following instructions from the trafficker who they have been encouraged to trust (ECPAT UK 2007). In these situations, the abuse starts at a later stage in the child’s trajectory.

1.3 In this report we explore the complex issues faced by practitioners working with children and young people who have been trafficked. This encompasses both children who have been trafficked into and within the country from abroad and UK nationals who are trafficked within the UK. Following identification of a child or young person as trafficked, how would service delivery today meet the child’s needs? Are we able to provide this “better life” that professionals often recount as the motivation for migration? Would Abina’s disclosure of rape be believed now, and would children’s services have the resources to follow the guidance for best practice as specified by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) in 2007. The Children Act 2008 and the Laming Report (2009) ask for a strengthened focus on the relationship between the practitioner and the child, the use of reflective practice, and the incorporation of skills and experience gained by senior practitioners in all cases of child protection through the involvement of a consultant social worker. Now is an ideal time to look at the needs identified by those practitioners most experienced in this work to enhance relationship-based, time-aware practice that puts the child protection needs of the child and young person first and foremost.

The overall aim of this research has been to identify good practice in this complex and dynamic environment. To this end, we highlight key messages and lessons learnt from research and practice to date. We outline some of the questions identified by the research staff team at the outset, and we explore the responses to these questions by drawing on a thematic search of literature and policy documents.

How does the Palermo Protocol on trafficking define the trafficking of children and young people?

1.4 The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, which is commonly referred to as the Palermo Protocol (2000) and came into force in 2003, provided the first internationally agreed definition of human trafficking (Article 3). It noted:

(a): "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

(b) the consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used.

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purposes of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;

(d) Child shall mean any person under 18 years of age.

The Palermo Protocol supplements the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and can be seen as the most influential international protocol concerning human trafficking. The definition contains three distinct elements, which interrelate: the "process" of travel (the recruitment, transportation and transfer); the "means" used (use of violence, threats or other use of force or coercion); and the "purposes" (exploitation, which includes, at a minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs).

Children and young people under the age of 18 cannot consent to being trafficked: what does this mean to them?

1.5 The Palermo Protocol has been instrumental in shaping debates around consent and agency by stating that children under the age of 18 cannot legally consent to being trafficked.

As many who have been trafficked have had past experiences of war, poverty and abuse, questions have been raised about whether trafficked persons should be seen as victims per se, or whether some, with the support and agreement of their families, put themselves forward to be trafficked as a means of escaping adverse situations in their countries of origin. While questions of choice might be explored for adults who are seeking to leave their country of origin, the Palermo Protocol (2000) defines children clearly as victims:

Children under 18 cannot give valid consent, and any recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purposes of exploitation is a form of trafficking regardless of the means used.

In practice, however, issues around a child's agency may be more complex.

The confusion relating to children's agency is further compounded by children's own complex understanding of the role they played in being trafficked. Their own perceptions may be tied in with previous traumatic experiences in their country of origin, or borne out of complex relationships with their traffickers. Children's self-definition (or lack thereof) as "trafficking victims" may be shaped by their hopes and expectations with regard to starting a new life abroad. Their conception of agency may be formed by their different cultural perceptions of childhood and home. Their conception of agency may be formed by their different cultural perceptions of "childhood" and "home" (Breuil 2008). They may not be aware that they have any rights at all, apart from those attributed through their families or carers. Rarely would children and young people be familiar with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Child trafficking contains elements of deception, coercion and forms of control, whether physical, monetary, emotional or psychological, all of which may influence a trafficked child's self-perception. This is explored later in the report, specifically in chapters 3 and 4.

Why are children and young people trafficked?

1.6 Research and scoping exercises (CEOP 2007; ECPAT UK 2007, 2009; Harris and Robinson 2007) have shown that children are trafficked for a plethora of forms of exploitation, including:

- sexual exploitation
- domestic labour
- benefit fraud
- work in cannabis factories
- work in restaurants
- work in factories
- work in nail bars
- drug mules or decoys for adult drug traffickers
- begging or pick-pocketing
- forced marriage
- trade in human organs (although, as far as is known, no cases of this have emerged within the UK to date)
- ritual killings (the “Adam” torso in Thames has been mentioned as a possible case of trafficking)
- agricultural labour
- illegal inter-country adoption
- trafficking of children as a repayment of initial trafficking “debt”.

These activities are frequently referred to as 3D jobs – dirty, difficult and dangerous (UN Drug Control Programme 2002). While the trafficking of women and girls for the purpose of prostitution constitutes perhaps the most prevalent and recognised form of exploitation, trafficking is not confined to sexual exploitation. UK studies by CEOP (2007, 2009) and ECPAT UK (2007, 2009) reveal that while many young women are trafficked for sexual exploitation, there is a broad range of reasons for both young women and young men to be trafficked into the country. The Home Office report *Trafficking for the Purpose of Labour Exploitation* gives an overview of existing literature on other forms of exploitation experienced by trafficked persons (Dowling et al. 2007).

What is the difference between a trafficked and a smuggled child or young person?

1.7 Trafficked children are frequently confused with, or labelled as “smuggled”, “separated” or “unaccompanied asylum-seeking children”.

“Trafficking” and “smuggling” are the two most common terms used for the illegal movement of people. They are often confused, being used interchangeably. Save the Children’s *Position paper on preventing and responding to trafficking of children in Europe* suggests that:

Since trafficking in human beings involves moving persons for profit, it is often confused – in policy as well as in practice – with smuggling of migrants, which is the subject of another Protocol supplementing the *UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*. (2007: 9)

According to the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air:

“Smuggling of migrants; shall mean the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.” (UN 2000: Article 3).

1.8 While the terms “trafficking” and “smuggling” can be a source of confusion, there are a number of important distinctions between the two concepts. According to government guidance on safeguarding children who may have been trafficked (DCSF 2007), human smuggling describes an event whereby immigrants or asylum seekers pay people to help them enter the country illegally, after which there is no longer a relationship.

Trafficked persons, in contrast, are coerced or deceived by the person arranging their relocation and forced into exploitation by the trafficker or person into whose control they are delivered or sold during transportation and/or on arrival in the country of destination (HO & DCSF 2007: 6).

Thus the relationship between the smuggler and the smuggled person technically ends on entry into the country of destination, whereas when a person is trafficked an exploitative relationship continues.

1.9 Another distinction relates to the crossing of borders. While smuggling always involves the illegal crossing of an international border, trafficking can be internal as well as transnational and involve illegal as well as legal border crossing (Save the Children 2007:10). Legally speaking, trafficking constitutes a violation of human rights whereas smuggling constitutes a crime against a state. Under UK law, smuggling is referred to as “facilitation” and is an offence under the Asylum and Immigration Act 2003.

While a clear distinction can be made at the conceptual level, boundaries between the two terms often become blurred in practice. Although the crime of smuggling does not constitute a human rights violation in itself, smuggled persons are often victims of human rights violations. Moreover, some cases may involve elements of both crimes, for instance, if a person is trafficked to another country, crossing its borders without proper legal documentation, or if a migrant is smuggled into a country and later deceived, transported further and forced into trafficking and exploitation (Save the Children 2007: 10). This point is explored further in chapter 6, where we question whether the illegal smuggling of the child or young person can, in itself, be exploitative, since the child may be placed into a situation of vulnerability through being a smuggled child.

How does the definition of a “trafficked”, “separated” and “unaccompanied asylum-seeking child” or young person help us to understand the circumstances they have experienced?

1.10 The trafficking of children and young people can take various forms and routes. If identified, trafficked children often come into contact with asylum teams and can therefore become part of the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) population. UASC is the term most commonly used by local authorities to describe children arriving in the UK seeking asylum without a parent or designated carer. In the absence of specific trafficking recording and monitoring systems, many trafficked children appear to be conceptually absorbed by the UASC category by default. However, it is important to note that many trafficked children may not be defined as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and may fail to come to the notice of UASC teams.

1.11 In the UK, separated children who have applied for asylum are commonly referred to as UASC. However, the terminology used to describe children and young people who arrive in the UK without an accompanying adult is problematic and contested. For instance, the term “UASC” fails to include those children who are accompanied by an adult who is not their parent, guardian

or primary carer. The Separated Children in Europe Programme refers to such children as “separated children”. (See www.separated-children-europe-programme.org/index.html)

While the local authorities referred to within this report used the term “UASC” frequently, it sits uncomfortably with some, as it is feared that the asylum-seeking status can take precedence over the young person’s status as a child in need. “Separated children” is the term used in most countries to describe children who are outside their country of origin and separated from their parents or legal or customary primary carer (UK Parliament, Joint Committee on Human Rights, Tenth Report 2007). This term is seen as good practice, as it describes the situation of many unaccompanied asylum-seeking children as being separated from their families abroad. ECPAT UK also refers to “separated children”, as the term denotes all those who are separated from their parents or primary guardian (Bokhari 2008).

In the context of this report, we use the term “separated children”, rather than UASC. However, as local authority data is recorded under the category of UASC, some references are made to UASC and separated children interchangeably.

What are the numbers of separated children and young people within the UK by gender?

1.12 In 2006, 70 per cent of all separated children and young people referred to as UASC who were in care were boys and 30 per cent were girls (HO 2008). The figures for the years 2002–6 show that the proportions in the gender categories have remained relatively constant, with 75 per cent of boys and 25 per cent of girls being in care in 2002, while the age category has changed more significantly.

There are currently around 6,000 UASC supported by local authorities in the UK. The annual intake of new cases has remained relatively static at around 3,000 per year over recent years (HO 2008).

What age are most of the separated children and young people in care?

1.13 The number of children aged 16 and over has been steadily growing over the past five years. In 2002, 54 per cent of looked-after UASC were under 16 while 46 per cent were 16

and over. At 31 March 2006, 34 per cent of UASC children in care were under 16 while 66 per cent were 16 and over (HO 2008).

In this context, the importance of age assessments and disputes should be highlighted as a crucial issue for trafficked and asylum-seeking children; this will be further discussed throughout the report. Existing practices around age assessment have frequently been challenged and their reliability questioned (Aynsley Green 2007). Recent research into the wellbeing of UASC further found age disputes to cause substantial stress to young people and to impact negatively on their mental health (Chase et al. 2008).

What happens to separated children when they leave local authority care?

1.14 The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 introduced amendments to the Children Act 1989 regarding leaving care provisions and specified duties of local authorities with respect to children who have been “looked after” by them in the past. Local authorities have a duty to give “former relevant children” assistance by devising pathway plans, outlining support and accommodation, and to provide education/training or support for those seeking employment. Local authorities further have a duty to contribute to expenses incurred by the young person living near the places where they are or will be employed, or seeking employment or living near the place where they are or will be receiving education or training. With regard to separated children and young people there is a degree of uncertainty among local authorities as to whether the above-mentioned leaving care provisions apply, as illustrated by the Hillingdon Case, which was an action (judicial review) in the High Court brought by four former UASC who had been accommodated and otherwise assisted by the London Borough of Hillingdon until they were 18. The four (now all over 18) contended that the local authority owed them a continuing duty under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 as “former relevant children”, as they had been looked after (by being provided with accommodation). The court ruled that a child who has been accepted as “looked after” should be eligible for leaving care services (including a named personal advisor, accommodation and a pathway plan) irrespective of the decision on the young person’s asylum claim).

To assist local authorities meet the leaving care costs of separated children and young people, the government has set up a UASC Leaving Care Costs Grant (DCSF 2007).

What does the UK ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking mean?

1.15 The UK government ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking on 17 December 2008 and it became operational on 1 April 2009.

The Convention is designed both to promote action against traffickers and, equally importantly, to provide safeguards and entitlements to identified victims of trafficking. The Convention recognises the difficulties of law enforcement and social care professionals in making positive identifications of victims given the covert nature of the crime and the reluctance of many victims to disclose their plight to the authorities. Victims fear retribution from the traffickers or lack trust in the willingness or ability of the authorities to protect them. Member states must provide the opportunity for a “reflection period” to be given to victims whose entry into the country may well have been irregular and where otherwise they would be subject to removal by immigration authorities. The reflection period in the UK is for a period of 45 days (exceeding the prescribed minimum of 30 days) where “reasonable grounds” have been established by a “Competent Authority” that an individual should be considered to be a victim.

1.16 In relation to child victims (that is, those up to age 18), Article 10 of the Convention requires member states to ensure that victims are provided with accommodation, legal advice, medical assistance, education and that an “organisation authority or individual” be appointed to act as a guardian. All decisions regarding the child’s welfare and future should be taken in their “best interests” in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This is in line with current practice, where all separated children, whatever their country of origin or residential status, become looked-after children within the provision of the 1989 and 2004 Children Acts. Through their children’s social care staff, the local authority acts as the child’s guardian. Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) provide the framework in which trafficked children should be identified and protected in the same way as any child who is at risk of harm and abuse.

As from April 2009, social workers and/or police officers working within LSCB frameworks and procedures should refer cases within the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for consideration by the Competent Authority. The impact of the Convention on the welfare of

child victims of trafficking is less significant than that for adults, as many trafficked children arrive in the UK or later emerge as separated children and UASC. The asylum system normally provides leave to remain until the applicant is 17.5 years of age while their claim is processed and any appeals concluded.

It is possible that the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants, etc.) Act 2004 will need to be amended to ensure that UK law fully covers the specific protection of children, including making their consent irrelevant if they are under 18 years old. However, it is clear that identification of any individual who has been trafficked is complex and it is important that any NRM provides a comprehensive service to frontline staff, based on a thorough understanding of the different forms of trafficking, and the particular plight of children and young people who have been trafficked.

Is there any funding to support the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention?

1.17 The UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) is working with the UK Border Agency (UKBA) to raise awareness of the impact of the ratification (www.ukhtc.org). The government provides direct funding for other law enforcement agencies such as the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) and some direct services to adult female victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation (see the Poppy Project at www.eaves4women.co.uk).

The NSPCC National Child Trafficking Advice and Information Line (CTAIL) has also been funded through the Home Office and Comic Relief to run a helpline for practitioners concerned about how to identify or manage a case of a trafficked child and to oversee the management of a limited caseload. With its trafficked young people's advisory group, this service is taking a lead in collating data, working in partnership with agencies and offering social work support and advice on safeguarding trafficked children.

However, existing research (CEOP 2007, 2009; ECPAT UK 2007), corroborated by findings from the present research project, reveals an acute need for specific resources to support practitioners who are safeguarding the full range of trafficked children and young people from abuse. Additional funding for direct work and for enhanced training of staff from a range of different disciplines will be needed if the aims of the Council of Europe Convention are to be achieved. Lord Laming's recent report (Laming 2009) calls for an overview of the current

training for social work staff, with a particular focus on the experience they receive in working on child protection cases. He recommends that social work is organised through social work units where an experienced social work consultant is supported to manage the more complex and emotionally demanding child protection cases. He also advocates that Children's Trusts ensure that a named and preferably co-located representative from the police, a community paediatric specialist and health visitors are active partners within children's services. These recommendations are timely as many practitioners within this research noted the need for further training, better support for multi-agency work and for designated senior staff leading the interventions in relation to the complex trafficking cases.

What data do we have about children and young people trafficked into the UK?

1.18 The UK has been identified as a significant transit and destination country for trafficked children. The majority of children trafficked into the UK begin their journey in East Asia or Africa (Sillen & Beddoe 2007). The particular economic and political changes within Europe have moreover contributed to specific forms of feminised poverty and resulted in an increasing movement of impoverished children within and between European countries (Jeffreys 1999; Mullenger 2000; Munday 1998; Nistor and Soitu 2000; www.ecpat.org.uk).

Human trafficking constitutes one of the most serious human rights violations of our time and is thought to be the third most profitable organised criminal activity in the world, behind weapons and narcotics, generating an alleged US\$12 billion a year (Edward et al. 2007). Knowledge of the scope of trafficking remains relatively vague due to its clandestine and transient nature. Although the credibility of estimates has been challenged, some have suggested that 2.4 million people annually are trafficked across borders around the globe. It is believed that half this number or 1.2 million of all trafficked people are children (UNICEF 2008).

1.19 There is still relatively little reliable data to give a comprehensive overview of child trafficking in the UK. In 2006, the first proactive policing operation, Pentameter 1, was launched to tackle human trafficking, simultaneously involving all 55 police forces across the UK. The operation visited 515 premises, identified 188 women (primarily from Eastern Europe, China/Southeast Asia, Africa or Brazil) and confirmed that 84 of these women were victims of trafficking. As less than 10 per cent of the UK's massage parlours and brothels were visited during Pentameter 1, it is therefore estimated that several thousand more victims

remain to be found. While the majority of the women discovered by Pentameter 1 were aged between 18 and 25 at the time of their arrest, 12 were minors aged between 14 and 17. The operation resulted in 232 people being arrested and 134 people being charged with a variety of offences (www.pentameter.police.uk).

Building on Pentameter 1, a further operation, Pentameter 2, was launched on 3 October 2008. This identified 167 victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation, 13 of whom were children. The *Update to the UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking* (HO 2008) identified figures and stated that Pentameter 2 was:

...mounted on a larger scale than Pentameter 1 and lasted for twice as long. During the operational phase of the campaign 822 premises were visited of which 582 were residential, 157 were massage parlours or saunas and 83 were other premises including hotels, and ports of entry into the UK. 528 arrests were made and 167 victims of sexual exploitation were recovered, of which 13 were children/young people...In addition, 5 victims of labour trafficking were recovered, of which 3 were children/young people." (HO 2008: 17)

1.20 In 2007, CEOP published a scoping study on child trafficking in the UK, which found 330 cases of children that fitted the profile of having been trafficked. Of the children found in this scoping study, 276 (85 per cent) were believed to be between 15 and 17 years old, while 24 children were thought to be between 13 and 14 years of age and 14 were 12 years old or younger. It is appreciated that these findings may be questioned as many of the children's ages are estimated through age assessments, rather than through verified documented evidence. The majority (86 per cent) of children with clear evidence of trafficking were girls; 65 per cent of these girls were believed to have been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, while 23 per cent were suspected to have been trafficked for the purpose of domestic servitude. The remainder were thought to have been trafficked for the purposes of drug trafficking, cannabis cultivation and other forms of criminal activity, adoption, servile marriages, benefit fraud and other forms of labour exploitation such as in restaurants. The types of exploitation in the cases of trafficked boys recorded in the study were less clear. The report suggests that this may be because boys were being smuggled into the UK, rather than trafficked, or because the types of exploitation boys were involved in were harder to identify. Cases where information regarding the exploitation of boys was given included those involving cannabis cultivation, labour exploitation, begging and domestic servitude (CEOP 2007).

Drawing on the findings from this scoping exercise in 2007, CEOP created four levels of probability of young people being trafficked, ranging from low to high probability of trafficking. Of the 330 young people assessed:

- 70 were placed in level 1
- 70 were placed in level 2 with two or three evident indicators of trafficking
- 85 were placed in level 3, where law enforcement investigations found three or more indicators consistent with recognised child trafficking profiles
- 105 were placed in level 4, where there was clear evidence of being trafficked.

In total, 44 source countries were identified in the study, mainly in the regions of the Far East, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, West Africa, East Africa, Eastern Europe and the Baltic states (CEOP 2007: 5).

1.21 ECPAT UK found similar patterns in their study of 80 suspected cases of trafficked young people coming from Africa and East Asia (ECPAT UK 2007). Similarly, 38 of the 50 young people who were suspected of being trafficked in a review of trafficked and sexually exploited young people in West Sussex were 16 or 17 years old, 62 per cent (21) of whom were of Chinese origin, 12 were from Liberia and 7 were from India. Most presented as separated children, either as unaccompanied minors or with adults who were not holding parental responsibility for them (Harris and Robinson 2007).

1.22 A recent Strategic Threat Assessment from CEOP (April 2009) identified 325 children from 52 countries as potential victims of trafficking (March 2007 to February 2008). Disaggregating child trafficking by nationality, the report highlighted the profiles of particular nationalities. Information known to date about trafficked children from China, West and East Africa, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Bangladesh, South Africa and Zimbabwe, as well as Roma children and “internally” trafficked UK nationals, was provided to begin to identify the known trends of child trafficking within the UK. The assessment also found that sexual exploitation is likely to be the most identifiable form of trafficking and showed how children who are trafficked often come from vulnerable or socio-economically deprived backgrounds. It also described how violence, or the threat of violence, is just one of the many control mechanisms used by traffickers to silence children or young people.

1.23 Research commissioned by the office of the Children’s Commissioner for Wales and carried out by ECPAT UK considered what evidence base there was that child trafficking was

occurring in Wales (ECPAT UK 2009). The experiences of 41 practitioners in Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham were examined and, of 45 children reported to be of concern, 32 children within Wales were included in the study. For the first time, more boys than girls were identified as having been trafficked and it was also confirmed that children were being identified in rural towns and villages as well as the better-known urban areas close to airports. The report highlighted how practitioners often encountered difficulties identifying a child as trafficked stemming from attitudes, knowledge and practice on or about trafficking more broadly.

While asylum and immigration legislation and policy remain non-devolved areas, services for children within Wales are the responsibility of the Welsh Assembly Government, which has now set up a Cross Party Assembly Group on trafficking of Women and Children. One of their key issues to date has been the number of children going missing.

What do we know about those trafficked children and young people who go missing?

1.24 CEOP estimates that 56 per cent of the 330 known or suspected trafficked children identified in the scoping study have gone missing without trace (CEOP 2007). The CEOP report indicates that of the trafficked children who went missing and were later found, suspicion or evidence of abuse was recognised in the intervening period. The study further highlights failings in social welfare arrangements for these children. Prior to the launch of the CEOP scoping study, the UK government had announced that 220 victims of child trafficking had been identified over an 18-month period. Of these 220 children, 183 went missing from social service care (Sillen and Beddoe 2007). This supports a claim made in an ECPAT UK study on missing children published in 2007 that 60 per cent – or 48 out of 80 reported or suspected cases of child trafficking – had gone missing. The study was based on interviews with practitioners from three specific localities in the UK, suggesting that many children who have gone missing after being trafficked into the country “had not been investigated, identified or recorded as victims of trafficking at the time they went missing” (ECPAT UK 2007: 5). The report reveals a worrying lack of data held on the 80 children suspected of having been trafficked into the UK. From a review of young people in West Sussex who had been trafficked into the UK, over half of the 60 cases went missing within a week of arrival (Harris & Robinson 2007). This work noted that, since 2000, 118 UASC have gone missing from care in West Sussex and that over half are suspected victims of trafficking.

What are the legal and policy contexts protecting trafficked children and young people in the UK?

1.25 Trafficking has been written into various domestic laws within the UK. Sections 57 to 59 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 cover trafficking into, within and out of the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation, and sections 4 and 5 of the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants etc.) Act 2004 made it an offence to facilitate the trafficking of people for exploitation. There is also other specialist legislation such as the Gangmasters (Licensing) Act 2005, which aims to better protect migrant workers. Trafficking involves the committing of many other offences. For law enforcement purposes there are advantages to using the specific offence of trafficking, but this does not imply that other offences should be ignored. It is important to note that traffickers can be charged and prosecuted with many other offences, such as “facilitation”, “rape”, “abduction” and “grievous bodily harm”, to name a few. It is important to note that the use of these options for disrupting and prosecuting traffickers is available.

1.26 Other laws relevant specifically to the trafficking of children and young people include the Children Act (1989 and 2004). More recent developments have included the “*UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking*” (March 2007, updated 2008) and guidance on safeguarding children who may have been trafficked (HO and DCSF 2007). This guidance provides a range of flowcharts to guide practitioners through the use of sections 17, 20 and 47 of the Children Act 1989, setting a framework for preventing the inappropriate use of private foster care arrangements. It supplements “*Working Together to Safeguard Children*” (DCSF 2006). Also, the “*UK Staying Safe Action Plan*” (DCSF 2008: 45) notes the need to improve the provision of a safety net and of safe places for young people who go missing from home.

Are there any local policy initiatives in the UK aimed at protecting trafficked children and young people?

1.27 Trafficked children and young people often enter the care system either through asylum teams or sexual exploitation services. As such, their care entitlements frequently overlap with those of UASC. Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 imposes a clear and unequivocal duty on local authorities to look after UASC below the age of 18. Within local authorities, children’s services have responsibility for their care.

The London Safeguarding Children Board has produced a protocol for safeguarding trafficked and exploited children. It notes that the procedure is to provide guidance to professionals and volunteers from all agencies in safeguarding children who are abused and neglected by adults who traffic them into and out of the UK in order to exploit them.

Visit www.londonscb.gov.uk/procedures/supplementary_procedures.html or click on the following link:

 [London procedure for safeguarding trafficked and exploited children](#)

Also developed is a London toolkit for safeguarding trafficked children, which is an initiative to pilot a best practice multi-agency safeguarding children toolkit for responding to the trafficking of children. It results from work streams from London councils, individual London LSCBs, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and the Home Office (ACPO, CEOP and UKBA). The draft toolkit has now been sent to 11 local authorities for piloting throughout 2009. Visit www.londonscb.gov.uk/trafficking or click on the following link:

 [London toolkit for safeguarding trafficked children](#) – draft for piloting (1.7mb)

What is the legal status of the young person once they reach 18?

1.28 The growing number of looked-after UASC aged 16 and older raises questions with regard to what happens to UASC once they reach 18. At this stage, the legal status of a young person is assessed and his or her future will largely depend on whether the young person is granted Refugee Status, Humanitarian Protection (HP), Discretionary Leave (DL), or whether the young person's asylum application is rejected.

Where a young person's asylum claim has failed, even when a period of limited leave is granted, it is likely that he or she will ultimately be removed from the UK. In such an event, the local authority must still provide the Leaving Care services to which the young person is entitled.

What is the difference between “internal” and “international” trafficking?

1.29 Studies of migration have often split into two different bodies of work – one primarily concerned with the international trafficking of children and young people between countries and the other concerned with the internal trafficking of children and young people within countries. It has been argued that these two different approaches to understanding the problems have remained separated from each other (King et al. 2008). As such, different sources of data and different research techniques have been used to describe international and internal migration and trafficking, often led by policy agendas between or within countries. This has had the adverse effect of narrowing our understanding of the process of trafficking of children and young people from abroad, a process, which often includes the further trafficking within the country of destination.

Our research suggests that trafficking can be divided between those children and young people who are:

- Trafficked from abroad: these young people will be moved on within the UK after arrival from abroad, and may therefore then also be defined as “internally trafficked”. They may not speak English, may have little knowledge of the UK support systems available through children’s services, may have come from “home” cultures (and climates) that are profoundly different from those in the UK and may have experienced violence and abuse during their journey. They are unlikely to have any knowledge of a local peer group or family/care network that they could have any access to within the UK.
- Indigenous UK nationals trafficked within the UK: here the focus has been, in the main, on UK nationals trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation (as outlined in the Sexual Offences Act 2003). Most of these young people will be English-speaking (as a second if not first language). They will, in the main, have a knowledge or familiarity with different forms of culture in the UK, and will have some awareness of a local peer group, family or care network within the UK. Little is known about whether, and to what extent, UK nationals are internally trafficked for other forms of exploitation.

When using the concept of “internal trafficking” it is important that these distinctions are held in mind to recognise the unique vulnerabilities and needs of children and young people from abroad. Throughout this report we have maintained a dominant focus on the experiences of children and young people who are trafficked into the UK from abroad, while taking note of cases of the trafficking of UK nationals within the country as they arose in the research.

How can our knowledge of sexual exploitation help us to develop relationship-based child-centred practice with trafficked children and young people who have been sexually exploited?

1.30 There are valuable lessons to be learnt from work safeguarding sexually exploited children and young people. In 2000, the government issued *a guidance paper on “Safeguarding Children Involved in Prostitution”* (SCIP) (DH 2000), which advocated that the young people were to be worked with as victims of sexual exploitation. This guidance is currently being updated, and, set alongside research reports and evaluations, provides a strong overview of issues involved in the work (see Chase and Statham 2005, Harper and Scott 2005, Melrose 2004, Pearce 2002, 2007, 2009, Scott and Skidmore 2006). Findings from this work note the need for a central focus on child protection concerns, for integrated multi-agency provision to run alongside targeted specialist resources, and for training to alert practitioners and the general public to indicators of abuse.

While the focus of this work has been developed to address the sexual exploitation of children and young people, it will be seen in chapter 5 of this report that similar structural issues arise in good practice developed with trafficked children and young people.

Is the trafficking of children and young people a child protection issue or an immigration concern?

1.31 There has always been a tension between immigration control, the immigration status of the child and child protection concerns. However, following the Palermo Protocol, and subsequent developments in good practice, it is clear that child protection is the first and foremost consideration when working with a case of a trafficked child or young person.

1.32 The lifting of the UK government’s reservation to the UNCRC in December 2008 is significant as it demonstrates a total commitment to a child-centred approach, protecting

children from exploitation. Although separated children and young people had been eligible for protection under section 17 or 20 of the Children Act 1989, lifting the reservation made a definite statement that trafficked children will receive the same protection under the current safeguarding children's framework as other children in the UK.

While these decisions have been welcomed, non-governmental organisations such as Amnesty International and the Refugee Council are continuing to campaign for a greater recognition of the needs of trafficked people, particularly children. Specifically, they call for:

- appropriate support and accommodation with specialist providers to deal with victims;
- making funding available to voluntary and statutory agencies to provide specialist support to trafficked people and particularly children;
- investing in research to establish a clearer picture of the prevalence of trafficking and characteristics and needs of victims of trafficking (www.amnesty.org.uk; www.refugeecouncil.org.uk).

The UKBA issued a consultation document on their code of practice *Keeping Children Safe from Harm* (UKBA 2008) with the focus on child protection enhanced as a result.

What do we know of the needs of trafficked children and young people?

1.33 There are still gaps in knowledge around the needs of trafficked persons, particularly children. Existing research paints a complex picture of those needs. The work of Zimmerman et al. (2006) explored the health needs of 207 women trafficked into the UK, 24 of whom were aged between 15 and 17. The women in the study had experienced extreme forms of sexual, physical and emotional violence and abuse within their home countries prior to being trafficked. Zimmerman et al. highlighted the detrimental cumulative effect that continued violence experienced during the trafficking process had had on the women's physical and mental health. They identified important recommendations for health and social service providers across Europe. These ranged from the need to provide a recovery and reflection period of a minimum of 90 days for adults following being identified as trafficked, to the need for safe housing, long-term psychological support, and occupational and educational training.

Recent research on the emotional wellbeing and mental health of separated children in the UK mentions the extreme trauma, distress and accumulated loss of family members many young people had experienced before leaving their country of origin or during their journeys (Chase et al. 2008: 2). Here, the terms “UASC” and “separated child” are used interchangeably. Children, particularly older children participating in the research, suffered from anxieties, stress and other difficulties linked to emotional health problems. The work reported a range of common manifestations of emotional difficulties, ranging from missing family, feelings of isolation and loneliness, disturbed sleep patterns, general anxiety, headaches, panic attacks, depression, eating difficulties and, in some cases, more severe mental health problems requiring specialist support or hospitalisation. While this research reveals gaps in terms of appropriate (mental) health services, it also highlights the need for developing an appropriate language for mental health that is less stigmatised and better understood by young people across a range of cultures. Many participants articulated their feelings of loss and trauma as a “sickness of the heart, not of the mind” (Chase et al: 3). Westernised notions around emotional wellbeing and therapeutic mental health services can be alienating to young people from other parts of the world. As one separated young person from Africa explained:

It's different here...everything when you say you are stressed, they going to say you are mental...something like that...I don't like someone to call me mental. Mental is one who become like crazy or can't think, who fight if you move close...this is the one we call mental. Even like counselling, they may think I'm mental. That's why I don't like to use those types of services because I don't want anyone to say I'm mental... 'cos I don't think I'm mental. (quoted in Chase et al.: 3)

1.34 Work undertaken by Kohli (2007) on separated children and young people identifies similar needs as those noted by Chase et al. (2008), and addresses the complex challenges for social work practice that are involved in providing culturally sensitive services for such children and young people.

Trafficking often involves every form of abuse – neglect and physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Many of the symptoms and complexities may be an entirely normal response to what is, essentially, an abnormal situation (Hynes 2007). The child's or young person's behaviour needs to be understood in this context.

What are the gaps in existing data?

1.35 While existing studies shed some light on the scope of child trafficking in the UK, they are unlikely to paint an exhaustive or complete picture of the situation. As noted within the CEOP scoping report, identification of cases improves as practitioners and the general public become more aware of the issues and more able to identify indicators of trafficking cases (CEOP 2007). Monitoring and analysis of child trafficking has been and remains challenging due to the fluid and clandestine nature of the crime (Sillen and Beddoe 2007).

The limitations in existing knowledge and available data on trafficked children also stem from the absence of a national, centralised data recording and monitoring system specifically relating to trafficking. As we note in this report, many local authorities do not have the requirement, or the mechanisms in place, to record the identification of trafficked children and young people or their movement within and out of the country.

Instead, trafficked children frequently fall under the remit of data collected by asylum teams or the subcommittees of LSCBs for safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation. This can restrict incidents of trafficking to those involving experience of sexual exploitation, sidelining other forms of exploitation. Unless trafficked children are in care or receive support through sexual exploitation or asylum services, they may easily slip through the net.

Three further gaps have been identified:

- The backgrounds and context from which the children and young people arrive need to be better understood through research into the source countries, their efforts to prevent trafficking and their relationship with other countries that might be involved during the child's or young person's transit.
- The young person's own account of why and how they were trafficked into the UK from abroad and the impact this has had on their development has not been researched. There has been no comprehensive review of young people's own accounts. Although there are serious ethical considerations that need to be borne in mind when planning such research, it is essential that a better, child-centred account of the reasons for, and experience of, trafficking are provided by the young people themselves.

- Finally, little is known about the problems faced by practitioners who are trying to recognise and respond to the needs of trafficked young people. It is this gap that the present research begins to identify and explore.

Conclusion

1.36 This research aims to begin an exploration of the complexities faced by practitioners in their work with trafficked children and young people.

This chapter has provided an overview of some of the existing literature and policy frameworks that inform our understanding of trafficking. Before moving to the findings of the research, the next chapter explains the original aims, the methods used and the settings within which the research took place.

Chapter 2 Research aims, methods and context

Introduction

2.1 This chapter explains the origins and governance of the research. It provides an overview of the research aims, the ethical considerations that were taken into account and the research methods that were used. It gives an overview of the three sites where the research took place and a breakdown of the numbers of practitioners approached through out the process of the research.

Research aims

2.2 As noted in chapter 1, the work of children's charities and campaign organisations has raised concern about whether trafficked children and young people are being identified and how their needs are being met.

2.3 The NSPCC funded a two-year research project (2007–9) to explore these concerns in more depth, drawing on practitioners' experiences of working with the cases of trafficked young people. The aims of the research were to:

- Explore in depth the different ways in which trafficking is understood by a range of practitioners from different service agencies and provide evidenced recommendations for practice in their area.
- Explore the obstacles that might emerge to identifying the numbers of young people trafficked in the three areas.
- Identify the numbers of children and young people trafficked into each of the three areas.
- Chart the process through which a child or young person first gained access to a support agency, including how they first contacted an agency and for what reason.
- Where possible, provide a profile on each of the children and young people identified including: age; nationality; country of origin; the reason they were trafficked into the country; and a summary of their current circumstances.

- Identify how the practitioner understood the immediate and longer-term needs of the children and young people concerned.
- Identify how the professionals feel these needs are best met.
- Where possible, identify perceptions of how the children/young people feel these needs are best met.
- Make recommendations about how agencies or individuals can best support the children/young people concerned.

2.4 The overarching aim was to draw on practitioners' experiences to identify good child and young person centred practice in work with trafficked children and young people, focusing on safeguarding those concerned.

2.5 The study provides limited quantitative data on young people trafficked into and within the three sites. It proved very difficult to gather reliable quantitative data because:

- practitioners worked with a range of different definitions of trafficking; and
- many cases of trafficking that did exist had not been recorded within any formal recording mechanism.

The primary aim of the work was to provide a qualitative analysis of the issues and complexities faced by the practitioners when identifying and working with trafficked children and young people.

2.6 The main focus of the study was to address the complexities facing practitioners in their work with children and young people who were trafficked from abroad into the UK.

However, it became clear that a number of practitioners were facing complex problems in identifying and working with UK citizens who were trafficked within the country for the purpose of sexual exploitation. It was also clear that the three sites had different densities of caseloads, those nearer to airports receiving more referrals of those trafficked into the UK from abroad than others, whose referrals tended to be mainly of UK citizens trafficked for sexual exploitation. There was some concern that the legislation enshrined within the Sexual Offences Act 2003 designed to protect children from trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation was not being used to its full capacity, and that the trafficking of UK nationals within the UK needed further attention. For this reason, while the focus of the work in this report is directed towards the complexities facing practitioners in their work with children

trafficked from abroad, we also consider some cases of UK nationals trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Research staffing, governance and dissemination

2.7 This research was commissioned by the NSPCC. The NSPCC's Head of Research had overall responsibility for setting up, managing and reporting on progress of the research, working in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire. Part of the funding for the work came from a generous donation to the NSPCC by "The Children's Charity". The day-to-day responsibility and management of the work was co-ordinated by the Principal Investigator, Professor Jenny Pearce from the University of Bedfordshire. Two Senior Research Officers from the NSPCC, Dr Patricia Hynes and Dr Silvie Bovarnick, were responsible for working with the team to co-ordinate the fieldwork, analysis of findings, draft sections of the report and to be available for consultation on child protection and safeguarding concerns. Sarah Field, a research assistant at the University of Bedfordshire and Cara Senouni, the University of Bedfordshire administrator for the project, contributed to the data collection and administrative tasks respectively. Chloe Pritchard from the NSPCC supported administrative work by transcribing and inputting data for analysis (see acknowledgements for others who contributed time to the project).

The research team referred to Professor Susanne MacGregor as an independent academic advisor and reported through written and verbal presentations to a multi-agency advisory group, which met quarterly throughout the duration of the research. The research advisory group comprised a representative from the safeguarding team of each of the three research sites. These staff were responsible for supporting the research team liaison with each site.

The findings from the research were collated into a draft report, which was circulated among members of the Advisory Group for comment and amendment prior to publication. The research report will be launched at a national conference organised via Making Research Count (www.beds.ac.uk/research/iasr/mrc) and is available on the NSPCC (www.nspcc.org.uk/trafficking) and University of Bedfordshire websites.

Research methods

2.8 The research methods included the use of focus groups, semi-structured interviews and case studies. These three different research methods were used to explore the generic research questions with practitioners from a range of disciplines. First, the team ran focus groups in each of the three sites. Then one-to-one semi-structured interviews were held with a range of different practitioners from the three sites. Finally, the three sites identified files representing details of children and young people who had been trafficked that were analysed as case studies by the research team. Findings were analysed thematically and triangulated for verification.

The generic research questions were piloted first through pilot interviews with colleagues from within the NSPCC; and second through an initial focus group in one of the three sites.

2.9 First, a total of 65 practitioners took part in three separate focus groups run in each of the three sites. Two researchers were present at each focus group and the focus group discussion was digitally recorded, following permission being granted from those present. Focus group discussion followed a specific list of topics framed around the generic research questions (see appendix 4). The size of the focus group varied depending upon practitioner availability and expertise in each of the three sites. No focus group was smaller than five or larger than ten people.

Table 1: Numbers of practitioners attending focus groups in each of the three sites and the numbers of trafficked children and young people (TCYP) with whom they had worked

| Site | Number practitioners | Worked with 0 TCYP | Worked with less than 5 TCYP | Worked with 5–10 TCYP | Worked with 10–20 TCYP | Worked with more than 20 TCYP |
|--------------|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Site 1 | 23 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 11 |
| Site 2 | 17 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Site 3 | 25 | 16 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| Total | 65 | 21 | 13 | 9 | 6 | 16 |

Focus group members were given written documentation about the research project in advance, outlining the key research questions.

The transcribed recordings from the focus groups were analysed manually by two separate members of the research team. The data was analysed thematically and the findings cross-referenced between the two staff members. A summary of the thematic analysis was presented to the research project Advisory Group for comments and review.

2.10 Second, one-to-one semi-structured interviews were carried out with practitioners from each of the three sites. Purposeful sampling took place to try to interview practitioners from the focus groups with experience of working with trafficked children or young people.

Interviewees were selected for interview:

- If they had been a member of a focus group had particular experience in working with trafficked children and young people;
- If their name had been put forward by the local site research representative (a member of the LSCB) as a staff member with particular experience of work with trafficked children and young people.

The majority of practitioners interviewed had been part of a focus group. An additional seven were interviewed following recommendation from the local site research representative, bringing the total number of practitioners contacted from the three sites to 72.

Table 2: Professional status of practitioners in focus groups (FG) and interviews

| Agency or profession | Site 1 FG | Site 2 FG | Site 3 FG | Total in FG | Professions of the seven practitioners attending interviews who had not been a part of a focus group |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|---|
| Young persons drug and alcohol worker | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | |
| Health worker GP and hospital-based health workers | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | |
| Looked-after children's nurses | 3 | 4 | 0 | 7 | |
| Education welfare and school-based education support workers | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 1 |
| Social workers, including LSCB | 6 | 5 | 7 | 18 | 2 |
| Independent reviewing officer | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | |
| Children's centre support worker | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | |
| Children's residential worker | 3 | 3 | 1 | 7 | |
| Asylum team worker | 2 | 0 | 1 | 3 | |
| Police | 1 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| UKBA | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | |
| NGO provision for children and young people | 2 | 0 | 7 | 9 | |
| CPS | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | |
| YOT | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total number of practitioners in focus groups and interviews | 23 | 17 | 25 | 65 | 72 |

The semi-structured interviews followed a set format of questioning developed from the generic research questions (see appendix 5 for semi-structured interview questions).

With agreement from the practitioner, the interviews were digitally recorded. The recordings were transcribed and analysed thematically through use of NVivo software.

2.11 Finally, the data recorded within case files pertaining to 37 children and young people were studied using a case study template (available on request to the research team). The template was piloted with NSPCC practitioners from the NSPCC National Child Trafficking Advice and Information Line (CTAIL) and with members of the CTAIL young people's advisory group. The final template used reflected amendments recommended following this piloting exercise.

The ethical reasons for conducting case study reviews from data recorded in case files, rather than through direct contact with the children and young people concerned, are outlined below. The experience of conducting this research project, including the work carried out by the

research team in contact with the CTAIL young people’s advisory group, raised awareness of a number of ethical concerns to be addressed. It became apparent that the ethical issues identified below could be addressed by including children and young people in the process. This offers the children and young people the opportunity to contribute their own views of their experiences to the developing knowledge base on trafficking while gaining valuable experience in, and accreditation for, understanding and conducting research. Although children and young people were not involved as participants in this particular research project, the research team is working on developing this for future follow-up activity.

2.12 A minimum of five case studies were sought from each area. The information from case study files was manually placed on the case study template by the research staff and input into NVivo software for thematic analysis. The quantitative data from the case studies is outlined below, while qualitative data is incorporated within the body of the report in chapters 3 to 6.

Table 3: Number of case studies analysed

| Site | Cases of trafficking into UK from abroad | Cases of trafficking of UK citizens | Total cases of trafficking analysed |
|--------------|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | 16 | 0 | 16 |
| 2 | 10 | 4 | 14 |
| 3 | 1 | 6 | 7 |
| Total | 27 | 10 | 37 |

Of the 37 Cases, 18 were of situations where the child or young person was reported missing or had experienced periods of going missing from care.

Table 4: Gender and age breakdown of the 37 case studies analysed

| Age | Girls | | | | Boys | | | | Gender unknown | | | | Total |
|---------------|------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|-----------|------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| | UK citizens trafficked | | Trafficked into UK from abroad | | UK citizens trafficked | | Trafficked into UK from abroad | | UK citizens trafficked | | Trafficked into UK from abroad | | |
| | Sexual exploitation | Other | Sexual exploitation | Other | Sexual exploitation | Other | Sexual exploitation | Other | Sexual exploitation | Other | Sexual exploitation | Other | |
| 3 and under | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 6 |
| 4–8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 9–12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 13–15 | 5 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15 |
| 16/17 | 4 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14 |
| Totals | 9 | 0 | 9 | 12 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 37 |

Table 5: Reasons for trafficking (of the 37 case studies analysed)

| Sexual exploitation | Forced marriage | Domestic servitude | Benefit fraud/ ?illegal adoption | Restaurant work | Drug trafficking | Not known | Total |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------|-----------|
| 19 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 37 |

Table 6: Country of origin of the children and young people of the 37 cases studied

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| UK | 10 |
| China | 8 |
| Nigeria | 8 |
| Somalia | 1 |
| Pakistan | 1 |
| Cameroon | 1 |
| Ghana | 1 |
| Congo | 1 |
| Sierra Leone | 1 |
| Zimbabwe | 1 |
| Uganda | 1 |
| Eastern European country | 1 |
| Unknown | 1 |
| Total | 37 |

Ethical considerations and confidentiality

2.13 Ethical approval for the research project was given by the University of Bedfordshire, School of Applied Social Studies Ethics Committee and by the NSPCC Ethics Committee. Scrutiny of all ethical considerations followed considerations identified in the World Health Organization's publication *WHO Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women* (Zimmerman & Watts 2003), in the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and British Sociological Association ethical guidelines, and in reference to Barnardo's ethical guidelines for research with children and young people (www.barnardos.co.uk).

It was agreed that the three sites where the research took place would not be identified. The names of agencies and the practitioners involved in the research would also remain anonymous. Where relevant, data would reveal the type of agency involved (for example, voluntary organisation, health service provider or statutory social work provider) but no other details would be given regarding staff names or specific departments. This was agreed through the Advisory Group. It recognised the research aim to reveal the complexities confronted by a range of practitioners. It was agreed that practitioners were more likely to feel free to discuss the problems they faced if reassured that there would be not be a focus on personal recrimination. However, it was agreed that if researchers identified practice that was felt to place children and young people at risk of significant harm (as defined in the Children Act 1989), the practitioner(s) involved would be informed that details were to be passed to the relevant site representative on the research advisory group.

The identity of children and young people was protected through the use of false names. The examples of case material used throughout the research are composites, drawing on different sections of the analysis of the actual case studies. Composite case studies were piloted between the research team and circulated to the Advisory Group for consideration prior to publication of the report. There are no case studies within the report that could be traced to any one individual young person's circumstances.

The national context and overview of the three research sites

2.14 The purpose of this overview was to establish an understanding of relevant national data and of each of the three research sites. It explains each site's current data recording and monitoring processes around cases of child trafficking. The exercise sought to gain a better

understanding of local procedures and the agencies involved in working with separated and trafficked children and young people. As noted in chapter 1, although this research refers to separated children and young people, data in each of the three sites is recorded under the title of UASC.

2.15 The overview involved finding information about the local authority's records and monitoring of UASC and trafficked children and young people in the UK and in the three specific sites for the research. As no specific category for data recording on trafficked children and young people exists, key professionals in each council were identified and asked questions relating to the following areas:

- children in care
- sexual exploitation
- recording and monitoring
- trafficking protocols.

2.16 It was helpful to be able to compare data from the three sites against national data wherever possible.

Children in care: the national context

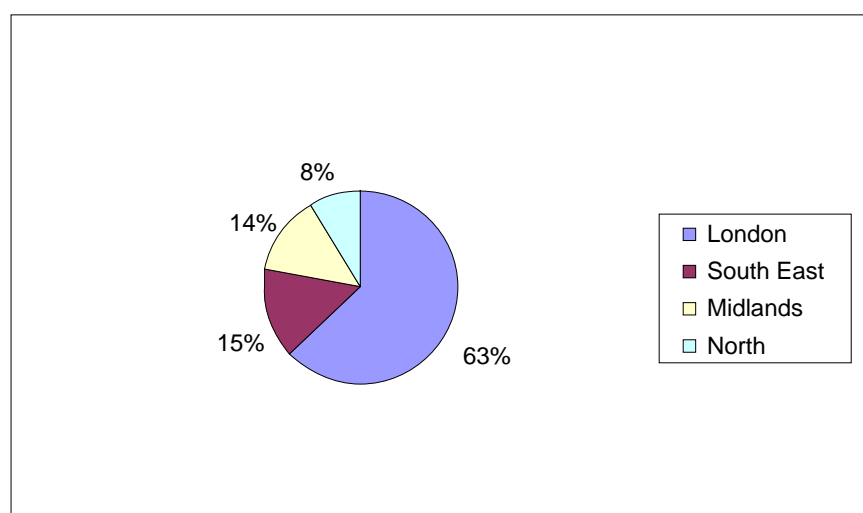
2.17 Around 59,500 children were looked after in England as at 31 March 2008, although some 90,000 pass through the care system in any year. Forty-two per cent of looked-after children return home within six months (www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000810/index.shtml).

The system aims to support rehabilitation back into families where that is possible. In the case of trafficked or separated children, such reunion can be complex or impossible. The country of origin may be at war or there may be other circumstances that prevent a safe return. Children may have fled their country of origin without knowing where their parents are or whether they are still alive. In many cases, parents agree to their child going abroad, enticed by promises of a good education or a well-paid job, or simply because lack of financial resources make raising their children in their home country very difficult. It has also been suggested that, in some instances, parents are instrumental in trafficking their own children.

Separated children

2.18 In 2006, a total of 2,850 asylum applications were made by unaccompanied minors, constituting about 12 per cent of all asylum applications in that year (Brewis 2007). In the same year, 2,565 initial decisions were made on applications for UASC. Of those decisions relating to children and young people aged 17 or younger, 7 per cent were granted asylum, less than 1 per cent of applicants were granted humanitarian protection, 22 per cent were refused, and the remainder were awarded discretionary leave, mostly up until their 18th birthdays (Chase et al. 2008). As at 31 March 2006, 63 per cent of UCAS children in care in England were looked after in London; 15 per cent were looked after in the South East, 14 per cent were looked after in the Midlands; and 8 per cent were looked after in the North (DfES 2006).

Table 7: UASC in care by geographic location



The local research sites: children in care

2.19 In site 1, there was a total of 648 looked-after children as at 1 October 2007; 357 of these were identified as UASC.

In site 2, the number of children in care has risen in the past year: on 28 November 2008 there were 1,056 looked-after children in comparison to a population of 991 children in care of the local authority as at 31 March 2007. The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

in site 2 was 690 on 28 November 2008, constituting 65.3 per cent of the total number of children in care.

In site 3, the number of looked-after children has generally varied between 660 and 680 and has been declining in the past years. As at 31 October 2008, 604 children were in care, 462 of whom were under the age of 16 while 142 were between 16 and 17 years of age. As at 1 December 2008, 48 of the looked-after children in site 3 were UASC.

Processes for dealing with trafficked children

2.20 The most noticeable process for the identification of trafficked children and young people in each of the three sites was through services that worked with sexually exploited children and young people.

In site 1, the LSCB procedures are used and a Referral and Assessment Service conducts an enquiry jointly with the police child abuse investigation team (CAIT) under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and/or the airport intelligence unit. Where cases include alleged sexual exploitation, a formal Strategy Meeting is held and a Safeguarding Plan is devised as part of the strategy. Sexual abuse is a category of abuse under *Working Together* (DCSF 2006), which would necessitate a Child Protection Plan. This plan is integrated into the Care Plan if the young person becomes looked after. If the young person remains in the community, then the Referral and Assessment Team or the Child in Need Team would hold the case, making sure that the Child Protection Plan is not discontinued until the risk of sexual exploitation has been removed. These Child Protection Plans are monitored by an Independent Reviewing Officer, who will chair the child protection conferences relating to the case.

In addition to the all-London Child Protection Procedures, site 3 also has an airport protocol, which covers issues relating to child trafficking. This protocol specifically addresses site 3's unique situation as a port of entry. It has a virtual "airport intake team". The referral and assessment team deals with all cases of sexual exploitation, including those who are UASC.

In site 2, the Children Quality Assurance Unit follows the review system for looked-after children, identifying cases of sexual exploitation and trafficking within this review. The local authority has a sexual exploitation project, which includes two police constables funded by the Metropolitan Police Service, two Barnardo's social workers and a Missing Child worker funded by the Home Office, and planning and training input by the Children's Quality

Assurance Service in the local authority. The project takes referrals from professionals, parents/carers and children. All children who meet the referral criteria are the subject of a Strategy Planning Meeting under the London Protocol. There is ongoing planning under the protocol for children found to be at risk of sexual exploitation. Specific allegations of abuse are investigated by the children's services assessment service, together with the Metropolitan Police Service. A sexual exploitation personal advisor is appointed to work with young people who are found to be at risk of sexual exploitation. There is a specific protocol between the Unaccompanied Minors Service, the Asylum Screening Unit and the Metropolitan Police officer.

In site 3, all sexually exploited young people, including trafficked young people, are referred to the Sexual Exploitation Service. The sexual exploitation service is a multi-agency partnership between the Safeguarding Children Service, police, a team of youth workers and staff from the local drug and alcohol project: Turning Point. An individual strategy meeting is held on each young person and is reviewed on a regular basis until the young person is 18 or until they are thought to be no longer at risk. A copy of site 3's referrals manual and a short protocol on child trafficking is available from the research team on request.

Recording and monitoring of trafficking cases

2.21 In site 1, the education and children's services use electronic recording where possible. If a child is trafficked, details will be recorded on the case notes of the child. The indicators and reasons for this judgement will be identified as part of the Care Plan / Safeguarding / Child Protection Plan. Each child has a separate individual case file, which is held in the archives of the council. No separate recording of child trafficking is kept, other than on individual case files. Site 1 does keep a separate record of children and young people who go missing. This is reported to the LSCB on a quarterly basis in the form of a manual spreadsheet, which is held in the Safeguarding Children and Quality Assurance Service. There are situations where a young person has been assessed as having been trafficked where they would not have a Care Plan but might have a Safeguarding Plan. This is drawn up at the strategy meeting and details issues that need to be considered when developing the Care Plan. The Safeguarding Plan is similar to the Child Protection Plan but not reviewed at child protection conferences by the independent reviewing officers.

In site 2, data on trafficking is held by the Children's Quality Assurance Unit. The sexual exploitation database also records data on suspected trafficking cases.

In site 3, suspected cases of a trafficked child or young person are monitored by the Asylum Team.

2.22 In the absence of a central database, it was difficult to ascertain the number of incidents of trafficking of children and young people. Also, as this research project shows, the identification of a trafficked child or young person depends on the levels of awareness and expertise of the practitioner or carer concerned. This means that cases of suspected trafficking may be identified in one situation or overlooked in another. In addition, the sites varied in whether they included the movement of UK nationals within the UK in the definition of trafficked young people. These factors combined meant that the data available to reveal the scale of the problem was, in the main, unreliable.

It is expected that issues about the recording of data on trafficked children and young people will begin to be addressed as the NRM commences in April 2009.

Missing children

2.23 Site 1 follows local city-wide guidance on Safeguarding Children Missing from Care and Home.

In site 1, 89 young people left local authority accommodation without leaving a forwarding address between 1 January 2006 and 31 December 2008. These young people had all arrived via the airport and were under immigration controls. The majority went missing within seven days of arrival at the airport. All of them were between the ages of 16 and 18, and may have been older, as they had not been age assessed. The majority (53) were Chinese, Mandarin-speaking females. All of them were reported missing to the police, UKBA and port authorities, and received a formal safeguarding response using child protection procedures.

The trends around missing children are monitored by the LSCB trafficking and exploitation subgroup, and reported quarterly to the LSCB main board meeting. An agreement has been reached with UKHTC and UK BA that they will receive all intelligence and data around missing children from site 1. This will feed into any national law operations being run by the Serious Organised Crime Organisation (SOCA). Such arrangements have now been formalised within the NRM, whereby all data on suspected and actual trafficked cases are referred to the UKHTC and to the UK BA.

