



Making every child matter ... everywhere

Strategic Threat Assessment Child Trafficking in the UK

2010



Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Introduction | 5 |
| 2. Executive Summary | 6 |
| 3. Aim | 7 |
| 4. Environmental Scanning | 9 |
| 4.1 Political | |
| 4.2 Economic | |
| 4.3 Social | |
| 4.4 Technology | |
| 4.5 Legislation | |
| 4.6 Organisation | |
| 4.7 Media | |
| 5. Methodology and Collation | 11 |
| 5.1 Request for information and intelligence | |
| 5.2 National Referral Mechanism (NRM) data | |
| 5.3 CEOP – general | |
| 5.4 Use of information | |
| 5.5 Inclusion of data | |
| 5.6 Method of analysis | |
| 5.7 Limitations | |
| 6. Responses | 13 |
| 7. Demographic Overview | 14 |
| 7.1 Countries of origin | |
| 7.2 UK Regional destination of exploitation | |
| 7.3 Gender, age and exploitation type | |
| 8. Recruitment, Transportation, Control and Coercion | 17 |
| 8.1 Recruitment and background | |
| 8.2 Abuse and exploitation en-route | |
| 8.3 Travel documentation and Tier 4 visa abuse | |
| 8.4 Control and coercion en-route and in exploitation | |
| 9. Missing and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children | 21 |
| 10. Vietnamese Children (58 cases) | 23 |
| 10.1 Background | |
| 10.2 Statistical overview | |
| 10.3 Routes into the UK | |
| 10.4 Trafficking within the UK | |
| 10.5 Working conditions and abuse in exploitation | |
| 10.6 Street crime, labour and sexual exploitation | |
| 10.7 Victims prosecuted as offenders | |
| 10.8 Age assessments | |
| 10.9 Emerging trends | |
| 11. China (24 cases) | 27 |
| 11.1 Statistical overview | |
| 11.2 Routes into the UK | |
| 11.3 Criminal networks | |
| 11.4 Emerging trends: Tier 4 visas and winter/summer schools | |
| 12. West African Children (51 cases) | 29 |
| 12.1 Statistical overview | |
| 12.2 Traffickers | |
| 12.3 Exploitation and abuse | |
| 12.4 Emerging trends | |
| 13. Eastern Europe (48 cases) | 31 |
| 13.1 Roma children (32 cases) | |
| 13.2 Eastern Europe (16 cases) | |
| 13.3 Emerging trends | |
| 14. South Asia (28 cases) | 33 |
| 14.1 Bangladesh (11 cases) | |
| 14.2 Pakistan (7 cases) | |
| 14.3 Emerging trends | |
| 15. Other Forms of Exploitation | 35 |
| 16. Areas of Concern | 36 |
| 17. Advances in the Fight against Trafficking | 37 |
| Annex A – Case Study | 39 |





1. Introduction

Child trafficking - the movement of children for the purpose of exploitation - is a form of child abuse and modern day slavery. Many UK professionals who work with children still do not believe that child trafficking is a problem in their neighbourhood; rather, child trafficking is perceived to be a problem in large cities or less developed countries. Evidence shows this is not true. Boys and girls of all ages are trafficked into and throughout the UK from all over the world and exploited for many different purposes including sexual exploitation, forced labour, benefit fraud and criminal enterprise (such as the cultivation of cannabis and street crime). By its very nature, child trafficking is a hidden and covert crime. However, when statutory authorities are equipped with a basic awareness of trafficking indicators, these children can be better detected and safeguarded.

The UK has demonstrated its commitment to tackling all forms of human trafficking with the launch of the UK Action Plan on Human Trafficking by the Home Office and Scottish Government in October 2009¹. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) was launched as part of this plan in April 2009 as a central process to aid the identification and protection of victims of trafficking. The NRM, alongside other models of good practice, has raised levels of awareness across the UK, helping to safeguard trafficked children. Many of these initiatives are described in greater detail later in the report. Despite these advances, levels of awareness are inconsistent across the whole of the UK, with some areas having little or no knowledge of child trafficking.

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre has the national strategic lead on child trafficking in the UK, with the aim of building knowledge on the scale and nature of child trafficking across the UK. CEOP began this work in June 2007 with the publication of a report entitled *A Scoping Report on Child Trafficking in the UK*, which was the first baseline assessment of child trafficking in the UK. It identified 330 children as potential victims of trafficking in the period from March 2005 to January 2007. The report also identified that the general level of awareness of the problem demonstrated by front line practitioners, combined with the response by statutory agencies to child trafficking, was insufficient. After the report was published, CEOP developed a specialist child trafficking function to support the work of the Home Office, United Kingdom Borders Agency (UKBA), United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) and the Serious and Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) by providing a child protection perspective on trafficking, advising government departments with on strategy and policy and advising front line workers at a more local level.

Following the publication of the 2007 report, CEOP then produced an updated baseline assessment of child trafficking in the UK in 2009. The *Strategic Threat Assessment of Child Trafficking* in the UK covered the 12 month period from March 2007 to February 2008 and identified 325 children as potentially trafficked child victims. CEOP also produced a number of smaller themed assessments on child trafficking, including *Children and Young People Encountered in Cannabis Farms* (March 2009) and *Child Trafficking for the Purpose of Benefit Fraud* (October 2010).

This 2010 Strategic Threat Assessment aims to deliver on CEOP's continuing commitment to examine the latest picture of child trafficking in the UK. It offers a more detailed analysis of the findings published in the 2009-2010 CEOP Strategic Overview released in November 2010, where 287 children were identified as potentially trafficked in the 12 month period from March 2009 to February 2010. By gathering tactical information from frontline agencies across the UK, CEOP has been able to:

- a) further assess the strategic national trends;
- b) inform police, UKBA, children's services, partner Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the wider community to help deliver a better response to the identification and protection of children; and
- c) aid the prevention and prosecution of those who seek to exploit children. To do this, partnerships between agencies are required to share information, best practice and co-ordinate an appropriate response.

¹ www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/humantrafficking004.htm



2. Executive Summary

- A total of 287 children from 47 countries were identified as potential victims of trafficking. Most were from Vietnam (58), Nigeria (40), China (24) and a significant number of Roma children² (32) were also identified.
- Where the type of exploitation was identified (219 cases), 35% (76) of children were sexually exploited, most of whom were female. Eighteen per cent (39) were exploited for cannabis cultivation, 11% (25) were exploited for domestic servitude, 11% (23) for benefit fraud, 9% (19) for labour exploitation, 9% (20) for street crime, 4% (8) for servile marriage, 2% (4) for illegal adoption and 2% (5) for various other types of exploitation.
- The trafficking of Vietnamese children into and within the UK is the largest and most significant trend found during this period. Most were boys aged 13 to 17, exploited as 'gardeners' cultivating cannabis plants in cannabis factories.
- The number of children trafficked into the UK to work in cannabis farms is likely to increase or remain as a major trend. The increased competition and involvement from British and other non-Vietnamese nationals is likely to introduce more violence to this type of criminality, increasing the risk to children involved.
- The number of potential victims of trafficking who go missing from local authority provided care continues to be a major theme. Sixty-seven per cent (28) were Vietnamese nationals and 17% (7) were Chinese. A number of Vietnamese children who went missing were rediscovered in cannabis factories. Local authority provided care is sometimes failing to prevent victims returning to exploitation, although there are cases where supportive care has prevented this.
- The trafficking of West African, primarily Nigerian children continues to be a major profile. These children often arrive in the UK, disguised as family members of the traffickers. Many are then exploited in non-registered private fostering arrangements with the abuse hidden and occurring in private residences. Exploitation commonly includes domestic servitude, sexual exploitation and benefit fraud.
- Victims were identified as being exploited or destined for exploitation in all regions of the UK. Greater London was the most frequently identified destination (83 children) followed by the North West of England (29 children).
- Where age was identified (229), 71% of potential victims of trafficking were between 14 and 17 years old (164).
- 56% (160) of children were female compared to 34% (99) who were male. The gender was unknown in 10% (28) of cases.
- There has been a significant decrease in the number of Chinese victims of trafficking identified this period. At the same time there has been a rise in the number of Chinese minors applying to enter the UK on Tier 4³ visas, which may be linked to the decrease in trafficked children and, as a result, requires further investigation.
- Vietnamese and Roma children are often treated as offenders (for cannabis production and street crime offences respectively) rather than potential victims of trafficking.

² Mainly from Romania, but a number were from Bulgaria.

³ A Tier 4 visa is a student visa which operates on a points based system to determine entry.



3. Aim

This document is an assessment of the current intelligence picture of child trafficking into, within and through the UK. It aims to build on the findings of CEOP's 2007 Scoping Report and the 2009 Strategic Threat Assessment. The 2009 STA focused on the period 1 March 2007 to 29 February 2008. This assessment brings our knowledge up to date by focusing on data collected during the period 1 March 2009 to 28 February 2010.

This report aims to inform the reader of the latest trends, themes and patterns in child trafficking. It will examine the profiles of child victims and trafficking networks, discuss the methodologies employed and identify the enablers of trafficking.

A restricted version of this report is available for law enforcement agencies. In addition this version will contain intelligence gaps and recommendations.



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4. Environmental Scanning

4.1 Political

The Government has committed to supporting and protecting victims of trafficking whilst bringing traffickers to justice. The Minister for Immigration has stated that the Government will make tackling human trafficking a priority⁴. The Government has also stated that the best protection should be available to these children⁵. They have pledged to tighten the student visa system (see section 9.3 and 12.4) and possibly merge UKBA into the proposed National Crime Agency (NCA) which will enable more police powers to be applied at borders.

There are currently no plans to adopt the European Union (EU) directive on human trafficking. The Home Office stated that adequate provisions were already in place, but they would review their stance once the directive was finalised⁶. The UK will opt into the European Investigation Order, making it easier for the police to investigate suspects living in each other's states⁷. The Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group raised concerns that NRM trafficking assessments should not be reviewed in line with immigration issues and protection of victims was not at the forefront of the system. In relation to children, there were concerns that responsibility was being taken away from children's services and placed with authorities who did not have the same child protection expertise⁸. The Home Office is currently re-evaluating the NRM.

Presently, the Government plans to reduce migration to the UK from outside the European Union. This is likely to have a negligible effect on trafficking as most child trafficking cases involve the illegal crossing of borders, be it clandestine entry or overstaying a family visit visa.

4.2 Economic

It is difficult to say with certainty if or how the economic downturn is affecting the trafficking of children to the UK. The differences in wealth and opportunities between the UK and source countries will continue to make the UK a desirable destination for trafficking overall, but it is possible that children could be trafficked to other destinations where the recession has not had as much of an effect. On the other hand, financial hardships could cause some to seek radical solutions, exploiting children as a cheap labour option.

Clearer economic effects are the cuts the public sector will face over the next year. This may affect the ability to police, protect and safeguard trafficked children from harm. The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) has already been affected, losing its trafficking unit and Operation Golf, which is dedicated to combating Roma criminal networks, due to cease by April 2011.



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4.3 Social

Through an increased media focus and the efforts of many NGOs, the profile of trafficking in the UK has been elevated in the public consciousness, however there is still a long way to go to raise awareness across all relevant service providers. A number of anti-trafficking community groups have emerged in response to raise awareness and assist police at a local level⁹.

⁴ www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/news/trafficking-a-priority

⁵ Baroness Neville-Jones. House of Lords debate - 27 July 2010.

⁶ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10861235>

⁷ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-10777870>

⁸ Wrong kind of victim? The Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group - June 2010.

⁹ For example OXCAT (Oxford Communities Against Trafficking) and CCAT (Croydon Communities Against Trafficking). Stop the Traffic and AFRUCA (Africans Unite Against Child Trafficking) are NGOs which support community groups in raising awareness and combating trafficking in the UK.

4. Environmental Scanning

4.4 Technology

Technology is used to help control victims of trafficking and make financial transactions. Traffickers continue to issue mobile phones and SIM cards to trafficked children, particularly those who spend time apart from the trafficking network, such as those who are accommodated by social services. A number of children in care were noted to have used the internet before they went missing, at least two of whom were thought to have been in contact with their trafficking network. The internet is reportedly used to make primary contact with children. The Women's Union, an official statutory body in Vietnam, highlighted the use of the internet by traffickers to groom girls for sexual exploitation or forced marriage in China. Traffickers would become online friends with the girls, in some cases even paying for their internet access. They would then arrange offline meetings, often taking them shopping in a big city and then later trafficking them across the Chinese border.

Although the use of the internet in trafficking or selling the services of exploited children has not been evidenced in the dataset for this report, it has been evidenced in the United States¹⁰. It is possible that this may have occurred in the UK.

4.5 Legislation

The Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 can now be better applied to prosecute offenders who traffic younger children and babies following the amendment by the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009. The infrastructure is therefore in place for law enforcement to prosecute more cases successfully if adequate resources and planning are utilised.

Section 71 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 introduces a new offence of holding someone in slavery or servitude, or requiring them to perform forced or compulsory labour. This piece of legislation became active as of 6 April 2010 and is applicable in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

With effect from 1 April 2010, section 53A was inserted into the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as a result of Section 14 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009, creating a new offence of paying for the sexual services of a prostitute subject to force. Despite this, the law has only been used three times. Detectives state the maximum £1,000 fine is little incentive to dedicate resources, coupled with the difficulty in proving prostitutes are coerced and exploited¹¹.

4.6 Organisation

The Government have outlined in their report *Policing in the 21st Century: Reconnecting police and the people* plans to merge SOCA with the UKBA, creating the National Crime Agency (NCA) with part of its function to act as a border police force. With increased policing powers and co-ordination the UK could become a more hostile place for traffickers. However, as stated earlier, spending cuts may reduce capabilities.

4.7 Media

The media has greatly promoted awareness of child trafficking in the UK in recent years, relaying key messages from reports by law enforcement and the third sector to a national level through newspaper reports, documentaries¹² and dramas such as *I am Slave*¹³. The media has also picked up on related subjects such as the abuse of private fostering relationships and child domestic servitude¹⁴.

¹⁰ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2010/aug/craigslist-underage-prostitution-allegations>

¹¹ The Guardian. 19 August 2010. Crackdown on use of coerced prostitutes has resulted in only three cautions in one year.

¹² For example: Dispatches: Britain's secret slaves. 30 August 2010. The hunt for Britain's sex traffickers. 31 August – 2 September 2010. Channel 4.

¹³ Channel 4. Screened 30 August 2010.

¹⁴ Newsnight. 13 -14 September 2010. BBC.



5. Methodology and Collation

5.1 Request for information and intelligence

In March 2010, a request was made to stakeholders who play a role in combating child trafficking in the UK to provide information on potential cases of child trafficking identified during the period 1 March 2009-28 February 2010¹⁵.

A covering letter, terms of reference and intelligence requirements were sent to force intelligence bureaus (FIBs) or identified single points of contacts (SPOC) across all UK police forces that have direct involvement in child trafficking investigations. This included officers who sit on the ACPO Child Trafficking and Child Abuse Investigation groups. The UKBA centrally co-ordinated their response to the request for information which covered their intelligence and five regional enforcement sections.

A covering letter, a list of child trafficking indicators and a questionnaire was sent to children's services departments across the UK and a number of relevant NGOs.

5.2 National Referral Mechanism (NRM) data

The UKBA were approached and it was agreed that CEOP could have access to NRM data relating to minors for the period of the assessment.

5.3 Additional reporting

The UKHTC is the central repository for all information and intelligence relating to human trafficking in the UK. CEOP has continued to receive information and intelligence from the UKHTC on possible and actual child trafficking during the timeframe under assessment. In addition, referrals and reporting from other partners and contacts mean that a good depth of relevant information and intelligence was already held by UKHTC and CEOP prior to the intelligence request.



To protect children's confidentiality, intelligence has only been used for strategic profiling. Where cases are referred to, identifying information such as names, dates of birth and locations have been removed.



5.4 Use of information

To protect children's confidentiality, intelligence has only been used for strategic profiling. Where cases are referred to, identifying information such as names, dates of birth and locations have been removed. As stated in the submitted requests for information, intelligence would be shared with the UKHTC as the national repository of intelligence on human trafficking. CEOP would under no circumstances disseminate this information to any other organisation without written consent from the originator unless the handling code permitted.

Where source agencies were concerned about the sharing of specific aspects of data, it was requested that the initials of the child were given instead of the the child's name, so that alongside the date of birth they could be used to uniquely identify identical cases received from different agencies. In one or two cases there was little information on the victim and it is possible, though not probable, that they may have been included more than once in the dataset.

¹⁵ The previous 12 months were omitted to bring the study up to date and compare the 12 month period two years prior.

5. Methodology and Collation

5.5 Inclusion of data

Some cases referred to CEOP were not included in the dataset for the following reasons:

- the number of children trafficked in the submitted intelligence was unclear (the minimum number of victims was used¹⁶);
- the case fell outside the twelve-month data sampling period – 1 March 2009-28 February 2010¹⁷;
- the persons were age assessed or otherwise established as adults during this period; and
- there was insufficient information given, or the case was not deemed as a trafficking case.

5.6 Method of analysis

The data contributed to this report was subject to quantitative and qualitative analysis. Statistical representation has been used to analyse profiles and trends. However, given the general limitations of quantitative and statistical analysis in examining phenomena where all the data is not accessible, more emphasis has been placed on the qualitative findings.

5.7 Limitations

This report was compiled using data submitted by external partners; it is therefore a reflection of the quantity and quality of the intelligence received. As such it is a useful reflection of national levels of awareness.

Many victims were only identified after they escaped from exploitation and not at port on entry, despite travelling overtly with their traffickers using false documents or travelling as imposters. In 54 cases, exploitation had not yet occurred when victims were identified, with indicators of trafficking being evidenced at port. Thirty two of these children were identified in London. As the most frequently identified destination of exploitation, with its ports being the major transport hub into and out of the UK, this is perhaps to be expected. It is also possible that statutory authorities in London are more likely to have received training on child trafficking, owing to London's status as a major point of entry into the UK, resulting in higher levels of awareness.

The dataset was smaller than that of the 2009 Strategic Threat Assessment, but that was compensated by the inclusion of NRM data. This was partly due to a reduction in the scale of the data collection exercise due to a reduction in resources and a tighter timeframe than was allocated to the previous report¹⁸.

Law enforcement priorities and resources are also an issue. Trafficking offences are often recorded or 'crimed' by police under a different or lesser offence, due to a lack of awareness and as a result traffickers are often prosecuted for lesser offences. For example, it might be easier to prosecute for an exploitation offence rather than a trafficking offence. It is often difficult to evidence that a child was brought to the UK against their will – international law enforcement co-operation may be required where the trafficker is not resident in the UK, complicating, delaying and increasing the expense of investigations.

Responses to intelligence requests also rely on agencies identifying the correct departments and professionals within large organisations who are responsible for child trafficking. This is especially difficult in non-law enforcement agencies, which often do not store information centrally within an accessible database.

There was also the issue of responsibility, with some agencies not submitting data as they thought it should be the responsibility of other agencies that had a role in the case. Time constraints and resources will always be an issue, with agencies often at full capacity with their day to day workloads.

¹⁶ One referral of trafficking may have included more than one child or young person.

¹⁷ Cases referred to CEOP where the transportation part of the trafficking may have occurred before this time period but where the exploitation element of the trafficking took place within the time period of this assessment were included in the dataset.

¹⁸ This freed resources to investigate intelligence gaps identified in the 2009 STA and commit to assisting with the UK action plan against trafficking.

6. Responses

Twenty one police forces from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland responded to the intelligence request, with 11 responding with nil returns. Intelligence was mainly provided in the form of intelligence logs, with a number of forces compiling a small report or spreadsheet in response to the data request. As was the case for CEOP's 2007 Scoping Report and 2009 Strategic Threat Assessment, responses were not received from a number of force areas containing major ports believed to be used for child trafficking. The UKHTC forwarded and continue to send CEOP intelligence logs relating to potentially trafficked children. SOCA also supplied a number of intelligence reports and provided CEOP with strategic reports on facilitation and trafficking.

The UKBA provided a full and detailed response. The five regional sections provided intelligence reports and the intelligence section produced a report specifically for the request which detailed a number of cases. The UKBA also granted CEOP access to NRM case data.

Seveteen responses were received from children's services, with ten of these responding with nil returns¹⁹. Only one of the NGOs contacted responded (although two others had sent CEOP cases at earlier dates).

A number of police forces, children's services and NGOs did contact CEOP to affirm they would respond, but did not follow through on this.

The tighter timescales and reduced resources compared to the 2009 Strategic Threat Assessment have likely resulted in a reduced response. Agencies were given less time to respond and the request for information was only made once.



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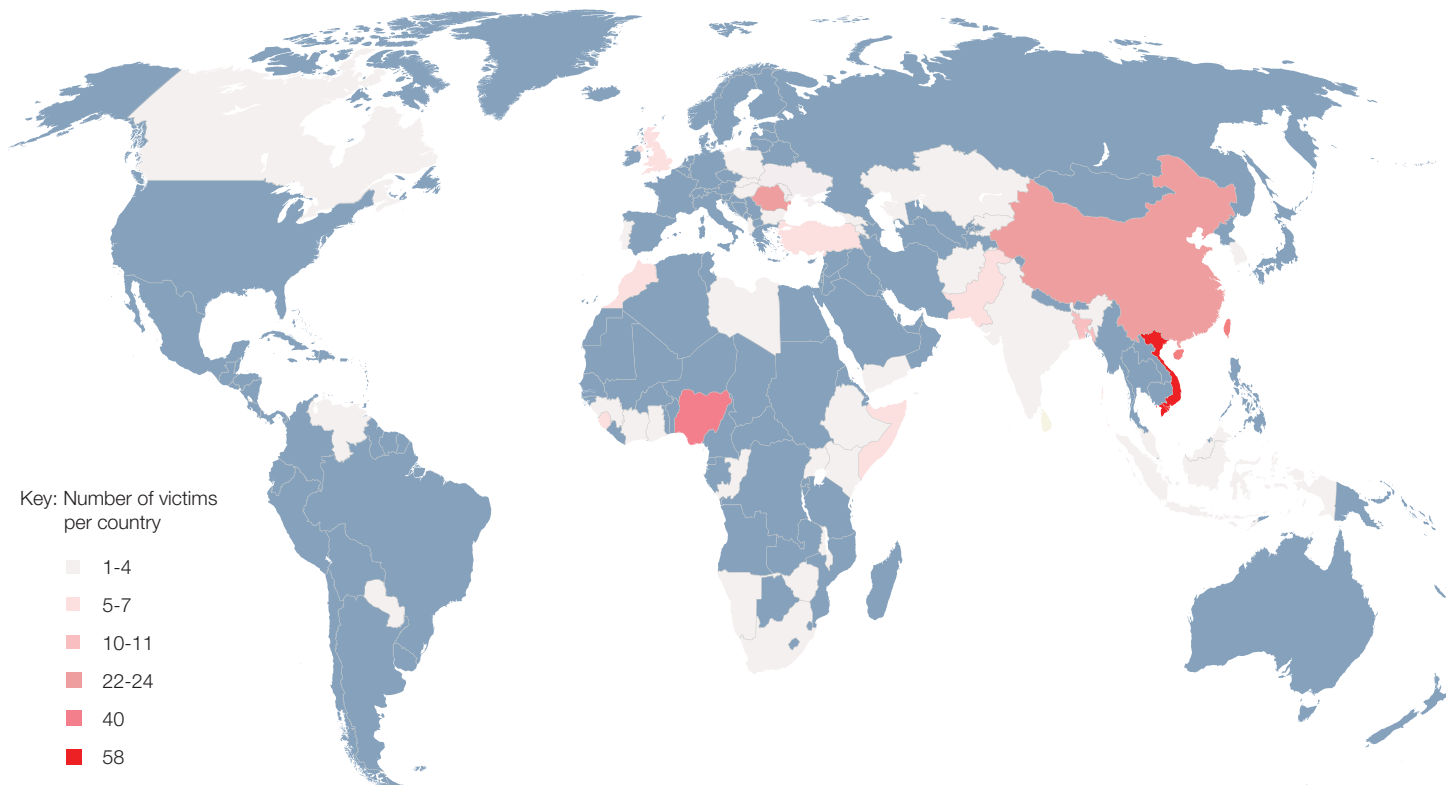
¹⁹ Difficulties were encountered identifying contacts within each local authority in the UK and some may not have been reached.

7. Demographic Overview

7.1 Countries of origin

The 287 potential victims of trafficking identified from the data collection originated from a total of 47 countries.

Figure 1 Source countries of potentially trafficked children identified between 1 March 2009 and 28 February 2010



The dataset recorded children being trafficked or potentially trafficked from the following countries in order of frequency; Vietnam (58), Nigeria (40), China (24), Romania (29)²⁰, Bangladesh (11), Pakistan (7), Sierra Leone (7), Morocco (6), Turkey (6), Afghanistan (3), India (4), Somalia (5), United Kingdom (5), Poland (4), Sri Lanka (3), Ukraine (3), Bulgaria (2), Canada (1), Congo (2)²¹, Kazakhstan (2), Malaysia (2), Paraguay (2), Slovakia (2), Zimbabwe (2), Albania (1), Armenia (1), Bolivia (1), Cameroon (1), Ethiopia (1), Georgia (1), Ghana (1), Guinea (1), Hungary (1), Indonesia (1), Ivory Coast (1), Kenya (1), Kurdistan (1), Liberia (1), Malawi (1), Moldova (1), Namibia (1), Portugal (1), South Africa (1), South Korea (1), Uganda (1), Venezuela (1) and the Yemen (1).

There were 34 cases where the country of origin could not accurately be determined²².

It should be noted that a child may claim to be from one country but may in fact be from another. This deception can occur because certain countries have more favourable asylum rights. One child stated she came from Liberia but had a Nigerian passport and could not answer basic questions about Liberia. In other cases, Chinese minors have been identified as using South Korean documents to aid passage through certain countries, only to destroy or hand them back to an agent at a later stage. This obscures their true nationality and also prevents removal from the UK as the UKBA cannot evidence their country of origin.

²⁰ The vast majority of children identified were of Roma origin. There were three children out of the 29 who were identified as either Bulgarian or Romanian Roma.

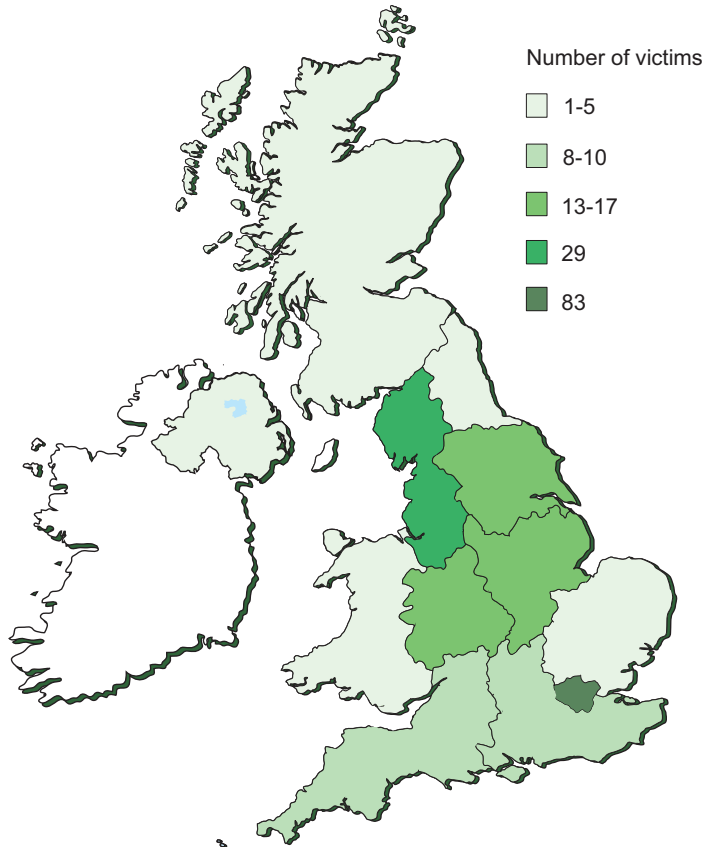
²¹ The data did not specify if this was the Republic of Congo or Democratic Republic of Congo.

²² For 21 of these cases the region of the world was given instead of a country of origin. The regions were; Eastern Europe (7), Europe (5), Africa (5) and South East or Far East Asia (4).

7. Demographic Overview

7.2 UK regional destination of exploitation

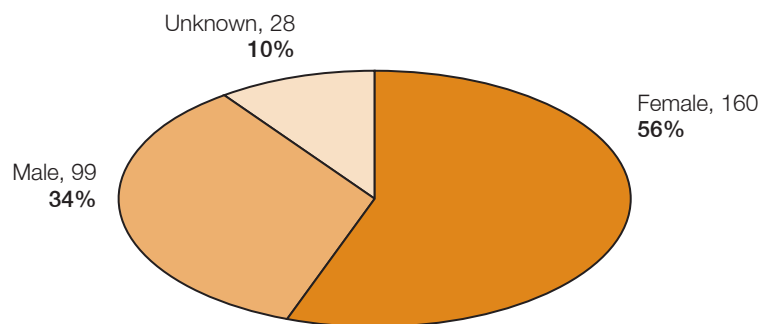
Figure 2 Identified regional destination of children trafficked into the UK



As can be seen in figure 2, child trafficking is a crime that affects every single region in the UK. London still remains the most frequently identified venue of exploitation with 83 identified cases, including a high number of detailed NRM referrals. This pattern may be a reflection of the increase in reports received from members of the public, identifying venues of exploitation.

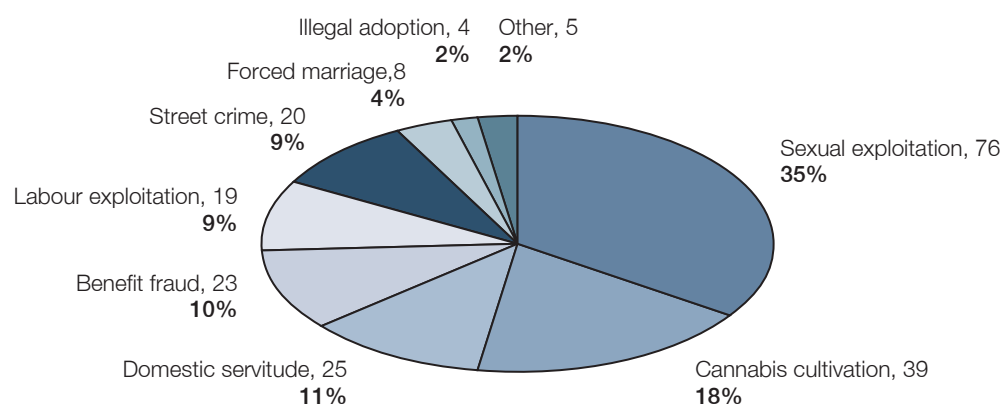
7.3 Gender, Age and Exploitation Type

Figure 3 Genders of Victims



7. Demographic Overview

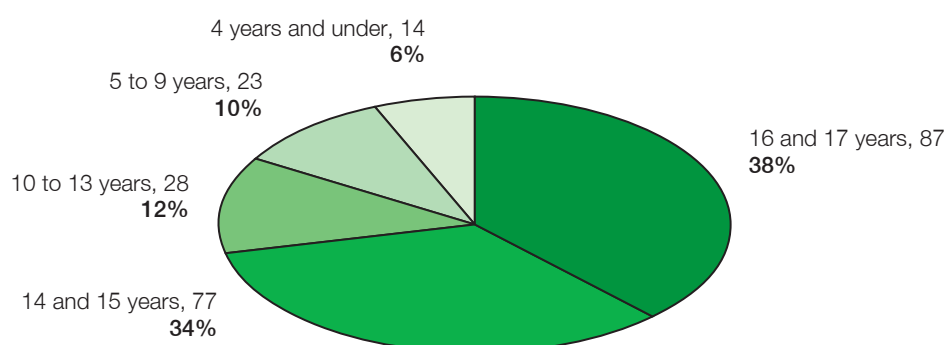
Figure 4 Identified primary exploitation types



The distribution of male and female children (figure 3) may reflect exploitation types (figure 4) with females accounting for 91% (69) of victims potentially trafficked for sexual exploitation, the most frequently identified form of abuse²³. Similarly, in the previous two years, most victims identified were girls and the most frequent type of exploitation was sexual – the difference in this period being an increase in the representation of boys. This may be a reflection of the second most common form of exploitation, the cultivation of cannabis, where boys account for 90% (34) of the potential victims. Other types of exploitation did not have such a marked gender bias.

In the previous period, it was thought that trafficked boys were less likely to be identified than girls, as boys were more likely to be trafficked into the UK by clandestine means²⁴. In this period, this premise was supported as a higher proportion of boys were identified in exploitation, having entered the UK via clandestine methods, with most being Vietnamese boys found in cannabis farms during police raids.

Figure 5 Age ranges identified



The distribution of the age²⁵ of children potentially trafficked into, within or out of the UK is similar to that identified in the previous CEOP Strategic Threat Assessment, with most children aged between 14 and 17 years of age. However, a shift in this pattern is evident, where slightly younger victims of trafficking have been identified in this period. The most commonly identified victim ages in this period were 15 and 16 years, compared to 16 and 17 (47%) in the previous period. A slightly younger profile may be a result of the decrease in Chinese minors compared to the previous period, whom were mostly aged 16 or 17 years. There are still concerns that younger children are harder to identify and therefore not represented. Younger children are often trafficked into the UK as part of a 'family group' which is harder to detect at port. Children are also more vulnerable and easier to control at a younger age.

²³ 18 out of 26 victims potentially trafficked for domestic servitude and all victims potentially trafficked for forced marriages were identified as female.

²⁴ The 2009 STA identified more boys than girls who entered the UK by clandestine means. It was also referenced on one occasion that trafficking networks believed boys were more able to endure the arduous trip. It is unknown if this observation is in reference to the physicality of the journey or the dangers of sexual predation from men being facilitated alongside girls or from agents encountered en-route.

²⁵ The age of the child when first trafficked into, within or out the UK was used.



8. Recruitment, Transportation, Control and Coercion

It should be noted that the experiences of victims are always unique, though overall themes and trends can be extracted from the dataset. This section examines similarities and trends in accounts to identify who child traffickers target and how they operate. Victim background and recruitment methods were often obtained from their own testimonies.

Cultural differences must be taken into account, although it should be emphasised that these do not excuse abuse and exploitation. In many cultures, children are expected to work at a young age, often foregoing education. Parents and children alike may therefore gladly take an opportunity to work abroad in order to earn more money for their family. The child may even be aware of the conditions, pay and risks involved. The child is unlikely to know about child protection and human rights legislation in the destination country. It is important for statutory agencies to recognise that any child working in illegal conditions, no matter how trivial, may potentially be in a situation of exploitation.

8.1 Recruitment and background

Most victims were living in relative poverty before being recruited. Many children and their families had been manipulated by traffickers, others were aware that they were being sent to the UK to work. On occasion, children were told they would be placed under debt bondage (see 8.4) and the type of work they were expected to carry out in order to pay off the debt. Many children shared common vulnerabilities exploited by traffickers. These are highlighted below:

- a sudden detrimental change in personal circumstances (such as the death or arrest of their parents or guardians). As a result, the child would often move in with a close family member, such as an uncle, aunt or grandparent;
- being regarded as a financial burden (sometimes children were made to find work locally);
- parents and extended family members no longer having the ability or desire to support their children, therefore commonly arranging transport for the child to the UK. They sometimes would arrange work in the UK through agents, so the child could financially support them; and
- traffickers targeting destitute and vulnerable families, offering their child a better life in the UK. This may include the offer of education or work for the child with the promise of remittances in order to support their family.

Traffickers would also directly target children. The child, seeking to escape their circumstances, may have been duped by traffickers who promised them a better life in the UK. Traffickers are primarily opportunists, preying on children who suffer extremely difficult circumstances, initially offering them security before exploiting them later on. A number of regional differences were noted between profiles:

- **West and East African cases:** Children were sometimes physically and emotionally abused during their stay with relatives in West Africa, who often had many of their own children to look after and struggled to provide for the additional child. Practitioners found that West and East African children were often more forward in recounting their background, recruitment and experiences in exploitation than Chinese and Vietnamese children²⁶. Commonly, the trafficker was another relative or family friend. Some were told they would be working as a domestic servant in the UK, to which they agreed.
- **Vietnamese cases:** Some were told upfront they would be working in cannabis farms, with some stating they did not know that cannabis was illegal and thought they were entering legitimate work. One girl trafficked to the UK to work at a cannabis farm found out this was illegal and was instead allowed to work in a nail bar.
- **African and South Asian cases:** Traffickers often recruit, traffic and exploit children themselves whereas Chinese and Vietnamese networks have more defined roles in each part of the process.

8.2 Abuse and exploitation en-route

Many victims of trafficking are subjected to sexual²⁷, violent and psychological abuse whilst travelling to the destination of exploitation. This abuse is often a means of control to ensure victim complicity but also may be for the traffickers' self gratification.

²⁶ This may be as a result of fear of reprisals from Chinese and Vietnamese trafficking networks which are far reaching, more structured and powerful than those observed in most other profiles. Chinese and Vietnamese communities are quite insular and the victim may not be forthcoming, as they plan to integrate into these communities.

²⁷ Traffickers have been known to rape female victims to brutally instil control over their victim. This is more frequently seen when females are trafficked for sexual exploitation, to break their resistance and ensure complicity.

8. Recruitment, Transportation, Control and Coercion

Anecdotally, girls who are trafficked to work in brothels are often raped by an agent en-route to break down their resistance to abuse so that they are more likely to accept exploitation²⁸.

As identified in the 2009 Strategic Threat Assessment, children were sometimes made to work off part of their debt bond (see section 8.4) before reaching their final destination. During this period, three cases were identified where this occurred. Two Vietnamese boys recovered from exploitation in the UK stated that they had been forced to work in a restaurant in France en-route to the UK.

8.3 Travel documentation and Tier 4 visa abuse

Travel documentation is discussed more fully within the profiles section. The use of false and fraudulently obtained documentation is extremely prevalent in the trafficking of West African minors. This documentation was either detected or mentioned by the victim in 16 different cases, more than in any other profile encountered. Likewise, children trafficked from South Asia were often given false documents. In both profiles, victims were frequently given documentation in the family name of the trafficker²⁹. In some cases, this was the passport of the trafficker's own child with the victim adopting their identity. Cases were identified in the dataset where they would wear the same clothes and have their hair styled to resemble the genuine holder of the passport.

Chinese and Vietnamese networks may provide children with documentation for transit countries but take it back or destroy it before the child enters the UK. With a decrease in Chinese children identified and the clandestine entry of Vietnamese minors, fewer trafficked and undocumented arrivals are being detected than in previous periods.

Whilst the numbers of undocumented children claiming asylum at port have fallen during this period, there has been an increase in the abuse of Tier 4 visas to gain entry to the UK. A Tier 4 visa is a student visa which operates on a points based system to determine entry.



In this period, there were five cases where children were recorded as potentially being trafficked using a Tier 4 visa. Three children originated from Central Asian countries, the other two came from Vietnam and China.

8.4 Control and coercion en-route and in exploitation

Traffickers will employ a variety of measures and techniques to direct and ensure the complicity of trafficked children, both in the transportation and exploitation phase. By definition, control and coercion is not necessarily an element of all cases of child trafficking, but it is frequently employed by traffickers and is therefore a strong indicator of trafficking³⁰. This section details some of the measures frequently identified in the data collected.

Debt bondage

Debt bondage refers to a financial debt determined by the trafficker/trafficking network which the victim is illegally bound to and will have to work to pay off. The debt commonly covers travel arrangements, accommodation, food, a work arrangement fee and miscellaneous trafficker fees.

 **Anecdotally, girls who are trafficked to work in brothels are often raped by an agent en-route to break down their resistance to abuse so that they are more likely to accept exploitation.** 

²⁸ 2009 Strategic Threat Assessment, CEOP.

²⁹ 2009 Often the picture of the trafficked child was taken and a document obtained with this picture and the agent's family name.

³⁰ For a full list of indicators of trafficking please refer to Annex B in the 2009 Strategic Threat Assessment.

8. Recruitment, Transportation, Control and Coercion

This debt is often set at an inflated rate and will take several years to work off. In two cases recorded in the dataset, Vietnamese children stated they had to pay debts of £17,000 and £20,000. The girl who stated she had a £17,000 debt was told she would have to work for two years in a cannabis factory to pay off this debt, which demonstrates the extent of the exploitation considering the risks, isolation and time spent working at these venues levied against the high turnover by these criminal enterprises.

On occasion, victims stated that a family member paid this fee upfront, but in the majority of cases, victims were kept in exploitation until the debt had been paid off. It is likely that a debt bond is an excuse to keep a child in slavery indefinitely. Some victims stated that they were not paid in exploitation, but others were able to wire money home to their family. One boy stated that he was paid £100 for one or two months of work at a cannabis factory. It is not known if he was in debt bondage, but it might be assumed by this small amount that most of his earnings were to pay off a debt bond. Likewise, a Chinese boy was paid £30-£40 a week for working six days a week and 12 hour shifts.

Coaching

It is often argued that vague background stories containing insufficient corroborative detail are an indication that a story is false. Authorities may subsequently conclude that the individual is an economic migrant who will seek to claim asylum and obscure the truth to avoid identification and prevent deportation, therefore discounting the possibility that the individual is a victim of trafficking. It should be noted, however, that coaching victims to provide a vague story is a measure of control, as the agent wants to ensure that the victim is not immediately deported. The victim will comply by recounting a fabricated story believing they are in the process of being facilitated, whilst the trafficker hopes to stall authorities long enough to get the victim out of their control and into exploitation. Traumatic events and age of the child may also have an impact on the clarity of the story.



Some victims stated that they were not paid in exploitation, but others were able to wire money home to their family. One boy stated that he was paid £100 for one or two months of work at a cannabis factory.



Within the dataset, there are many similarities between victim background accounts, which may be an indication of coaching. A number of Vietnamese children stated their mother was working in the UK and they wanted to leave care to find her³¹. In all of these cases the child gave vague information about their mother and no evidence was found to substantiate the existence of the child's mother in the UK.

More definite proof of coaching is demonstrated clearly in one case in the dataset where two Vietnamese men and one boy were stopped by motorway police climbing out of the back of a lorry. One of the men was found with a script of what to say at an asylum interview³².

Coaching is particularly common for unaccompanied children who arrive with inadequate documentation and claim asylum at port. This was particularly true of Chinese minors who often stated they were fleeing persecution as they were Christian but demonstrated little knowledge of the faith. Other indicators of coaching included one girl refusing to have her fingerprints or photograph taken after claiming asylum and being told by the agent to let him do the talking at borders en-route to the UK.

³¹ In the 2009 STA, a Vietnamese boy also stated this. In this period, two boys who were accommodated together by the local authority both stated they wanted to leave to find their mother who was in the UK.

³² As most Vietnamese victims enter via clandestine means and are relatively hidden, traffickers would only coach victims for asylum on the chance they are detected.

8. Recruitment, Transportation, Control and Coercion

Control of travel documentation

Agents often provide travel documents but then remove these documents from the children after use, recycling them for use with other children³³. Agents trafficking Chinese and Vietnamese victims would often take back or instruct the child to destroy documentation before entering the UK. Without documentation, it is difficult to substantiate the true identity, age and origin of a child or adult. If authorities come into contact with children with no documentation and claim asylum as a minor, verification of their story is difficult and costly, thereby preventing or delaying removal. A number of children who claimed asylum were thought to be adults. Without documentation to prove otherwise, an age assessment would usually take place. However, this takes time and these children will be placed in care until the assessment is carried out. Many children placed in care later went missing before such assessment could be carried out.

Communication

On arrival in the UK, trafficked children are extremely vulnerable. Many will be unaware of their human rights, be unable to speak English and will have no knowledge of UK culture and procedures. Their trafficker, often from the same source country as the child, is the person they have depended upon during their journey, their only source of familiarity and someone they trust. Traffickers are able to abuse this trust, creating a sense of fear of authorities in the UK. Chinese and Vietnamese trafficking networks often part from the victim at border control, but retain communication by providing mobile phones³⁴ or a phone number for the victim to memorise. These children are often identified at border without adequate documentation and put into local authority provided care. This study recorded a number who went missing from their care placements shortly after placing or receiving calls. In two cases, Vietnamese children had used the internet whilst in care.

Little or no luggage

This is an indicator of trafficking, as the child is viewed as a commodity and allowed little or no personal items. Some females who arrived with little or no luggage had been sexually exploited. This trend was identified in CEOP's 2009 Strategic Threat Assessment. It is believed that traffickers do not require the victim to bring clothes since attire is provided at the venue of exploitation.

Restriction of movement

This is common across all profiles. Children are often locked in safe houses or venues of exploitation, restricting their movement, preventing escape and obscuring victims from the public. On leaving the venue of exploitation, they would often be accompanied. In some of the Chinese and African cases, trafficked girls were prevented from escaping by a guard stationed at the venue of exploitation or could only leave if accompanied by the guard.

Threats and emotional, physical and sexual abuse

This abuse is common across all profiles. The threat of violence against the child or family members back home or the physical or sexual attack against a child is used to dissolve resistance and ensure complicity.

³³ The agent will even take the child's own passport after use.

³⁴ A total of seven Vietnamese and three Chinese children were recorded as being found with a mobile phone or SIM card whilst in local authority provided care.

9. Missing and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

The number of trafficked children who went missing from local authority provided accommodation in this period compared to the last has decreased, but still continues to be a major trend. Eighteen per cent (53) of the children identified in the study were recorded as having gone missing from care at some point, with 15% (42) still recorded as missing. Most victims go missing within one week, many within 48 hours. Vietnamese children comprise the biggest identified profile and make up almost two thirds of the total number of potentially trafficked children who were still identified as missing when case data was submitted.

The slight decrease in numbers of missing children is likely a reflection of the drop in trafficked Chinese Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). As reported in CEOP's previous trafficking assessments, Chinese children comprised the largest identified group of trafficked minors and would enter overtly as an UASC and go missing from care as a method of entry into the UK. Conversely, Vietnamese children avoid border controls by entering clandestinely, where victims are only placed in local authority accommodation if they are found in exploitation, or attempting to enter the UK illegally prior to exploitation. Incidents of going missing from local authority accommodation are therefore fewer.

It is believed that Vietnamese children go missing from care as they are pressured to return to exploitation as there will be consequences for themselves or their family if their debt bonds are not worked off. This issue is discussed in more detail in section 10.4.

It is clear from the numbers of trafficked children who go missing from local authority provided care that this remains a significant child protection issue. It is likely that, given the levels of grooming and coercion, children go missing from care homes, back into the hands of their traffickers and re-entering a situation of exploitation. Providing adequate levels of supervision and helping to break the contact between the child and trafficker can help safeguard children from further abuse³⁵.

A Newbridge³⁶ style model could potentially work here, but would be costly. Hertfordshire Local Authority have produced a cost effective multi-agency anti-trafficking model and Hillingdon social services³⁷ have introduced measures which have been successful in reducing the number of trafficked children who go missing from local authority care. The procedures employed in the Newbridge model include:

- creating a barrier in communication between child and trafficker (for example, no supervised visits to the child's accommodation and limited/no access to phones or the internet);
- staffing accommodation with professionals with knowledge of trafficking;
- increased supervision, educating children about the dangers of trafficking and their human rights; and
- providing a helpline for children to memorise in case they do go missing.

It is believed that Vietnamese children go missing from care as they are pressured to return to exploitation as there will be consequences for themselves or their family if their debt bonds are not worked off.

³⁵ It has been demonstrated that monitoring the child's use of phone and internet communication and not allowing unsupervised visits from strangers will decrease the likelihood of children running away since communication with the trafficker is broken.

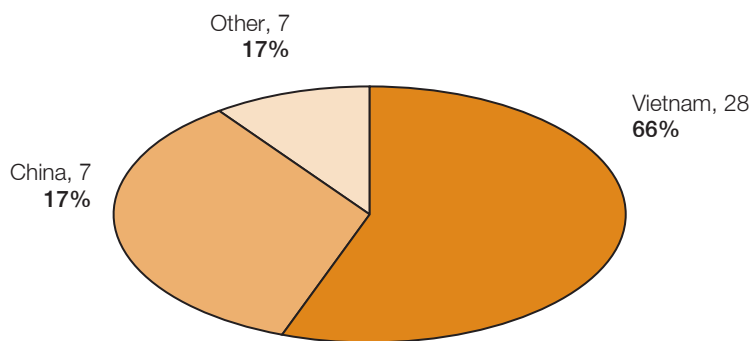
³⁶ Initially set up at Gatwick airport, Newbridge-style models are being piloted at several other UK airports. Identified victims of trafficking are frequently supervised, fully for the first 24 hours. Communication devices are prohibited as are meetings with visitors unless a member of staff accompanies them. A number of other measures are put in place to encourage the child to remain in care, assess their needs and encourage disclosure.

³⁷ Hillingdon borough services Heathrow airport.

9. Missing and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Likewise a guardianship scheme (similar to that seen in the Netherlands) where an independent guardian takes parental responsibility of children may also accomplish the same effect (see section 18). The feasibility of this should be explored extensively as a UK-wide solution to meet the needs of potential child victims of trafficking, ensuring their protection and rehabilitation.

Figure 6. Country of origin of children who were identified as missing at end of study



10. Vietnamese Children (58 cases)

10.1 Background

The trafficking of Vietnamese children into and within the UK is the largest and most significant trend this period. Most victims are trafficked overland from Vietnam by lorry and enter the UK by clandestine methods via seaport. The criminal networks involved in the recruitment, transportation and exploitation of children are well organised, flexible and generate large finances, mainly from the cultivation and wholesale distribution of cannabis. These findings are also reflective of the NRM statistics, where the most frequently identified potential victims of trafficking under the age of 18 were Vietnamese and exploited in cannabis farms³⁸.

New research commissioned by ACPO identified that white British criminals control the majority of the cultivated cannabis market in the UK, ahead of Vietnamese criminal networks³⁹. This research identified that even if farms were controlled by non-Vietnamese nationals, Vietnamese 'gardeners' were still used to cultivate the cannabis plants at the direction of these criminals. This suggests that Vietnamese criminal networks are co-operating with criminal networks of other ethnicities, although most intelligence points to Vietnamese networks being involved exclusively in the illegal facilitation of Vietnamese nationals into the UK. It should be noted that despite the findings of this research, the dataset only refers to Vietnamese nationals as the exploiters of Vietnamese children⁴⁰.

There has also been increased involvement and awareness-raising by the ACPO Child Protection Abuse and Investigation (CPAI) lead and many UK NGOs on the issue of children being trafficked to work in cannabis farms. There is also an increased concern that children are being prosecuted as offenders rather than protected as victims of trafficking. Many Vietnamese minors have been charged, prosecuted and sentenced for the production and supply of cannabis, but to date, there have been no convictions (for trafficking offences) of criminals who have trafficked or exploited these children⁴¹. However, from a safeguarding point of view, the greatest concern is the significant number of Vietnamese children who go missing from local authority provided accommodation prior to or after exploitation.

10.2 Statistical overview

Victims were aged between 13 and 17 when first trafficked into the UK. Seventy-four per cent (43) were boys and 26% (15) were girls. Thirty-seven children were identified as being exploited in cannabis factories. Four girls were exploited for labour purposes (nail bars), three boys were exploited for street crime (breaking and entering into rival cannabis farms and illegally selling DVDs) and three girls were sexually exploited. In 11 cases, the type of exploitation was not known.

10.3 Routes into the UK

In 28 cases it was identified that the child entered the UK via seaport. Five entered via an airport and the method of entry was not recorded in the remaining 25 cases. The method of entry and route were obtained predominantly from the victim's testimony after they had been recovered from exploitation. In most cases, the seaport was not recorded.

Victim testimonies suggest similarities in the route taken into the UK. Many flew with an agent to Russia. They were then transported via lorry, often with other Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese nationals to the Ukraine, Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany, France and finally the UK. Children stated that they were often passed between Vietnamese agents who appeared to operate in individual countries en-route; however, in a number of cases, agents were not Vietnamese. One boy stated that he flew to the UK from Vietnam with a white agent and in another case, local agents were used to arrange onward passage for a girl being trafficked through the Czech Republic.

³⁸ Any premises, whether commercial or residential, shall be deemed a cannabis farm if it has the following: *'The premises, or part therein, has been adapted to such an extent that normal usage would be inhibited and usually present without the premises, or part therein, are items solely concerned for the production of cannabis, i.e. hydroponics system, high intensity lighting, ventilation/extractor fans, any other associated equipment, and/or electricity meter bypassed. The overall appearance of the venue in combination with any available intelligence will provide an indication as to whether the site is, was, or is intended to be a cannabis farm. It is irrelevant how many plants are present on site. For example, there may be no plants if the site has been made ready to commence cultivation. Alternatively the crop may already have been harvested and only the remnants of the harvested crop will be apparent'*. ACPO definition of commercial cannabis cultivation.

³⁹ UK Commercial Cultivation of Cannabis Problem Profile. July 2010. Regional Intelligence Unit for the East. Unrestricted.

⁴⁰ It should be noted that some of the agents were European and in one case where Vietnamese girls were brought to the UK for sexual exploitation the trafficker was a Chinese national.

⁴¹ As of August 2010.

10. Vietnamese Children (58 cases)

Although it is difficult to verify from the information received, the presence of other foreign nationals may suggest that Vietnamese trafficking networks use other criminal networks in transit countries to organise illegal facilitation. Agents and networks appeared well connected and it appears that multiple routings across Europe were available, with victims stating that they would often transfer to a different lorry, separating from others who were being facilitated to different destinations. The number of agents and networks handling trafficked children is illustrated in one case in the dataset, with one boy being passed amongst 17 different agents during his journey.

In some cases, lorry drivers appeared complicit and part of the criminal network, waiting in forested or other secluded areas for agents to bring the passengers to them. There were also cases where Vietnamese nationals took advantage of situations to smuggle themselves onto a lorry or van bound for the UK. In the latter situation, they stowed themselves away in vehicles travelling from Calais to Dover, boarding vehicles in or close to Calais. In one case, an English couple refuelled at a nearby petrol station, whilst a number of nationals including a minor entered the back of the unlocked van. In another case, UKBA officials detected a minor at Calais in the back of a lorry. It was thought the minor had breached the secure zone at Calais and entered the back of the lorry whilst the driver refuelled at a petrol station. In each of these cases, the minor was accompanied by at least one adult though it was not specified if they were an agent.

Clandestine methods were not always used throughout the entirety of the journey. Some of the victims stated that they were given a passport or travel document to help them pass border controls before entry to the UK. In seven cases, the victim stated that the agent had taken back the document once it had been used. All Vietnamese children identified as potential victims of trafficking in the UK were found without any form of identity or travel documentation.

10.4 Trafficking within the UK

Victims were identified as being destined for all regional areas of England and Wales. The most frequently identified destinations were the West Midlands (eight), East Midlands (seven) and Greater London (eight).

The data collected reveals very little regarding the networks involved in the trafficking of children, including whether the destination or type of exploitation is finalised before the trafficking process begins. There are indications that the process is well organised. For example, traffickers have been recorded as organising work for children both on arrival and throughout the period of exploitation, moving victims between UK cities. Victims taken out of exploitation following police raids are generally placed in local authority accommodation. However, many victims went missing from local authority care and were later found in a different city in the UK. This may reflect the resilience and geographical spread of networks, which are able to switch operations to other force areas and regions and move trafficked victims accordingly. Many victims go missing as a result of unpaid debt bonds, resulting in contact with the trafficking network who will attempt to re-recruit victims, often threatening them or their family back home if they do not comply by leaving care. Debts were sometimes secured against relatives' land back in Vietnam as insurance, which further increases victim complicity.



The data collected reveals very little regarding the networks involved in the trafficking of children, including whether the destination or type of exploitation is finalised before the trafficking process begins. There are indications that the process is well organised.



In a recent case⁴² a Vietnamese boy was making great progress in his foster placement. One day a woman who stated she was his mother called and asked to speak to her son. After the call, the boy appeared unsettled and for the next few days became notably more despondent. He went missing shortly after. The woman may have been part of the trafficking network or genuinely his mother. Families sometimes pay part of the debt bond, borrowing from money lenders who may be associated with the trafficking networks⁴³. They may therefore need their child to pay off their debt.

⁴² This occurred outside the period of the dataset.

⁴³ Interview with project officer from International Organisation for Migration, Ho Chi Minh City Office, Vietnam. 5 November 2010.

10. Vietnamese Children (58 cases)

The extent to which trafficked Vietnamese children go missing from care is discussed in section 9, with 48% (28) of Vietnamese children still recorded as missing at the time the data was collected⁴⁴. Many victims who were re-encountered by authorities after going missing were again discovered in venues of exploitation, mostly cannabis farms.

10.5 Working conditions and abuse in exploitation

All of the children identified in cannabis factories worked as ‘gardeners’, tending and watering the cannabis plants. As might be expected for a child, this is the ‘bottom rung’ position within the criminal enterprise. Often children were isolated, locked in the property alone and sleeping in the premises. One child stated he slept on a quilt on the floor. It is unclear if the children were locked in to prevent escape or as a measure of security, as other criminal networks have been known to force entry to disrupt rival operations. Many stated they remained in the residence for the entirety of their exploitation. Those who did venture outside stated that they would be accompanied by a member of the criminal network⁴⁵.

Restriction of freedom and movement was the most evident and commonly encountered form of abuse in exploitation but not the most serious. Three victims were emotionally abused and another physically harmed.

As in the Chinese cases, Vietnamese children identified as victims of trafficking appear extremely wary of authorities and communicate little about their experiences in exploitation or about their captors. This may be because they are fearful for family members. Many will have unpaid debts, perhaps explaining their reasons for not disclosing information and going missing from care. There may be an element of distrust of authorities stemming from their perception of law enforcement in Vietnam or from what their exploiters have told them about authorities in the UK.

10.6 Street crime, labour and sexual exploitation

Of the four cases where victims are recorded as being exploited for labour, all were female and three were exploited in nail bars. Vietnamese criminal networks involved in cannabis production are known to set up nail bars to launder money from their proceeds of crime. Essentially, this is the process of ‘cleaning’ money, so that it appears to have been generated from a legal trade.

In three cases, Vietnamese males aged between 13 and 15 may have been coerced to commit criminal activities, although there is debate by authorities as to whether they may have been complicit. They were found attempting to break into a rival’s cannabis factory in an attempt to destroy their operations. These cases were included in the dataset as they were accompanied by adult Vietnamese members of the criminal network who directed and participated in the attempted break-in.

There were three cases where the main type of exploitation was suspected to be sexual and one case where it was thought to be a secondary form of exploitation. All were female and aged between 14 and 16 when first trafficked. Since February 2010, a number of other Vietnamese girls trafficked from China to the UK for sexual exploitation have been identified. It is estimated that 60% of all women and girls trafficked out of Vietnam are destined for China to work in brothels in the south (close to the border with Vietnam) or are forced into marriage with older Chinese men⁴⁶. Some of the girls exploited in brothels later join the trafficking network as agents and some become madams of the brothels⁴⁷. In contrast, traffickers and the criminal networks involved in cannabis cultivation are mostly male.

10.7 Victims prosecuted as offenders

Despite the increased awareness raising by CEOP, various children’s services, NGOs and other lobbying groups, children found in cannabis farms are still being treated as offenders rather than victims. The ACPO Child Protection and Abuse Investigation, in conjunction with CEOP, has produced guidance for procedures to be taken when a child is found in such

⁴⁴ 55% (32) of Vietnamese children had gone missing at some point in the 12 month period of the study.

⁴⁵ In a number of cases this individual was described as a guard.

⁴⁶ Interview with Pacific Links, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. 4 November 2010.

⁴⁷ Interview with the Women’s Union, Hanoi, Vietnam. 8 November 2010.

10. Vietnamese Children (58 cases)

a farm⁴⁸, along with age assessment guidance⁴⁹ which puts the protection of the child at the forefront. Trafficking and age assessments where necessary need to be carried out as a priority, yet CEOP has evidenced that this does not always occur. Despite having ACPO approval, the guidance is not mandatory – it is up to individual police forces to adhere to the recommended procedures.

10.8 Age assessments

There is a difficulty around age assessment in many of these cases. Individuals identified in cannabis farms are often not able to prove their claimed age. Furthermore, there is a concern that individuals may be wrongly presenting a younger age in order to evade the criminal justice process for adults. Currently there is no defined process for how police should respond to cases where there are doubts about ages of individuals. In many cases, the issue is concluded by the court at the trial stage. Current police good practice follows the established UKBA process in similar cases where a referral is made to the local authority, who subsequently undertakes a Merton compliant age assessment (where official evidence or other reliable evidence is not available to confirm age)⁵⁰. This issue has been tabled at the ACPO Plenary on Child Protection and Abuse Investigation which has also produced guidance on age assessments⁵¹.

10.9 Emerging trends⁵²

Indications are that the number of children trafficked and exploited in cannabis farms will remain at a high level. The number of cannabis farms detected by police in the UK has more than doubled within the last two years, with police now on average identifying over 500 farms in the UK per month. Whilst British criminality appears to have overtaken the dominance of Vietnamese criminal networks, there is still a demand for ‘gardeners’, most of whom are Vietnamese regardless of the nationality of the criminality further up the hierarchy. With demand far outstripping the supply from domestic cultivation, it is likely that criminality will seek to capitalise on the high-profit low-risk strategy of increasing home grown production rather the riskier and less profitable import of cannabis.

The current methodologies used to traffic and exploit children are highly successful, with children entering largely undetected and those identified and put into care frequently going missing. Networks are still retaining victims with relative ease. It is therefore unlikely that the *modus operandi* currently employed will change.

An increased rivalry between networks has been identified in the dataset, with children participating in attacks on other farms. The low-risk profitability has attracted the involvement of non-Vietnamese networks and this increasing level of competition will introduce an increased level of violence from rival networks, who seek to disrupt, extort or control the market. It is therefore likely that those employed as ‘gardeners’, including trafficked children, will be at an increased risk of physical harm from outside the network.

⁴⁸ ACPO Child Protection lead’s position on Children and Young People recovered from cannabis farms. August 2010.

⁴⁹ ACPO Child Protection and Abuse Investigation position on the use of age assessments. August 2010.

⁵⁰ C412 B (Merton): R (B) v Merton London Borough Council [2003] EWHC 1689 (Admin) [2003] 4 All ER 280 Stanley Burnton J. Granting JR, the Court gave guidance as to how a local authority should approach the question whether an accompanied asylum-seeker was aged less than 18 years old.

⁵¹ ACPO Child Protection and Abuse Investigation position on the use of age assessments. August 2010.

⁵² UK Commercial Cultivation of Cannabis Problem Profile. July 2010. Regional Intelligence Unit for the East. Unrestricted.

11. China (24 cases)

In the 2009 Strategic Threat Assessment, CEOP identified the trafficking of Chinese children into the UK as the most significant and prominent trend in the period spanning 1 May 2005 to 28 February 2009. However, in the current period, more potentially trafficked children have been identified from Vietnam, Nigeria and Romania. As detailed in section 12.4, it should be noted that there is a possibility that Chinese children are successfully being trafficked into the UK on Tier 4 visas and are not therefore identified as potential victims.

It should also be noted that despite the decrease in numbers, the trafficking of Chinese children still remains a major trend. It is also of significant concern that the majority of Chinese children who were recorded as missing in earlier periods are still unaccounted for. A small number of these children have been identified as resurfacing in exploitation, so it is possible that the number of Chinese children in exploitation in the UK is higher than figures indicate.

11.1 Statistical overview

The ratio of female to males exploited, the age range and type of exploitation closely mirror the findings of potential victims identified in the 2009 CEOP Strategic Threat Assessment. Seventeen girls were identified compared to seven boys and potential victims were aged between ten and 17 years of age, with 79% (19) aged between 15 and 17 when trafficked. There were seven cases where labour exploitation occurred but unlike the previous reported period, only a few children were identified as being put to work in restaurants, with most coerced into selling items on the streets such as illegally copied DVDs. There were five cases of girls being sexually exploited and two cases where this was the secondary form of exploitation. These girls were mostly exploited in brothels. Two children were also identified as being exploited in cannabis factories.



It should also be noted that despite the decrease in numbers, the trafficking of Chinese children still remains a major trend. It is also of significant concern that the majority of Chinese children who were recorded as missing in earlier periods are still unaccounted for.



11.2 Routes into the UK

Children were most commonly trafficked into the UK by air (where transport was specified, 18 out of 21 victims arrived by air). Victims were trafficked by an agent who accompanied them on the flight but not across border controls. Most agents were male and of Chinese origin.

Routings into the UK varied greatly as they did in the 2009 CEOP Strategic Threat Assessment. Victims were recorded as travelling via Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Africa (country not specified) before flying into the UK. However, as seen previously, many victims flew to the UK from an airport in Western Europe (Milan, Dublin and an unspecified airport in Spain). The ports of entry were recorded as follows: London Heathrow (5), Bristol International (3), Gatwick (1), Manchester International (1) and Birmingham International (1). Greater London was still identified as the most frequent destination of exploitation (5), but victims were trafficked to many regions across the UK, with only the North and South East of England not being identified as a destination.

11.3 Criminal networks

Chinese trafficking networks appear to be the most advanced and sophisticated in the dataset. Networks are flexible and able to react quickly to law enforcement, by entering the UK via many different airports and routing children via many different countries. Tickets are often bought with cash at Western European airports shortly before the victim travels to the UK and the agents rarely cross UK border controls with the child.

11. China (24 cases)

The highest proportion and variety of control and coercion techniques were seen in Chinese cases (Section 8.4). In one case, a Chinese child was taken to her foster placement by her social worker the day she arrived at port. The child went missing as soon as the social worker left and it was believed that she might have been followed by the trafficking network to the carer's address.

11.4 Emerging trends: Tier 4 visas and winter/summer schools⁵³

There were concerns that a number of nationals who applied on Tier 4 visas would not have been granted clearance under the previous policy for student applicants, since the criteria for Tier 4 visas is placed on acceptance by the sponsor, evidence of finances and supporting documentation and the students eligibility for the course. As schools and colleges run as businesses, sponsors (the schools) will be interested in taking on more students for paid courses.

A number of policies have now been introduced to prevent abuse of Tier 4 visas. This includes the minimum level of English being raised from beginner to intermediate and the amount of time students can work in term time being halved from 20 to ten hours. Since February 2010, all Tier 4 sponsors have to report on their students through the Sponsor Management System (SMS). If schools or students fail to comply, the school can lose its license as a sponsor. One bogus college was shut down, as despite only having 11 desks, more than 2,500 graduates applied for post-study working visas in two months⁵⁴.

This puts the onus on schools to select appropriate agents abroad and select genuine students. Currently, there is no appeals process against a decision by the UKBA, so judicial reviews are used to challenge judgements, with many overturned or the school being granted interim relief to continue.

It is also important to note that accommodation is not always validated by the school, with some students entering private fostering mediated by the local authority. However, this mediation does not apply for those aged 16 and 17 years, which is the main age bracket of Chinese minors trafficked in the UK.

Another issue concerning trafficking using the Tier 4 visa is that students can bring dependents. In these cases, the relationship of the child to the adult is established only by consulting identification documents such as birth certificates. There are no work restrictions for dependants brought in by this method.

⁵³ Meeting with UKBA Sponsorship Investigation Unit, 5 August 2010.

⁵⁴ 35% rise in immigrant study visas. Metro. 27 August 2010.

12. West African Children (51 cases)

The trafficking of West African children into the UK continues to be a major trend, having been highlighted in both the CEOP 2007 Scoping Report and the 2009 CEOP Strategic Threat Assessment.

12.1 Statistical overview

The number of potentially trafficked children identified in this period compared to the previous period is similar (51 compared to 50) with most originating from Nigeria (40 compared to 33). Other children identified in this period originated from Sierra Leone (7), Ghana (1), the Ivory Coast (1), Liberia (1) and Guinea (1).

As previously identified in the 2009 CEOP Strategic Threat Assessment, the trafficking of African children is more opportunistic, perpetrated by one or a small number of individuals and differs greatly from the structured organised criminal networks that traffic Vietnamese and Chinese children. Whereas the latter employ covert techniques such as clandestine entry and circuitous routes with agents avoiding UK border controls, West African traffickers often accompany children at border control having flown directly to the UK⁵⁵ with the victim adopting an identity of a family member of the trafficker. This difference in organisation and scale is also reflected in exploitation, with most children exploited for benefit fraud (16) or domestic servitude (12) to improve the living standards of their traffickers, rather than for monetary gain⁵⁶.

Where gender was specified, over two thirds of the potential victims of trafficking were female (24 compared to ten boys). This may be reflective of exploitation type with all six victims of sexual exploitation being female and nine girls exploited for domestic servitude (compared to two boys⁵⁷). Traditionally, throughout many countries in West Africa, children, mainly girls, are often employed and sometimes exploited as domestic servants. Tradition cannot be used as an excuse to perpetuate exploitation however, and such claims are futile when extensive measures are taken to keep victims out of the public eye, hidden within the residence and not registered with a school or general practitioner. Of all the profiles identified, West African children had the most diverse age range, with potential victims aged between two and 17 when first trafficked to the UK. Again, this is reflective of the exploitation type. Girls who were sexually exploited had reached puberty and were aged between 14 and 17 and children exploited for benefits were between four and 15, with most aged below ten. Children exploited for benefits may be younger when first trafficked into the UK so the benefits can be claimed for longer, up until adulthood⁵⁸. Children exploited in domestic servitude were trafficked into the UK as young as eight.

As previously identified in the 2009 CEOP Strategic Threat Assessment, the trafficking of African children is more opportunistic, perpetrated by one or a small number of individuals and differs greatly from the structured organised criminal networks that traffic Vietnamese and Chinese children.

Unlike the Vietnamese and Chinese victims, the vast majority of West African children were destined for London (25), with four recorded as being destined for the South East, three transiting via the UK and one child destined for Wakefield and one for Manchester. Demographically, London has a greater African population than any other region in the UK, reflecting the destination of exploitation.

12.2 Traffickers

As identified in the 2009 CEOP Strategic Threat Assessment, the African profile is unique in that most traffickers or exploiters identified were female (19 out of 32 traffickers identified). Unlike the Chinese and Vietnamese profiles, the trafficker is often the exploiter. Where the stated relationship of the trafficker to the child was given, eight stated they were parents or guardians, eight stated they were close family (such as an uncle or aunt) and four said they were friends of the family. By attempting to establish a valid link to the child, traffickers hope to pass border controls with greater ease or provide an explanation as to why the child is in their care.

⁵⁵ Where port of entry was established 30 children arrived via an airport compared to two who arrived at a seaport.

⁵⁶ There were exceptions, with six girls being sexually exploited with three/four exploited at closed community brothels. The demand for females far outstrips the demand for males. Four of the six females were from Sierra Leone.

⁵⁷ The sex of the child in the remaining two cases was not specified.

⁵⁸ The trafficking of children into and within the UK for benefit fraud purposes. CEOP, October 2010. Unrestricted.

12. West African Children (51 cases)

12.3 Exploitation and abuse

In two cases, where girls were sexually exploited at a residence which functioned as a brothel, they stated their movements were restricted and a guard was present. One of the girls stated she was forced to have sex with between three and four men every other day. In each case the 'customers' would pay the girls' trafficker.

Many of the children exploited as domestic servants were subject to emotional and physical abuse. In another case, a girl was trafficked as a domestic servant when she was pregnant (unknown to the trafficker). When the trafficker found out, he gave her drugs in an effort to abort the pregnancy, prompting her to escape from exploitation.

12.4 Emerging trends

The trafficking of West African children continues to be a major theme, but is often difficult to identify due to the hidden nature of this exploitation. It is therefore difficult to estimate the scale of this exploitation.

More targeted awareness-raising is needed amongst the community and front-line practitioners to identify abuse. The trend of children being sent to the UK for a better life but being exploited on arrival is unlikely to change. It is therefore likely that the numbers of West African children exploited will remain high.

13. Eastern Europe (48 cases)

This section is split into two parts, one focusing on Roma children and associated criminal networks and the other looking at Eastern European minors, most of whom are female and have been sexually exploited in brothels throughout the UK.

13.1 Roma children (32 cases)

The trafficking and exploitation of Roma children in the UK has been a major theme since Romania's accession to the European Union. In this period, a number of Bulgarian Roma children and a Moldovan Roma child were also identified, exploited in much the same way as Romanian Roma children (forced to beg and commit petty theft). The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's Child Trafficking Advice and Information Line (CTAIL)⁵⁹ identified that many Roma children referred to them originated from Eastern European countries. The 32 children identified is almost certainly an underestimation of the scale and level of threat. This is probably due to a lack of national awareness, as compared to other profiles, the exploitation is visible, with most children being coerced into committing criminal activities⁶⁰. Whereas Greater London and the South East have benefited from the Metropolitan Police Service's Operation Golf⁶¹, many police forces do not look beyond the initial crime to the coercion applied by Roma criminal networks who control the children's activities and earnings. The current level of national awareness is reflected in the data, with 20 children identified as having been exploited in Greater London or the South East, compared to four children exploited elsewhere in the UK⁶². Anecdotal information suggests that Roma children come to the attention of law enforcement frequently throughout the UK but not necessarily as victims of trafficking.

Traffickers and exploiters were often the parents, guardians or siblings of the child. Operation Golf has identified that Roma criminal networks are occasionally hierarchal family based structures where children are exploited, sometimes by direct family members.

Most potential victims identified were female (17) rather than male (nine), ranging from seven to 17 years of age with most being 16 or 17. Where the exploitation type was identified, most were exploited for street crime (16), six for sexual exploitation, three for benefit fraud and two for labour exploitation.

In striking contrast to the general profile of victims of sexual exploitation, where 91% of victims were female, four of the six Roma victims were boys. These boys trafficked by Roma men were identified from two reports which were derived from an untested source, so the validity of the information has yet to be established. However, CEOP has received similar reports in previous periods and film-maker Liviu Tipurita's documentary 'The child sex trade' highlighted European sex offenders travelling to Romania to take advantage of vulnerable Roma boys⁶³. There are perhaps indications that Roma criminals are exploiting a niche in the sex market here in the UK, but better intelligence must be established before this assumption can be verified.

Although not recorded in this period, there is concern that many young Roma children are often pressured to marry at a young age. Traditionally, the father of the bride would receive a dowry from the father of the bridegroom. Within the Roma community, girls are commonly married in their early teens or even younger. Some become pregnant and bear children at this early age. These concerns are addressed more fully in the CEOP report Child Trafficking for Benefit Fraud Purposes⁶⁴.

Many of these cases were derived from reports of criminality committed by Roma children. These children are continuously treated as offenders and not identified as potential victims of trafficking. Many Roma children caught committing or attempting petty crime are held by police until a responsible adult collects and takes them home. There are concerns that



Most potential victims identified were female (17) rather than male (nine), ranging from seven to 17 years of age with most being 16 or 17.



⁵⁹ A specialist service for anyone working with children who may have been trafficked.

⁶⁰ This would include theft of person, distraction theft, shoplifting and begging.

⁶¹ A MPS police unit set up to combat a large Romanian Roma criminal network work exploit children as a means of generating illegal funds.

⁶² The destination of exploitation was not detailed in the remaining eight cases.

⁶³ Cutting Edge, Channel 4. 2003.

⁶⁴ *The trafficking of children into and within the UK for benefit fraud purposes*. CEOP, October 2010. Unrestricted.

13. Eastern Europe (48 cases)

these responsible adults may be the very adults exploiting the children. The good practice established in some parts of the country (such as Operation Golf and the Hertfordshire anti-trafficking model) must be disseminated to a wider audience to increase the understanding amongst first line practitioners that these children should be safeguarded, not prosecuted.

13.2 Eastern Europe⁶⁵ (16 cases)

Of the 16 children and young people identified from Europe, 14 were female and sexually exploited in brothels across the UK. The girls were aged between nine and 17, with most aged between 13 and 16. Four originated from Poland, two from the Ukraine and one from Slovakia. The country was not stated in the remaining cases but it was believed the girls were from Eastern Europe.

For 11 of the children and young people, the intelligence originated from an untested source, most originating from Crimestoppers reports. These reports commonly stated that underage girls of Eastern European origin were working at a brothel. The address of the premises was stated and a description of the owner of the brothel was often given, but little detail was given of the victim.

In the last reporting period, there have been two highly successful investigations into the trafficking of Eastern European girls involved in prostitution within the UK. In June 2009, members of a trafficking network were arrested and remanded in custody following an investigation into the report of a 15 year-old Slovakian girl being trafficked by a group of men and women. She was forced to have sex with men for money by one of the group, who also raped her. Another investigation into a case regarding a 15 year-old Romanian girl, who was forced into prostitution, resulted in a successful prosecution of the main trafficker (see annex A).

New legislation making it illegal to have sex with victims of trafficking may have a positive effect resulting in decreased demand. The effect of this legislation on the trafficking of minors of commercial sexual exploitation will be difficult to measure, as the current intelligence picture is limited. Only a handful of people have been charged for this offence and the prostitutes were all adults⁶⁶. Proving that individuals were aware that they were having sex with victims of trafficking is also difficult to substantiate.

13.3 Emerging trends

The exploitation of Romanian Roma children in the UK surged on Romania's accession to the European Union. Likewise, the accession of Bulgaria in 2007 has seen increasing numbers of Bulgarian Roma children and adults entering the UK. As evidenced in the dataset, some of these children are being exploited in a manner that mirrors Romania Roma children. Both Turkey and Croatia have significant Roma populations, with both states currently negotiating to join the European Union. If accession is achieved, it is possible Roma criminal networks from these countries may enter the UK.

Operation Golf has highlighted that Romanian Roma criminal networks plan to target the London Olympics in 2012. The influx of tourists crowded into venues around the games may offer opportunities for begging, pick-pocketing and bag-snatching thefts.

With the possibility of the UK being targeted by more of these criminal networks, specialist units such as Golf are necessary. However, Operation Golf will cease to function operationally beyond December 2010 and in its entirety by April 2011. Operation Golf has played a major part in disrupting child trafficking networks and bringing associated criminality to justice.

⁶⁵ Non-Roma.

⁶⁶ Please refer to Section 5.6.

14. South Asia (28 cases)

Potential victims of trafficking originated from Bangladesh (11), Pakistan (7), India (4), Afghanistan (3) and Sri Lanka (3). The trafficking of Afghan minors was identified as a major profile in the 2009 CEOP Strategic Threat Assessment, but numbers of potential victims have decreased this period. However, there were concerns raised in relation to en-route abuse and their vulnerability. It should also be noted that Afghan boys communicated little of their experiences and abuse to authorities, preventing a clear picture of events being established.

CEOP has also received anecdotal reports from the UKBA that Bangladeshi and Pakistani children may be exploited for residence in the UK. A family may enter on a tourist visa, leaving a child behind in the UK on their return. This child is taken to an asylum screening unit with a sponsor, having been coached to recite a tragic story in relation to their family and his or her reason to claim asylum. The child will then enter a private fostering relationship with their sponsors. When the child is granted asylum or residence, the family will return to the UK and apply for residence on the back of a family reunion visa. In one case, a boy stated his mother had died, but she then arrived in the UK a few years later applying to reside with her child.

14.1 Bangladesh (11 cases)

Seven of the potential victims were female and four were male with a wide age distribution from three to 15 years of age. In four cases, the method of transport into the UK was recorded as air travel, mostly on direct flights into the UK. London was the most common destination of exploitation (five) and most victims were exploited as domestic servants (seven) with one child exploited in a restaurant kitchen.

Some of the victims had been in abusive relationships with their parents in Bangladesh, who later went onto sell them as domestic servants, making these children vulnerable to trafficking. Three children were even trafficked to the UK by their own fathers and subsequently exploited as domestic servants or made to work in the kitchen of a restaurant.

Aside from the fathers who trafficked their own children, the remainder were sold or taken over to the UK to serve as domestic servants in their household. The children were given false documentation and trafficked as a relative, commonly a niece or nephew. In two cases, it appears the child was moved between addresses and was made to perform chores at each address. One girl, now 15, was five when she was first exploited by her own mother in Bangladesh and at the age of ten she was trafficked into the UK. Another girl trafficked to the UK by her own father was made to carry domestic chores in a variety of houses to earn money for him. He would often lock her in a room and sometimes deprive her of food. Whilst working, she stated a man attempted to rape her, which prompted her escape from exploitation.

14.2 Pakistan (7 cases)

Four potential victims were identified as male and three as female. Except for a single two year-old, the children were aged between 13 and 15. Where mode of transport was identified, the children had been trafficked by air. Exploitation type was not identified in three cases and in the remaining four cases, two were exploited in takeaways (one of these children was also exploited for domestic servitude), one was exploited in an insurance scam and the other for domestic servitude.

 **Some of the victims had been in abusive relationships with their parents in Bangladesh, who later went onto sell them as domestic servants, making these children vulnerable to trafficking.** 

14. South Asia (28 cases)

14.3 Emerging trends

One of the children recorded in the dataset fell into exploitation after his parents died in the 2005 earthquakes in Pakistan. The recent floods in North Pakistan have devastated the region affecting an estimated 20 million people, killing over a thousand and making an estimated four million homeless, destroying their livelihoods⁶⁷. This could make many children vulnerable to trafficking. With strong links between the UK and Pakistan and large established communities in the UK, families and children could be duped into sending children to the UK for a better life by those who seek to exploit them.

Whilst domestic servitude and labour exploitation in restaurants and takeaways continue to dominate exploitation types, anecdotal information suggests children will continue to be exploited for residence.

⁶⁷ BBC news reports, 1 September 2010 and 13 August 2010. Reuters news report, 20 August 2010.



15. Other Forms of Exploitation

There were eight cases where girls were believed to have been trafficked or there was evidence they were going to be trafficked and forced into marriage. Three cases related to British Asian girls living in the East Midlands, two of whom were to be married in Bangladesh and one who was to be married in Leicester. In the latter case, the 17 year-old girl was subject to honour based violence from her family and is now living at a different residence. In the other two cases, pressure came from the girls' father, but the girls live separately from him with their respective mothers. In these three incidents, the marriage did not occur. It is possible that this trend is under reported or is not considered to qualify as trafficking.

The intelligence for the remaining five cases came from an untested source. There were indications that three Indian girls and two Moroccan girls were to be trafficked to the UK for marriage. Adult British Asians (potentially of Indian ethnicity) were said to be accompanying these girls to the UK.

The number of children identified as having been identified for benefit fraud has increased from eight to 23 during this period. The victims mainly originated from Nigeria (16). Three were of Roma origin, two were Somali and two were from Morocco. Three of the Nigerian children identified were trafficked via Dublin and four were trafficked between Ireland and the UK. These findings closely mirror those identified in the CEOP report on children trafficked for benefit fraud⁶⁸.

Four children were identified as being trafficked for illegal adoption. Two originated from Malaysia, one from the Yemen and one child was from Kazakhstan. The age of the Malaysian children was specified as less than 12 months and four years of age. Three of the four children were female; the gender of the remaining child was not specified.

⁶⁸ The trafficking of children into the UK for benefit fraud purposes. CEOP. October 2010. Unrestricted.

16. Areas of Concern

Awareness raising and the correct provision of support and care for trafficked children have already been covered earlier in the report. There are however a number of other specific issues which must be addressed if the UK is to provide better combat child trafficking.

Private fostering⁶⁹

It is important to stress that private fostering is a positive procedure which offers the children the chance to be raised by extended family members, but CEOP has raised concerns in how these relationships may be abused by traffickers.

The link between private fostering and trafficked children will be examined in more detail in an upcoming CEOP assessment on hidden children. Many trafficked children are exploited in unregistered private arrangements in the UK. Once in the UK and in the venue of exploitation, which often includes private residences, detection of the child can be problematic. However, many of these children are registered with GPs and are in education. The health and education sectors can take a larger role in identifying if children who are not living with a parent have been notified with the local authority.



The number of trafficking investigations and successful prosecutions must increase in order to act as a deterrent to traffickers and make the UK a hostile environment for this crime type.



Notified arrangements are also not without their risks. It is sometimes difficult to evaluate and verify the true identity of children and the relationship between the child and carer. Once a child reaches 16 years of age, they will no longer be visited by private fostering officers. This is of particular concern as the most commonly identified ages of children trafficked to the UK are 16 and 17⁷⁰.

Investigative expertise

The number of trafficking investigations and successful prosecutions must increase in order to act as a deterrent to traffickers and make the UK a hostile environment for this crime type. This may be a resource issue, as prosecuting for trafficking offences often entails protracted investigations with international co-operation. It may also be due to lack of knowledge and the difficulty in running such an investigation. There are only a handful of UK police forces which have units designated and trained in running investigations into trafficking.

Inter agency co-operation including multinational collaboration

Whilst confidentiality and victim safety is paramount, better information sharing and partnerships could better identify, prevent and safeguard potential victims of trafficking and disrupt trafficking networks. The emphasis is often on agencies within the UK to work together, but by working in source and transit companies, trafficking networks can be directly targeted and recruitment of victims restricted.

⁶⁹ Working Together to Safeguard Children Who May have Been Trafficked. 2007. Department for Schools, Families and Children – 7.49, 'Private fostering is defined in section 66 of the Children Act 1989. A private fostering arrangement arises when a child under 16 years (or under 18 if disabled) is to reside for more than 28 days in the care of someone who is not a parent, close relative, or someone with parental responsibility (these close relatives are defined by the Act as grandparents, brother, sister, uncle or aunt whether of the full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership or step-parent' and 7.50 states 'Parents and private foster carers are required to notify the local authority of a private fostering arrangement. A person who proposes to foster a child privately must notify the appropriate local authority of the proposal at least six weeks before the private fostering arrangement is to begin; or where the private fostering arrangement is to begin within six weeks, immediately'.

⁷⁰ Since CEOP commenced their UK child trafficking assessments in 2005.

17. Advances in the Fight against Trafficking

The UK has demonstrated its commitment to tackling human trafficking (which encompasses child trafficking) in the past few years with the UK Action Plan on Human Trafficking, launched by the Home Office and Scottish Government. This was last updated in October 2009⁷¹.

Frontline UKBA staff are now required to complete an e-learning package on indicators of trafficking and all new police recruits undergo a module on trafficking as part of their training. CEOP is currently in the process of developing a training course for first responders and a course for investigational best practice. CEOP's 'Thinkuknow' online safety module for trainers and teachers also now contains a section on child trafficking to help promote awareness in schools.

The NRM has done much to raise awareness levels, provide a protocol for sharing information and improve knowledge levels of the national picture of child trafficking. However, the NRM is in its infancy having been in operation since 1 April 2009. Contributing agencies may not be familiar or even fully aware of its function. There are also concerns that the NRM does not provide anything of value to victims of child trafficking⁷², so victims are purposefully not referred on occasion⁷³.



Frontline UKBA staff are now required to complete an e-learning package on indicators of trafficking and all new police recruits undergo a module on trafficking as part of their training.



The ACPO-supported Victim Identification Toolkit has been piloted in a number of different local authorities across the

UK, with the pilot finishing in March 2010. The pilot is currently being evaluated and monitored before any further decisions are made regarding its future purpose and function. Both the toolkit and NRM have raised awareness levels and will continue to do so in the future as their remit or the knowledge of these mechanisms increases.

Operation Newbridge is now being piloted at several airports across the UK. This model has seen a reduction in numbers of potential victims of trafficking at Gatwick, both increasing the awareness and reduction of trafficking at a local level.

ECPAT UK⁷⁴ are also currently running a three year campaign with the Body Shop to combat child trafficking. In July 2010, they petitioned for the government to introduce a system of guardianship for child victims of trafficking. These guardians would take parental responsibility, providing care, support and protection from exploitation.

There has been an increase in support in the response to trafficking in source countries. Media reports have highlighted a number of initiatives in China. The Vietnamese government has shown a willingness to work with the British government on a number of issues of concern, with the issue of trafficking on the agenda. Nigeria's National Agency for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) has also shown a willingness to engage with British law enforcement. The government in Nigeria is also taking measures to clamp down on the labelling and stigmatisation of child witches vulnerable to trafficking and the removal of harmful witchcraft practices (which are often employed as measures to control trafficked children).

Despite these advances and the efforts of CEOP and key partner agencies to raise knowledge levels, there remains a lack of consistency of knowledge amongst front line law enforcement, children's services and other organisations across the UK who may encounter victims of trafficking (such as education and health care).

⁷¹ www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/humantrafficking004.htm

⁷² Wrong kind of victim? The Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, June 2010.

⁷³ Identified victims of trafficking can qualify for 45 days of government funded support and one year's residence. Most vulnerable children who have illegally entered the UK regardless of whether they are identified as a victim of trafficking would remain in the UK at least until they reach 18. If adequate safeguarding measures are in place in their country of origin or the first EU country where they claimed asylum they may be deported there instead. It has been documented that on the referral of a potentially trafficked child, proceedings have taken place to remove a child based on their immigration status.

⁷⁴ End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes.



Annex A – Case Study

A 15 year-old Romanian girl was duped by a trafficking network, which promised her work in the UK but then forced her into prostitution. She was moved around various UK addresses and raped by an unknown male and her trafficker in the UK, Sorin Sardaru. She was then told, under threats and beatings, that she would have to work as a prostitute to earn her keep.

Due to her age, she was taken to a private brothel in Birmingham, where age was of no concern, and forced to service clients there. She was taken and collected by her trafficker or members of his family. Any money earned was taken from her.

An anonymous tip-off regarding a child working at the named brothel was received and police were able to rescue her from exploitation. A huge covert investigation was launched with the aid of Romanian police resulting in the arrest and charge of various members of the network for trafficking offences. The trial commenced on 23 October 2009. After consultation with all parties, it was agreed that a plea for human trafficking for sexual exploitation into the UK and inciting child prostitution would be accepted and on 24 October 2009, Sardaru pleaded guilty to the above.

Sardaru was given a seven year sentence for human trafficking and seven years to run concurrently for inciting child prostitution, as well as a lifetime on the sex offenders register. He will also be deported upon completion of his sentence.





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