

# Breaking the wall of silence

Practitioners' responses to trafficked children and young people

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June 2009

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## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all those who contributed time to this research project by participating in the focus groups and interviews as well as allowing access to case information.

Past and present members of the advisory group played an invaluable role in supporting, inspiring and steering this research through to its conclusion. Members are or have been Silvie Bovarnick (NSPCC Fresh Start), Sue Bradshaw (ACPO), Wendy DuChesne (BIA), Jane Dykins (Refugee Council), Sarah Field (University of Bedfordshire), Zoe Hilton (NSPCC), Patricia Hynes (NSPCC Fresh Start), Mandy John-Baptiste (NSPCC National Child Trafficking Advice and Information Line, NSPCC Fresh Start), Aarti Kapoor (CEOP), Susanne McGregor (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine), Andrea Marie (NSPCC), David McDonald (Home Office), Louise Moore (DCSF), Amanda Palmer (UKHTC), Nasima Patel (NSPCC), Nicola Payne (UKBA), Jenny Pearce (University of Bedfordshire), Jo Phoenix (Durham University), Victoria Presland (UKBA) and Lorraine Radford (NSPCC).

Particular acknowledgements are given to the range of staff at the three research sites. Their time, effort and support have been invaluable.

Many thanks go to the NSPCC National Child Trafficking Advice and Information Line (CTAIL) Young Persons Advisory Group who provided insightful feedback on the findings to the research team.

Others who have provided crucial assistance include Heaven Crawley (University of Swansea) and Nadine Finch (Garden Court Chambers). We would also like to acknowledge Margaret Melrose (University of Bedfordshire) for her work on this project and Wendy Roberts (Fresh Start, NSPCC) for her idea of a “road map” in gaining disclosure from children and young people who have been trafficked.

Particular thanks go to Cara Senouni (University of Bedfordshire) who provided essential administrative support throughout the research, to Chloe Pritchard (NSPCC Fresh Start) and to Sarah Field who worked as a research assistant on the project. Each provided excellent input at every stage of the research. Their support was essential to the work.

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## Executive summary

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### Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## 1 Trafficking is a process, not an event

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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## 2 Trafficking can be hidden behind a wall of silence

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**2.5 Experience can be used to ascertain patterns of those who traffic children and young people, from where and for what purpose. However, practitioners levelled caution against categorising or profiling these communities for fear of labelling them and overshadowing evidence of variation** (see recommendations 11–15 and 18). While patterns emerge of children being trafficked from specific countries for specific reasons, practitioners warned against profiling, as it can assume characteristics that might not be true in all cases and can limit practitioners' understanding of the complexities and diversities attached to individual cases. Practitioners need training to help them understand the distinction between trafficking and smuggling, and to work with the complexities that these differences involve.

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### **3 Every Child Matters: the role of mainstream services**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**3.7 Making a positive contribution and achieving economic wellbeing** (see

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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### Case study 1: Abina's story

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Why are children and young people trafficked?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Visit [www.londonscb.gov.uk/procedures/supplementary\\_procedures.html](http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/procedures/supplementary_procedures.html) or click on the following link:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## What are the gaps in existing data?

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

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

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

Three further gaps have been identified:

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

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

## **Conclusion**

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

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

## Chapter 2 Research aims, methods and context

### Introduction

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

### Research aims

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Research staffing, governance and dissemination**

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

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

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

## Research methods

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Interviewees were selected for interview:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Table 3: Number of case studies analysed**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

UK	10
China	8
Nigeria	8
Somalia	1
Pakistan	1
Cameroon	1
Ghana	1
Congo	1
Sierra Leone	1
Zimbabwe	1
Uganda	1
Eastern European country	1
Unknown	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>

## **Ethical considerations and confidentiality**

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

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

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

## **The national context and overview of the three research sites**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Children in care: the national context**

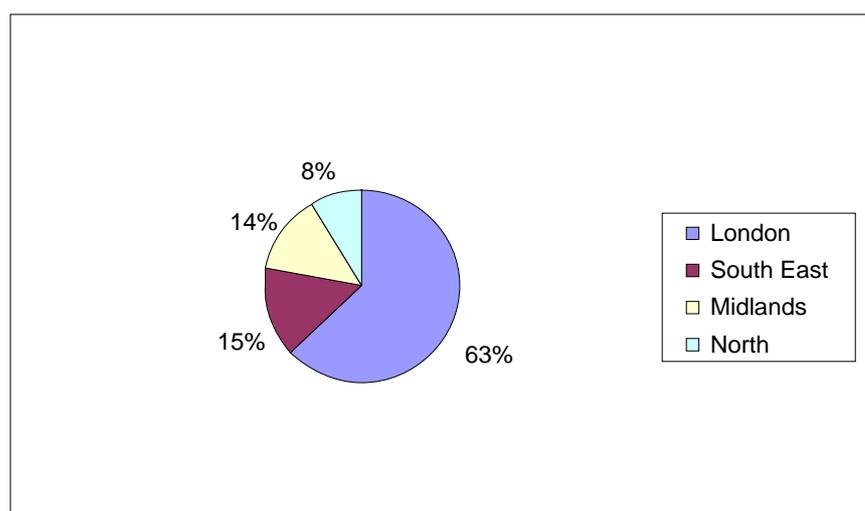
**2.17** Around 59,500 children were looked after in England as at 31 March 2008, although some 90,000 pass through the care system in any year. Forty-two per cent of looked-after children return home within six months ([www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000810/index.shtml](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000810/index.shtml)).

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

## Separated children

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

**Table 7: UASC in care by geographic location**



## The local research sites: children in care

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

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

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

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

## **Processes for dealing with trafficked children**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Recording and monitoring of trafficking cases**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Missing children**

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

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

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

All young people arriving at the airport in site 1 are given a leaflet about the dangers of going missing and the risks of child trafficking. This leaflet is in Mandarin and English, and is currently being translated into other languages to fit the profile of separated children in site 1. These leaflets are also being used by the Red Cross, to forewarn young people of the risk of trafficking while they are in transition to the UK.

As indicated elsewhere in this document, several children and young people have returned to care in site 1, after first going missing from the airport.

Site 2 has recently developed a focus on preventing children and young people from going missing by providing a particular body of work in collaboration with police and other services targeted at the child or young person at the point of arrival into the country. As a result, the numbers of separated young people who went missing from care without leaving a forwarding address dropped dramatically. Data on children and young people going missing is limited, as there are discrepancies in the period of time that young people go missing and a large number of children or young people repeatedly go missing on more than one occasion. The missing children's worker sees approximately 280 children per year who go missing and return. However, the majority of children who are suspects of trafficking or suspected trafficking are UK citizens trafficked internally within the UK. The borough has extensive missing from care and home procedures, which require a swift multi-agency response. It is noted that it is rare (one or two cases) of a child or young person under the age of 16 to go missing permanently.

In site 3, most recorded episodes of missing young people relate to those who are UK citizens. In most cases of missing children and young people, they return or are found. Figures for the number of looked-after children who have been reported missing in site 3 are below.

**Table 8: Numbers of children reported going missing in site 3**

Date	Numbers of children going missing
2006-7	52
2007-8	57
2008-9	87

Of the 87 who went missing from 2008 to 2009, the Permanence and Through Care Team have knowledge of four UASC who have gone missing.

## Summary of findings from the local sites

**2.24** The impression emerged during the overview of the sites within which the research took place was that there were difficulties in sites in identifying data on trafficked children and young people.

As noted throughout the research, there is little reliable evidence recorded of data on trafficked children and young people or of those who go missing from the borough.

In the sites under study, we found only a small number of recorded cases of child trafficking. This might highlight a gap in recording suspected (as opposed to confirmed) cases of child trafficking rather than an absence of trafficked children per se in these areas. Site 1, for instance, reported a substantial number of children who had gone missing and were suspected of having been trafficked. These children were recorded as missing rather than as suspected of being trafficked.

In site 3, cases of trafficked children had been monitored through police investigations of cases of child trafficking as a crime. As such, it was unclear how many cases of trafficked children and young people go unnoticed and how many suspected cases of child trafficking are dropped due to lack of evidence or are never fully investigated.

In site 2, trafficking was most likely to be recorded on the Children's Quality Assurance Unit's database on sexual exploitation, constituting one category among many other risk factors and indicators.

Overall it was surmised that, in the main, the issue of trafficking appeared to have fallen towards Sexual Exploitation Services.

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## Chapter 3 Trafficking is a process, not an event: questions of perception and identification

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### Case study 2: Yu Chan's story

Prior to coming to the UK, Yu Chan was, at the age of 14, trafficked from China to Europe where she was forced to work in prostitution. She had left an impoverished community in China, having been brought up within an orphanage as her mother had died in childbirth and there was no knowledge of the whereabouts of her father.

In the UK, she presented to children's services aged 15 after escaping from a brothel. She was five months pregnant. Yu Chan was initially placed in local authority care but a number of placement breakdowns were precipitated with her going missing for periods of time. Three days after giving birth, Yu Chan went missing with her baby. She telephoned her keyworker and informed her that she had sent her baby back to China.

It later emerged that the baby might have been sent to the same orphanage in which Yu Chan had lived.

Professionals also thought that Yu Chan did not understand the benefits and support to which she was entitled to help her to keep her baby in the UK. There was a lack of appropriate interpreting. Some reports said she had undiagnosed learning difficulties and defined her as naïve. Practitioners felt that she was subjected to pressures by unknown people, particularly from within her own community. She had been threatened by her traffickers who said that she owed them money and that the baby could repay the debt. She was threatened with her own and her baby's death if the debt was not repaid.

The suspicions, that someone might be controlling her and that she might be linked to organised crime were discussed in Strategy Meetings. However, it remained unclear how the money, necessary documents and plane tickets were found for her baby to be sent back to China.

Yu Chan subsequently fell pregnant again. Because her first child went missing, tight interventions were then placed on monitoring Yu Chan and her newborn child.

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## **Dilemmas facing practitioners in recognising trafficked children and young people**

Yu Chan had never experienced what is commonly assumed to be “home”. She had been accommodated in a number of different orphanages and had little knowledge of, or contact with, her own family members. For Yu Chan, there was no one event where exploitation and maltreatment began or ended. She did not have a strong understanding of where she was within the UK, of what legislation there was to protect her, or of her entitlements to support. The foster care placements that tried to support her were frustrated by her pattern of going missing, a pattern orchestrated by traffickers who abused her. Yu Chan’s exploitation undermined her sense of control over herself and her baby. The pattern of abuse was extended into the next generation, as the process of trafficking and exploitation continued with traffickers taking her child.

### **Introduction**

**3.1** This chapter explores the way that the trafficking of children and young people is a process, rather than an event. As such, it can be “hidden” within the day-to-day activities of the child and therefore it can be difficult to identify. Even though Yu Chan had been identified as a trafficked child, the abuse continued throughout her life and into the next generation. Yu Chan was an identified case, but practitioners noted that many were difficult to recognise. Although there are occasional cases where a young person is kidnapped, trafficked, rescued and then returned to their country of origin, this pattern, if it does exist at all, represents a minority of cases. Indeed, no such situation arose from the case studies investigated as part of this report.

This chapter explores practitioners’ observations of the way that trafficking processes can work by focusing on how knowledge about trafficking emerges; where the gaps in knowledge are; and how our limited understanding can be exploited by traffickers. While later chapters look more at the way that service providers can help to identify and respond to the children and young people, this chapter looks in more depth at the way trafficking is understood and defined as a process, rather than as an event.

It shows that our knowledge base of trafficking has been enhanced through the developing experience of practitioners who are working with trafficked children and young people. As

knowledge develops, patterns of the methods used by traffickers emerge, and policy and practice respond to prevent it. For example, there is increasing evidence that as the major airports become better equipped to identify and prosecute traffickers, other less advanced and more under-resourced airports are targeted by traffickers. The message here is that the problem can be tackled. The emerging information and knowledge about the problem needs to be shared so that, rather than being displaced from one area to another, trafficking is prevented overall.

### **Identification of a child or young person is also a process, not an event**

**3.2** The mechanisms through which trafficking abuses are perpetrated are incorporated into an overall process. They are integrated into the child's or young person's life. It is essential therefore that trafficking is understood in this way. For international cases, it may start with the child's or young person's parents, family and community who may, or more probably may not, be aware of the abuse inherent within the experience of being trafficked. It may be presented as a means of escape from war or poverty, or as an entry into a better life. It may be put forward as a form of smuggling, with the exploitation hidden until the child or young person is away from their country of origin. It may continue through the child's life and into the next generation.

For children and young people who are UK citizens and who are trafficked within the UK, similar processes are at play. Although the child is not crossing borders and therefore not moving through different language and dominant overarching cultural systems, they may be targeted for ongoing abuse and coercion over a time span that can continue into adulthood. The expectation that the child or young person should speak out about the abuse they have experienced needs to be understood in the context of the way that their exploitation has been normalised into their maturation and development. Indeed, it becomes part of their understanding of their own sexuality, self-esteem and self-worth.

What is shown in this as well as in other research is that trafficking has a devastating impact on the child or young person. As trafficking is understood as a lengthy process, so then is recovery from it. Trafficking is not a one-off, quick event and neither is a recovery plan for the child or young person concerned.

**3.3** In the same light, trafficking involves the child or young person who is a victim, but who is often a victim with a voice. Although the respected and endorsed legislation around the

rights of the child specifies that the trafficked child is a victim of abuse, and that they cannot consent to this abuse, there remains a question of how the child's or young person's own sense of agency is to be respected within this process and integrated into a recovery plan. For example, a practitioner who attended a focus group noted contact with a young man who had been trafficked to work in organised crime, being sent out to steal mobile phones and to act as a pickpocket. The practitioner noted that the young man had argued against being seen as a victim, despite some concerns from practitioners that he had also been sexually abused.

Apparently the young man had argued, "I might be abused, but I'm not dead." This young man felt that he would have died if left within his country of origin, which was at war, and where he had witnessed the murder of his father and had lost contact with his mother and brother. He, and many other trafficked children and young people have made extreme efforts to leave their country of origin, where "home" and/or "childhood" may have been displaced or destroyed. While undoubtedly victims of trafficking, or of smuggling, they may not want to conform to the dominant images of child or victim. This can mean two things. It can mean that manipulative traffickers who are skilled at exploiting the child's or young person's desire to be seen as grown up can encourage the child to accept exploitation as acceptable. It can also mean that the child themselves has a vested interest in hiding the exploitation, positioning themselves as exercising their own agency and making decisions about their own lives without interference from welfare/child protection services. Together these factors can encourage the child or young person to believe that, by colluding with the exploitation, they are making decisions for themselves and participating in the adult world.

Trafficking is hard to define, as it is a process with no easily identifiable beginning, middle or end. It can, therefore, go unnoticed: practitioners are uncertain about definitions or how to recognise a trafficked child or young person.

**3.4** There was a tangible level of confusion and uncertainty among many practitioners with regard to knowing and applying a definition of trafficking in their practice. As noted in chapter 1, the internationally agreed definition of trafficking is provided in the Palermo Protocol. This is repeated in the DCSF *Guidance for Safeguarding Children and Young People who may have been Trafficked* (DCSF 2007), the *London Protocol for Safeguarding Trafficked and Exploited Children* (LSCB 2007) and the *London Safeguarding Trafficked Children Toolkit 2009*, currently being piloted. It was often hard for practitioners to apply this clearly defined literal description. For example, a practitioner who had considerable experience of dealing with trafficked children explained:

I have looked at all the different definitions that they have and I realised that there isn't a full definition that everyone sticks too. It can be looked at very differently. I don't think that we have had a prescribed definition...it wasn't like, this is definitely it and this is definitely not. It was based on individual (Int. 25)

Another practitioner explained that some practitioners who had less experience and knowledge about trafficking issues might not be familiar with which definition to use:

I suppose it's maybe because we are sometimes working to different definitions and that people don't really know what definitions we are working to... (Int. 21)

As trafficking could have been the process through which the child or young person entered the country before claiming asylum, some practitioners were unsure about the numbers of cases that may exist. For example, there was a case of a young person who, years after claiming asylum, was identified as potentially having been trafficked as a child. This was not uncommon. Indeed, as more practitioners became familiar with identifying the indicators of trafficking, the more they recognised that some of their separated or unaccompanied asylum-seeking children had been trafficked.

...It made me think a little bit more about whether all asylum-seeking children are trafficked...if it does include all of our asylum seekers then obviously I have got hundreds of names... (Int. 4)

In the main, practitioners understood trafficking to involve the exploitation of the child or young person. Talking of her definition of a trafficked child or young person, this practitioner noted that:

Mine would be young people who were in some way forced or coerced or taken to this country for means such as prostitution or exploitation of some sort. When I mean taken, I don't always mean that they are forced into it or abducted. I mean that they could believe that they are coming in for good reasons but because they are young people they don't really understand what's happening. Maybe some form of blackmail, emotional blackmail from the traffickers to get young people to do come over here because if they don't something might happen to their family... (Int. 5)

The range of quotations from different practitioners reveals the complexities experienced in trying to understand and define a trafficked child. They suggest that further training is needed to enable the definition of child trafficking as explained in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress

and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol, UN 2000) and developed in the DCSF *Guidance on Safeguarding Children who may have been Trafficked* (DCSF 2007) to be incorporated into practice.

## **The relationship between trafficking and smuggling is unclear within the process**

**3.5** It was not always clear whether a separated child or young person had been trafficked or smuggled, or whether the distinction mattered in practice.

If, as according to the Palermo Protocol, children and young people under the age of 18 are considered too young to consent to agreeing to exploitation, and as smuggling is, by definition, an illegal activity, it was questioned whether a smuggled child or young person was also being exploited? Was the smuggler working in the best interests of the child by being paid to bring them illegally into a foreign country? The mere process of smuggling puts a child or young person at increased risk of abuse and exploitation as modes of travel are perilous. Children and young people who are smuggled unaccompanied by a parent or carer are particularly vulnerable to maltreatment. If the child cannot, on arrival, engage with school, health service provision or develop as an integrated member of a community, are their rights being undermined and are they, therefore, being exploited? As noted by one practitioner, who was deeply concerned that calling a child “smuggled” rather than “trafficked” may have negative implications:

I think it gets minimised when somebody labels a child as being smuggled...it's almost as if they consider a smuggled child to be in on it. Whereas a trafficked child is...a child that is being deceived all the way, as well as their families. (CS020)

There are also potential dangers inherent in this misunderstanding if a practitioner does not have enough evidence to consider a child as “trafficked”. Being regarded as “smuggled” may have future implications as any case for asylum may rest on the child’s or young person’s experience of being trafficked, and, if classified as “smuggled”, their future may be affected.

Within this debate it is important to refer back to the questions raised in chapter 1 about the expectations held of “home”. For many of these young people home might be dangerous and damaging. The opportunity for them, with or without their family, to be “smuggled”, albeit illegally, into what might be considered a better place may not be seen as exploitative and in

many cases will mean they escape persecution in their countries of origin. On the other hand, many practitioners were concerned that, once smuggled into the country, the child was left in a vulnerable situation, as their legal status was unconfirmed.

**3.6** While some practitioners expressed confusion with the boundaries between smuggling and trafficking, others felt they had a clear understanding of the difference:

I think for a trafficked child, it's organised crime. I think that family members back home can be abused, the children can be threatened. I also don't think a child consents to being trafficked. A child, I guess, that is being smuggled, it's quite difficult I guess because where they can be used interchangeably...But I would say smuggling is something that is maybe arranged by the family and it may be a safer route that's got some level of consent, that's just my understanding of it. I could be wrong. But I think that a trafficked child is much more worrying and they've been exploited, and are being exploited, and I think it's quite dangerous from, you know, the beginning to the end....

And:

...[smuggling] it's complicit and you know the child must know that they're going from A to B, they're going to get in the back of the lorry, they know they have to hide and then they're going to get out the other end and somebody will meet them. I think that it's almost as if they consider a smuggled child to be in on it. Whereas a trafficked child to me is a child that is being deceived all the way, as well as their families. I think there's a clear difference... (Int. 18)

Despite the clarity in this practitioner's mind, there were many who felt confused and who believed that they were learning as they worked with each separate case. There were some cases where it was noted that a child had been "smuggled" into the country for benefit fraud purposes, or within a private foster care arrangement for domestic servitude.

We have children come up through the ordinary child protection system as well. I was in a child protection conference because someone had picked up that this 14-year-old boy was not thriving. He was invited to the conference and stood up and said, "Look, these are not my parents – I was brought here." So that was a private fostering case and was trafficking. (Int. 10)

By definition, these are cases of the trafficking of children and young people, as they involve continued exploitation. The question remains open as to whether a child can be smuggled without being exploited, if, as suggested, the process of smuggling deprives them of their right to live as law-abiding members of a community within which they can integrate. In the main, practitioners noted that smuggling was invariably a part of the complex process involved in escaping persecution and being trafficked into a different country.

### **The more experienced and knowledgeable the practitioner is, the better the identification of the process**

**3.7** The process of trafficking became clearer the more experienced the practitioner became. It was evident that practitioners who had worked with a number of cases were better able to recognise emerging patterns. This improved their capacity to recognise indicators of trafficking. The indicators of trafficking that were identified through this research have been listed in appendix 3.

Many practitioners were able to identify trends in the way children and young people were trafficked. They were able to see patterns of trafficking from particular parts of the world repeat themselves in their work. Practitioners experienced in the work who were interviewed noted that, as patterns emerged, they were better able to contextualise the experiences of young people, then to identify trafficked children and young people, and to respond to their needs more adequately.

I mean what we find is that there tends to be particular nationalities who gravitate towards particular types of work or are trafficked for particular types of purposes. And it just tends to be a trend and a pattern of behaviour where they are subsequently found by enforcement units, all those kind of things...Notice how you have nail shops – predominantly people that we have who end up in that kind of...we see that definitely, particular nationalities end up in particular situations. Don't know what it is, don't know why, it just happens to be a trend. (Int. 12)

Interviews with practitioners and analysis of the case studies suggested that children and young people from African countries were trafficked in the main for benefit fraud, domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. Children and young people from Asian countries, including China, tended to be trafficked for sexual exploitation. Those from Eastern Asia were, in the

main, trafficked for sexual exploitation, and for work in informal, criminal economies. Some practitioners became familiar with particular patterns of trafficking:

It seems to be that, I think it's quite prevalent in Somali families that it seems to be benefit fraud...so that's one conclusion we came to. I don't know about any of the others really. (Int. 6)

However, profiling communities according to repeated patterns can run the risk of labelling specific communities with particular problems or stereotyping particular individuals. Practitioners were conscious of the need to be careful in treading the delicate balance between identifying a trend and labelling a community as a problem.

...profiling, yes, because (a) we don't like to profile and (b) we don't want to seem [to think] that all Somalis bring in children for the purposes of benefit fraud because we don't believe that at all. (Int. 14)

**3.8** While profiling seemed to help make sense of the complex nature of trafficking, it also ran the risk of forming generalised assumptions about particular nationalities or ethnic groups. Practitioners used such “profiling” to varying degrees, often depending upon their knowledge of the different countries of origin. Some were careful about making generalised statements; others were quicker to make assumptions about particular communities. For example:

I've not dealt with anything from Africa at all but I get the impression that with African girls from some states there's much more of a tradition of selling them off as slaves effectively...

and

...I mean one hears tales the Chinese are linked to it more than anyone else, and brothels where you've girls who are literally chained in the basement to a radiator. I've certainly not seen anything of that nature with the Eastern European girls which we've had. (Int. 15)

These views are, in the main, gained from general assumptions about trafficking and countries of origin, as opposed to being derived from evidence. Practitioners need support to ensure that they are informed of essential information about the circumstances from which many children and young people may be trafficked. This is important as general assumptions gained from the media or hearsay can be damaging if they influence practice.

## **The trafficking process can be hidden within private foster care arrangements**

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### **Case study 3: Binta's story**

Aged 16, Binta arrived in the UK in January 2007 from an African country where extreme violations of human rights were a daily reality. Initially she was refused entry to the UK and an unsuccessful attempt was made to deport her the next day.

Children's Services saw her as a very mature and calm young woman who controlled her emotions extremely well given that it was suspected she had been through traumatic experiences. When initially interviewed she was anxious, gave hesitant answers and it was considered that she "withheld" information about her immediate history.

When she first arrived she lived with an "aunt" after immigration had called her "father" in her country of origin to clarify the address where she would be living. At this time the young woman denied that the man was her father and that the woman she would be living with was her aunt. Throughout, the "aunt" was in possession of her papers, passport and documentation. She ran away from the "aunt" and presented herself at Children's Services in another part of the country. Not believing her account, her return to her "aunt" was facilitated, but she then admitted herself to hospital with a virus. Health professionals became suspicious and she finally managed to obtain protection and was accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

After five months working with her key worker, she disclosed that she had thought she was coming to the country for marriage. After another month of developing a positive working relationship, she disclosed some more details of how she had been trafficked. It was a full 12 months later that she disclosed details of rapes in her country of origin. By this time, her age meant that it was important to put together her case for asylum and, some 15 months later, detailed observation notes enabled her to be identified as "trafficked". The trafficking investigation needed to take priority over the asylum claim and her asylum interviews were therefore necessarily postponed.

Although described as "clearly bright" and "capable", she was not able to attend a formal educational establishment during this time. She did, however, register herself at a local library and worked through GCSE coursework by herself.

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**3.9** In case study 3 above, it can be seen that the process of trafficking a child or young person can be absorbed, and therefore hidden, within private foster care arrangements. Binta's case shows that, despite presenting herself to children's services, she was returned to live with her "aunt", who was the person she feared most.

The dangers of private fostering arrangements were publicised following the death of Victoria Climbié in 2000, who had been privately fostered by her great-aunt. Partly as a result, there have been recent developments to increase the scrutiny of private foster care arrangements, with an improved focus developing on the relationship between private foster care and trafficking. The British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF) has recently launched a national campaign – Someone Else's Child – to raise awareness about private fostering, suggesting a vital role for teachers in identifying this "invisible" problem. Despite this, and the discouragement of the use of private foster care arrangements, practitioners referred to cases where a child or young person had been brought into the country by someone referred to as an "uncle" or "aunt". It was often unclear whether:

- a trafficker had forced the young person to refer to them as a member of their family
- the young person actually believed that the trafficker was a member of their family
- different communities referred to family members and friends interchangeably.

The language of family was used throughout – "aunts", "uncles" and "cousins" being benevolent terms for what were, in the cases we examined, exploitative and abusive relationships.

It is around understanding what the use of language is...I will give a couple of simple examples of that – a young person might call somebody "uncle" and you would initially view that as a blood relative and quite often that is not the case...

and

...The young person was put on a plane by a man known to her as "Snakehead". She refers to him as being her uncle. (Int. 5)

Practitioners noted the need to be cautious about an uncritical assumption that private foster care arrangements were acceptable because carers were part of the child's family. That said, some noted concern that they be alert to different family structures, rather than assuming that a typical nuclear family was the most caring context for a child. As concepts of household,

family and community vary between and within countries, concerns were expressed about not wanting to be Eurocentric, enforcing a “one definition fits all” approach.

I mean if you think about it, if you lived in Africa, if you lived in Cape Town, Johannesburg, the societal norm is to have a house girl, yeah? She might be 13, 14. But she will do the housekeeping, the cleaning and such like. So if you then go to live in England, your norm is to have a house girl. So culturally I think there's a...I think people are a bit a scant sometimes “well that's normal”, if you're from that cultural background. (Int. 29)

However, the central issue for practitioners was to adhere to child protection procedures that secure the safety of the child, whatever family arrangement the child is within. While it was felt to be important to maintain a critical eye, ensuring that prejudice should not overshadow the need to respect diversity, a common connecting theme was that the rights, protection and safety of the child should be upheld. It is important to note here that the UNCRC, particularly in reference to Articles 19, 34 and 39, notes the responsibility of the state to assist the child or young person to recover from trauma and abuse and to facilitate reintegration. Articles 35 and 36 of the UNCRC – that children should not be abducted or sold and that they should be protected from activities that harm their development – are particularly relevant.

## **Children and young people's perceptions of trafficking**

**3.10** The right of the child is to live without abuse or exploitation. Practitioners recognised that trafficked children and young people might not understand what trafficking is. It was possible that the child or young person might not understand that they had been trafficked or, indeed, might not recognise that they were being exploited. They also might have a different understanding of childhood from that enshrined within the UNCRC as an ideal aim.

Many trafficked children, young people and their families and communities might have different understandings of exploitation and of childhood than those held by many of the practitioners. Child labour or early marriage might be expected in countries where homes may have been destroyed, attacked or displaced and in some cases might be seen as essential for survival. This means that the child has experienced situations where their childhood, understood as a protected time for play, education and development, might have been interrupted. Rather than understanding that they have been exploited, the child or young person might engage in employment or “work” without question.

Some of the Chinese boys who are over 15 would think that why shouldn't I be working? I have come here to get a better life and, yes, money has exchanged hands for me but I know it's illegal but what is the problem? (Int. 10)

In the case of one young woman, marriage to a stranger ultimately led her into a vulnerable situation and an exploitative relationship:

Marriage...She said at the time she did not mind this as she thought it would be better than living a miserable life in Africa. (CS001)

**3.11** Inherent within some children and young people's desire to earn some money and to be independent is a lack of recognition of the meaning of exploitation in general, and of trafficking in particular. Practitioners note that it is not until the young person has been removed from the trafficking context and supported in a place of safety that they might be able to look back and see that they were exploited.

...they transfer from the care of a person who suspectedly trafficked them to the care of social services...They are then able to compare their life beforehand and their life now, and then they can identify that they have been maltreated. Have I ever heard a young person use the word "trafficked"? No, never... (Int. 9)

Another practitioner had to explain what "trafficking" meant to a young woman:

She asked me what trafficking is. I explained that some people want to leave their country as they find it hard to manage life and want a better life. Some people know that they require a better standard of living and promise this to them once they arrive in the country of destination. However, these people are criminals and want the people they bring to work for them and the work could include different things. After I explained this [she] said that she had been trafficked. (CS006)

As noted above, practitioners recognise that children and young people's perceptions of their experiences of being trafficked are complex and heterogeneous. The child's or young person's understanding of what had happened to them varied widely and depended on factors including their age, the point at which they were identified or at which they escaped, their relationship with their traffickers, and the array of historical and personal circumstances that led to them being trafficked. Indeed, practitioners insisted that most children and young people would not use the term "trafficking" to describe their experiences.

She wouldn't have used those words. She was very annoyed that somebody had betrayed her trust and given her this information that was incorrect. Then that she was made to work, she felt very angry that this had happened and that she had allowed herself to get into that situation. But, yes, the words "trafficking" and "exploitation" are not words that most 14-year-olds would use on a day-to-day basis... (CS001c)

The types of perceptions of their experiences were more descriptive:

But they will explicitly say things like "I have been sold" or "I was given to so and so", and "I was made to work long hours without rest and with little food."... (Int. 29)

"Debt", too, was sometimes referred to:

You certainly don't get children saying that they're exploited or trafficked, you just hear the realities, which can be "I owe this person £20,000" or that "This horrible man was meant to look after me and instead locked me in a flat and raped me." So you hear the story but you don't hear the definition... (Int. 4)

**3.12** This is very important when developing child and young person centred practice. In many cases, children and young people's own description of what had happened to them included talk about trust and of pain, hurt and abuse. Children and young people used these terms more widely than terms such as exploitation and trafficking. As the process of identification of a trafficked child depends upon engaging with them, building a trusting relationship and waiting for disclosure to feel comfortable to them, using language that they can relate to and understand is essential.

### **Practitioners wanted to develop child-centred practice, but were aware that this often meant contradicting the young person's own perception of their situation**

**3.13** As noted above, the child's or young person's lack of awareness of what is happening to them can enable the process of exploitation to continue. Practitioners were conscious that this was easy for traffickers to exploit. Talking of some young women who were coerced into selling sex, this practitioner noted that:

Some Chinese girls that we had disappeared and had a “boyfriend”. These girls didn’t see themselves as exploited. They thought that this guy loved them... (Int. 11)

In a different case, another practitioner noted a similar issue for young people exploited in domestic servitude:

...just like domestic servitude and just like illegal working or working in various restaurants – to them that might be something of value and they don’t see themselves as being exploited, you know, or abused. So, yeah, there very much can be a discrepancy between what they think is OK in terms of how they’re treated and what really is OK... (Int. 29)

When working with a young person who is aware they are exploited and is looking for a way to extricate themselves, practitioners can rescue and engage with the young person with agreed and shared targets. Although difficult, this can feel rewarding, with some sense of achievement being gained by practitioner and child or young person. For example, the case below describes a situation where a young person ran away from the traffickers and asked to be protected by the local authority:

Well, Leonie was quite clear that she’d been trafficked, and she made hours and hours of statements about that to the police. She managed to escape from the perpetrators at a night club. By then she’d been sold five times and she really knew what was going on... (CS001a)

However, applying child-centred practice with a young person who is “choosing” to remain within an exploitative situation can present particular challenges that make identification of the trafficking process more complex.

### **Learning to understand and speak English can be part of the transition for a trafficked child or young person. Traffickers can exploit the child’s or young person’s lack of language skills**

**3.14** Language was seen both to connect the child or young person to “strangers” speaking the same language; and to isolate them from seeking help outside of their communities.

She apparently meets two people at the airport who are speaking her language and then goes to stay with them for two weeks...we know that this set-up isn’t right.

People who are strangers...they approach them and these people automatically take them in...They could be a risk of any sort... (Int. 14)

While a shared language might be assumed to tie a child or young person to a community, which could act as a source of support, at times it also made young people more vulnerable to being targeted by traffickers:

And again, the people that are trafficking them know that they're most likely to trust someone who speaks their own language. So if they've come from being trafficked...like with say an agent that's brought them in who's speaking their own language and says to them..."This is going to happen – the people are speaking English to you or whatever are not the people you want to tell anything to." (Int. 14)

The question of whether the "shared" community is actually the "safe" community needs further exploration. The important issue is that the child is safeguarded from harm and that assessments about where the best support will be found need to be based on an assessment of the ability of the adult or the community to care for the child, not whether there are similarities. Similarities might enhance the child's or young person's sense of confidence, or, alternatively, they might disguise or prolong further abuse.

## **The dominant awareness of trafficking for sexual exploitation**

**3.15** Children and young people are trafficked into the UK for a number of reasons, although many practitioners were particularly aware of the trafficking of children and young people for sexual exploitation. Forced marriage, for example, was often left out of discussions entirely. This raises concerns about the inadequate identification of forms of trafficking other than for sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and benefit fraud.

Data generated in this study reflected these more dominant forms. Throughout the research sexual exploitation was referred to 220 times, domestic servitude 40 times and benefit fraud 26 times. Agricultural labour, begging or pick-pocketing, credit card fraud, drug-related trafficking, forced marriage, inter-country adoption, restaurant work, work in nail bars, trafficking for the purposes of surrogacy and other forms of bonded labour generated less than 10 references each.

**3.16** When considering the similarities between mechanisms used by traffickers to control children and young people from abroad and UK nationals, practitioners referred to trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Perhaps reflecting the high media exposure that trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation tends to receive, this reflected the dominant perception that trafficking was primarily for, what is commonly referred to as a “sex slave trade”. While many practitioners were aware of other forms of exploitation, the majority linked cases of trafficked children to cases of sexual exploitation.

In very simple terms, if I am talking to other people about it: people being duped for the purposes of sexual exploitation into this country. (Int. 22)

When I first went to the team, two-and-a-half, almost three years ago, everybody, police, social services, media, everybody talked about trafficking in relations to sex...many people got muddled up, trafficking and smuggling. It was all about sex trafficking...And within six months of our team forming we realised that it wasn't all about that. We realised that children were being used as domestics...we realised that people were bringing kids in under the wire, so smuggling them in but going on to exploit them. (Int. 29)

Despite awareness of trafficking for a range of forms of exploitation, trafficking for sexual exploitation has remained the most visible. This is due partly to altruistic aims to “rescue” abused women and partly due to a perceived need to manage the burgeoning sex industry. The focus on sexual exploitation is endorsed through the advent of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, which introduced legislation to make illegal the trafficking of children and young people within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

**3.17** The Act has been helpful, in that it extends the range of legislation that can be used to convict sex offenders. The young person is not to be treated as a suspect offender or to be convicted of offences relating to prostitution. They are to be understood as a victim of coercion or abuse, and to be worked with through welfare-based interventions. This has, rightly, been endorsed within government policy (DCSF 2009). It is based on the premise, similar to the Palermo Protocol 2000, that a child under 18 cannot consent to their own exploitation and that the focus of the criminal justice system should be on gathering intelligence against the abuser.

While Section 4 of the Asylum and Immigration Act does cover internal trafficking for purposes other than for sexual exploitation, it is little used in situations where children and young people might be enticed or groomed by an adult into working for them to beg, commit petty theft or sell drugs within the UK. Gender plays a significant role here, as girls and young women are more easily perceived to be victims (particularly in relation to sexual offences) and boys and young men are more readily perceived as perpetrators (particularly of youth criminality). This suggests that further work needs to take place to enable practitioners to be familiar with the full range of legislation available to them to prosecute those who traffic children and young people.

**While there had originally been a focus on trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, it was increasingly recognised that the trafficking process often involved a range of different forms of abuse**

**3.18** Other forms of exploitation, specifically domestic servitude, adoption and benefit fraud, are becoming more commonly known among practitioners.

It would be children who are brought in for domestic purposes, children who were brought in for adoption, or children who were brought here for prostitution...

...Now we deal with domestic servitude and benefit fraud, rather than sexual exploitation. So we do get a better balance. We deal with sexual exploitation but we find the volume of child trafficking that we are uncovering is domestic servitude and benefit fraud. So therefore you're going to get a better balance of gender... (Int. 2)

As would be expected, practitioners who had worked with more cases of young people who had been trafficked from abroad into the UK had a broader knowledge of the country of origin than those who had managed a few cases. Similarly, those who had worked with cases of the sexual exploitation of indigenous young people within the UK were better attuned to the indicators of sexual exploitation than to the indicators of other forms of exploitation. While there is still much work to be done to improve identification and service delivery for sexually exploited children and young people, there is an additional need to raise awareness of the fact that the trafficking of children and young people may involve other forms of exploitation.

## **Manipulation, coercion and violence: these are central mechanisms in the way that traffickers maintain control over children and young people**

**3.19** The forms of manipulation used to control children and young people trafficked into the country from abroad were compared to those used to control children who are UK citizens trafficked within the UK. Invariably, they were seen to be similar. Before moving to look at the similarities, it is important to point out that, as noted in chapter 1, children trafficked from abroad were seen to have additional vulnerabilities because of their lack of knowledge of the environment, the dominant cultures in the UK and their rights, and because they may not be able to speak or understand the language.

### **The grooming process and the trafficked child or young person**

**3.20** The grooming model, developed to help understand the process through which some children and young people are enticed into sexual exploitation, is by no means the only explanation of how and why UK nationals and children and young people trafficked from abroad sell sex (Melrose 2004). Some are not groomed but are pushed by poverty into looking for ways of surviving. With this understanding, trafficking is perceived as a manifestation of inequality, both local inequality within the UK and global inequality between different countries across the world. However, practitioners often referred to “grooming” as an example of how coercion could be maintained over a child or young person. The important recognition was that the grooming process is planned and orchestrated by the trafficker as an inherent part of the manipulation and coercion. As noted above, this was not a one-off process but something that the trafficker(s) would develop with the child or young person over a period of time.

The “grooming process” is one whereby a perpetrator befriends a child or young person and encourages them to “fall in love” with them by flattering them, and giving them gifts and rewards. The abuser then separates the child or young person from their friends, family or carers. The child becomes dependent upon the trafficker, who increasingly uses force and violence as a mechanism of control. This is important as grooming is a mechanism through which the child or young person is encouraged to rely on the trafficker. They fail to understand that what is happening is exploitative. As explained below, the point at which the young person may want to leave the “relationship” is often the very point at which they are most isolated from support, and at which they are experiencing extreme violence and abuse.

A practitioner described the dynamics of grooming for sexual exploitation in one case of internal trafficking of an indigenous UK national as follows:

I think if they're at the beginning of a process, where they may be being groomed and exploited by, usually older males...certainly ones whom they think of as boyfriends...then they don't see themselves as being exploited, because that whole relationship plays on their need for attention, affection, that need to be an adult and to be seen to be grown up and taking part in what's an adult lifestyle really. And they say things like "Oh, let's just go back to the flat" maybe with the boyfriends and chill out, have alcohol, cannabis, you know perhaps stay out late, don't go home at all, and then perhaps don't go home...They see that as being really sort of exciting, and they don't see it as being exploitative. But I think when things start to turn a bit nastier and become more threatening, I think that they can see that they're being exploited, but by that stage it's quite difficult for them to actually get out of it... (Int. 21)

### **Some practitioners preferred to maintain a focus on trafficking of non-British children into and across the UK for the purpose of exploitation**

**3.21** It was found that practitioners' views of the trafficking process varied according to geographical location. Practitioners who were located near airports were faced with a wider range of cases than those located further from points of entry into the UK. They had a higher number of separated children and young people from abroad coming to their attention, and were more aware of children and young people being trafficked for a range of forms of exploitation, not only sexual exploitation. One practitioner placed near to an airport noted:

No, I think nobody would ever talk about indigenous kids as having been trafficked... (Int. 5)

And another said:

The stuff that we were discussing earlier on here about indigenous kids being moved from one place to the other, I don't think you'd find anybody here that talks about that as trafficking. (Int. 22)

Practitioners who were located further away from the points of entry into the UK tended to refer to indigenous young people who were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Their focus was more directed towards work with indigenous UK nationals, who they had

gained more experience in identifying and for whom some service delivery had been developed. They noted that trafficking could take place whatever the distance travelled if exploitation was involved.

...when she gets into a car she is immediately trafficked. It's the movement and the travel that defines trafficking...because if you look at the definition there are three things, it's the means, it's the end and it's the act. So the act of transportation or moving them from one place to another place is happening...the end, the objective of doing all these things to these kids is to sexually exploit them...Because they haven't come from overseas...doesn't mean they're not trafficked because there is exploitation and there is transportation by means of coercion, grooming, all these things that were mentioned in the Palermo Protocol...People think that trafficking has got to be foreign nationals coming across international borders, they don't realise about internal trafficking, they don't realise it could be UK nationals. There's still massive knowledge gaps. (Int. 24)

**3.22** There are a number of important points to be raised here:

- We must be wary about a tendency to create a trafficking hierarchy, where one form of trafficking is seen as more damaging and dangerous than another. All forms of trafficking involve the exploitation of a child or young person, and, whatever the circumstances, this is unacceptable. Our increased understanding of the process, of the mechanisms of control and of the journeys undertaken by those who are trafficked can improve our interventions to prevent abuse and to prosecute offenders.
- The awareness of trafficking within the UK is important as it encourages policy and practice interventions to consider the forced movement of UK nationals within the UK, as well as of children and young people who are trafficked into the country and then continue to be trafficked within the UK. This requires a direct link between work addressing “missing” children and young people, and work on “trafficked” young people, whether or not they are UK nationals.
- The tendency among practitioners to have a high level of awareness of the trafficking of UK nationals for the purpose of sexual exploitation raises scope for a review of the trafficking of UK nationals for other forms of exploitation.

## **It was noted that boys and young men were vulnerable to being trafficked for sexual exploitation as well as girls and young women**

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### **Case study 4: Thomas's story**

Thomas, a 16-year-old British boy, had a history of neglect and had been abused by his uncle and cousin. His mother was unable to care for him. He moved between different extended family placements, foster placements and several children's homes. Thomas was friendly with older men and there was a suspicion that he was given money for sex. He was known to experience problems with alcohol and cannabis use. Questions were raised with regard to periods when he went missing. On return from being missing he often had large amounts of cash, several mobile phones and expensive items in his possession. When questioned, he did not want to talk about what was happening or where he was going.

On more than one occasion, overseas travel was arranged for Thomas. He often went missing overseas for periods of between two and six weeks. Alongside concerns over sexual exploitation, there were suspicions that he might have been involved with drug traffickers. Thomas's journeys were often staggered. For example, on one he was sent to a country where he was refused entry. He then received instructions to move to another country where he was given further tickets for travel. Practitioners tried to investigate how Thomas obtained the money for these trips and how the trips had come about, but the exact circumstances remained unclear.

The sexual exploitation unit became involved and took hold of his passport to prevent Thomas from leaving the country again.

Thomas did not see himself as being trafficked. When questioned if he thought that he was at risk, he asked, "Why social worker worried about me now when they didn't care that my uncle abused me?"

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**3.23** This case shows that boys and young men, as well as girls and young women, can be trafficked into, within and out of the UK. It again demonstrates some of the difficulties that practitioners can encounter when developing child-centred practice. In this case, the practitioners and the young person held different perceptions of exploitation and abuse. While practitioners understand the young man's movement to be connected to trafficking for sexual exploitation, and rightly take steps to protect him, he is angry about their intervention, noting that, from his perspective, his sexual activity is creating more attention than the abuse he experienced from his uncle.

There is a developing awareness of the needs of boys and young men, and how to create interventions that work sensitively with them (see the young men's forum [www.nationalworkinggroup.co.uk](http://www.nationalworkinggroup.co.uk) and [www.barnardos.co.uk](http://www.barnardos.co.uk)). However, most services for sexually exploited children and young people tend to work with girls and young women.

But we have about 50 new referrals a year and most of them are young women. We did try to address that by launching some materials, you know posters and contact cards aimed specifically at boys. So I guess, I think from...that has had a little bit of success in that we've had about, I think this year we've had 6 out of 50 have been boys. (Int. 27)

It was recognised that boys and young men were vulnerable to being trafficked from abroad into the UK. In view of the fact that in 2006, 70 per cent of all separated children in care were boys (Home Office 2008), this was a cause for concern.

I think if we were concentrating on sexual exploitation we would recognise that boys are just as vulnerable for that, particularly Chinese boys. (Int. 10)

In this context, the sexual exploitation of boys still appears to challenge existing gender stereotypes:

I think people do tend to focus on girls for the simple fact that people know more about girls. But I don't think that it...obviously it doesn't exclude boys at all and I think it means that people really have to try harder to try and sort of look at the sexual exploitation of boys...(Int. 10)

### **Placing the blame for trafficking of UK nationals outside the UK: the “othering” of traffickers**

**3.24** Where there was a focus on work with indigenous UK children and young people being trafficked within the UK for sexual exploitation, perpetrators were often seen as being from particular communities. Assumptions about perpetrators were often based on speculation or hearsay, and there was an undercurrent of “othering” perpetrators.

I referred to them as Albanian but I think we had slightly more nationalities than that floating around...They were foreigners and they didn't have a very good command of English and that kind of thing. (Int. 15)

Although there were cases of white UK nationals trafficking young people for sexual exploitation, there was a tendency for attention to be placed on men from specific communities. However, there is a long history of research documenting the sexual exploitation of both young women and young men from a range of communities by a range of perpetrators, including local indigenous UK nationals. It is important to be aware that young people may be trafficked by all communities; and that women as well as men can perpetrate the offence.

## **Recording data on trafficked children and young people**

**3.25** A concern expressed by many practitioners was that little of the intelligence they held about trafficked children and young people could be shared, as there was no mechanism for recording data. This meant that there was little knowledge of trends or patterns or of evidence that could be used in court to convict offenders.

Actually we don't record it anywhere at the moment, we're not doing very well on that at all, but we need to be recording...so that we can do some research, start matching, start seeing if there's patterns...as they come through A&E, we do have a record of that...we had started collecting addresses to see if there were any that kept popping up...information is our powerfulllest tool...but we're learning what information we need to be gathering, car numbers, and I get residential workers and foster carers collecting the information, a description, a name...mobile phones...try to make a conscious effort and get the team to start logging the cases. (Int. 25)

Not all practitioners were aware that any information about the child's or young person's circumstances, behaviour and emotional state might be important intelligence. The involvement of the Crown Prosecution Service or the LSCB, if it occurred, was a helpful addition to determining whether the intelligence gathered could be used as evidence that would be upheld in a court of law.

The recent introduction of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a welcome attempt to begin to record and collect data on trafficked children and young people. The introduction of a competent authority, which will maintain a database of intelligence of trafficking cases, will undoubtedly raise the profile of the need for information sharing. However, as noted in chapter 1, the mechanism relies upon local identification of individual cases. The reliability of

the data recorded through the use of the NRM is yet to be seen, but the development of a system for this to take place is welcomed.

**3.26** It has already been shown that most practitioners remain unaware of the nature of intelligence that is reliable enough to be used by the Crown Prosecution Service in a case against an abuser (Jago & Pearce 2008). ECPAT UK, CEOP and UKHTC all provide information on how to initiate cases against those who traffic children and young people, and so advances are being made in this area. Staff need access to training that will equip them to identify a case, and to be aware of what information to record and how to support the child through to the point of initiating the case against traffickers. If it can be ensured that records of cases are maintained, two things will be achieved. One will be developing a knowledge bank about those cases where trafficking is identified; the other will be the accumulation of data that could be used to inform prosecutions.

The worry is that, as trafficking is a process within which ambiguity is always a factor, cases may slip through the net. Interestingly, and rightly, the important concern of practitioners was whether the child or young person was safe. Practitioners were concerned with whether they could identify the nature of the exploitation experienced, and whether they could work to support the child or young person to move away from the exploitative situation. In this sense, the work is all about identifying exploitation and securing the welfare of the child. This, as opposed to whether the child has been defined as trafficked or not, is the most important consideration.

## Conclusions

**3.27** This chapter has argued that trafficking is a process, and that identification and disclosure are rarely a one-off event at the point of arrival in the UK. The chapter has shown the difficulties faced by practitioners in identifying a child or young person as trafficked and explored some of the dilemmas they face in coming to their judgements. This includes a consideration of how much credibility to place on the child's or young person's own perception of their situation, and how to respect the voice of the child while also upholding child protection and keeping them safe from harm.

The chapter has explored how these dilemmas can arise because of the disparities that exist in the understanding of basic concepts such as "childhood" and "home" within UK society and in other countries. It also noted that practitioners need to be aware of the countries of origin of

children and young people who are trafficked from abroad, and of the levels of poverty, abuse and experiences of war and displacement that can cause vulnerability to being trafficked.

This chapter has shown that, because trafficking is a concealed, ongoing process in a child's or young person's life, damage over time is cumulative, and information about this does not emerge on one occasion but slowly, over time. There is often a lack of sophisticated systems to record information, and not enough collaboration between practitioners, but, with experience, some lessons for good practice are being developed.

The next chapter continues to explore the problems for practitioners involved in attempting to identify a trafficking case, and demonstrates how practitioners work with children and young people to facilitate disclosure.

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## Chapter 4 Breaking through the wall of silence: what practitioners can do to reveal the hidden problem of trafficking

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### Case study 5: Tabea's story

Tabea was aged 13 when she arrived in the UK and was used as an unpaid domestic worker within the home of a couple who knew her family. For two years she looked after a baby, washed all the clothing and cleaned the house. Bottles of bleach under the sink were labelled with her name. This was later used as an indicator of her work in domestic servitude, as she was given specific work tools named for her to use in her housework. During this time she was assaulted on numerous occasions by the couple and told by them that she had brought a “darkness” and “bad spirits” into their home. They changed her name and provided her with clothing that was old and too big for her.

A member of the public noticed that her clothing and her behaviour was unusual but did not know what to do or who to contact to report it. This same person spoke to her and Tabea told her that she was living with people who were not her parents and that she had to look after the child by herself. The member of public did not believe the story and thought that Tabea must be making it up. Continuously called names and criticised, Tabea eventually found out that if she went to the offices of the nearest social services, they could help her.

It took a number of home visits and three repeat presentations at the social services office before a full investigation was organised. Tabea found it impossible to explain the details of what had happened to her, but was taken into local authority care following investigation. After two years of support with the foster carer and a designated key worker, she disclosed the physical and sexual abuse she had received when living in domestic servitude.

The couple who trafficked her into the UK have been prosecuted following a trafficking investigation that took two-and-a-half years to complete. Tabea is achieving well at school, and has passed eight GCSEs. Her asylum application has been refused.

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## Introduction

**4.1** Throughout the research a picture of a wall of silence emerged that served to muffle concern about trafficked children and young people. This chapter aims to identify how this wall of silence develops and why it continues. The chapter argues that training is needed for practitioners to help them understand the pressures that silence trafficked children and young people. At the same time, public awareness of the issues involved needs to be enhanced. This is not a new finding. The UKHTC Blue Blindfold campaign is an awareness-raising campaign designed to encourage the general public to be more mindful of the indicators of trafficking, the “blindfold” denoting a public who do not see the signs. Other work by CEOP, ECPAT, the Refugee Council, AFRUCA, Stop the Traffick and many other organisations has contributed to campaigns to raise awareness of the trafficking of human beings and of the need for systems to record its prevalence.

The metaphor of a wall of silence is suggested as it identifies two separate processes taking place:

- On one side of the wall there are children and young people who are afraid or unable to speak, exploited by traffickers who are skilled at remaining concealed themselves.
- On the other side there can be a lack of awareness by the general public and some practitioners, enhanced by a culture of disbelief. This culture of disbelief is invariably entwined with questions about the age of the child or young person and their immigration status.

The chapter explores how these two factors combine to create a wall of silence around the trafficking of children and young people. We further explore the relationship between practitioners’ views and understandings of trafficking, as well as looking at the barriers a child or young person will need to overcome to disclose enough information to be identified as having been trafficked. We also consider routes to disclosure, the time it takes to gain information and the types of disclosure children feel safe to make. For children and young people who had been trafficked, we found that disclosure fell broadly into three main groups, which were:

- accidental
- purposeful
- prompted/elicited.

We make reference to these three types of disclosure in the cases below. We also discuss the control mechanisms that traffickers were seen to use, throwing light on the sometimes intangible ways a child or young person is restrained from speaking. The vulnerabilities and traumas involved in the process are then explored, following which some of the innovative methods practitioners have used to break through the wall of silence are discussed. In this chapter the process is explored whereby a young person might disclose that they have been trafficked, and the section concludes with some thoughts on creating a space for trust, involving relationship-based therapeutic work.

**4.2** Practitioners noted that children and young people trafficked into the UK may find it very hard to speak, to explain their situation or to understand that exploitation has taken, or is taking, place. However, once a child or young person does talk, some practitioners noted that representatives from a range of professional services could find it difficult to believe that this exploitation and abuse has actually taken place. A culture of disbelief and of suspicion can silence the child or young person, particularly when the age or immigration status of a young person is being challenged.

### **One side of the wall: children and young people are afraid or unable to speak**

**4.3** Practitioners noted that many trafficked children and young people would find communicating difficult if brought into the country from abroad as:

- They might not be familiar with the language of the country in which they have arrived.
- They might be repeatedly told by traffickers not to talk to anyone; the interpreter might be the only person who understands them; and they might receive legal advice to be careful not to talk freely for fear of making themselves more vulnerable.
- They might be suffering from trauma, which inhibits their capacity to be articulate.
- They might not believe or understand that what is happening to them is wrong.

- They might not be able to feel trusting of a practitioner or carer (see chapters 5 and 6).

Each of these features could, on their own or in combination, make it hard for a child or young person to discuss their experiences of having been trafficked.

### **The wall of silence is maintained through control and abuse from traffickers and through periods of the young person going missing**

**4.4** Practitioners were concerned that large numbers of trafficked children and young people went missing. It was noted that going missing can be a part of the trafficking process, a way for traffickers to make sure that young people who might be about to disclose, or who have disclosed, are silenced. This study provides evidence from case studies of children and young people going missing both before and after they had disclosed. They had either been abducted, or were intimidated into running away from the care home, or, alternatively, felt that they wanted to rejoin the trafficker(s) as they were coerced into feeling dependent upon them.

There was also evidence of children and young people going missing during the process of disclosing information about the abuse they had experienced. Children and young people could be abducted by traffickers, who invariably have contacts with local networks so that they know where the child or young person has been placed and to whom they have been talking. Sadly, this young woman, mentioned in the quote below, immediately went missing following the disclosure that she had been trafficked for domestic servitude.

If these people know where she is, they may have an impact on what she has disclosed already. Obviously there are very big safety concerns because she has essentially dropped someone in it. Now she is missing we are asking who has access to her, where is she and other questions. (CS009)

The ideal model should be advocated, where a designated and specially trained police officer works closely with the LSCB to accumulate local intelligence so that abduction legislation can be used in such cases.

If the child or young person is not abducted, they may run away, disturbed by the emotional impact of talking about traumatic experiences, or be afraid of the possible repercussions of

revealing information that will implicate traffickers. Either way, the “going missing” silences the process of disclosing information about their experience of being trafficked.

### **Disclosure takes time and needs a trusting relationship: “time-aware,” “relationship-based” thinking is essential**

**4.5** Disclosure by a child or young person who has been trafficked takes time. Details are rarely available on the first day, either through purposeful or accidental disclosure. It was shown that disclosure of trauma, abuse or exploitation often only occurs after a relationship of trust has been built up between the practitioner and the child or young person. Like adults, when a child or young person first arrives in the UK, they will not know who they can trust (Hynes 2003). Establishing this knowledge and confidence in the relationship will take time. In this way, it was more likely for disclosure to result from prompting or eliciting once a trusting relationship had been established.

**4.6** However, not all practitioners found establishing a relationship with the trafficked child or young person to be easy. Disclosure was sometimes further complicated by professionals’ attitudes and perceptions towards the child or young person with whom they were working. For example, the following three descriptions from three different professionals describe the same child:

Even with the very best social workers this child was extremely reluctant to disclose any information. (CS025)

The young person was very skilled at deflecting people from finding out more about her, her past or the people with whom she associates. She is closed off emotionally and will not discuss her own safety. (CS025)

On my first visit she seemed quiet and very alert. We decided to have another meeting at the end of the month. She is a mature young person who takes her schoolwork very seriously – her attendance at school is excellent and she now has nine GCSEs. Currently she is easy to engage and readily gives me information that she feels is safe to give, both over the phone and in person. (CS025)

Two of these practitioners found it difficult to engage with the young woman while the third, who had been allocated time and resources to build a relationship with her, was able to

support her in telling her story. The intelligence that was gained was later used in court against those who had trafficked her into the country.

This prompted and elicited disclosure was only possible because the young person felt safe with this particular practitioner. It is important to note that the practitioner had been supported through supervision, and had been given the time to invest in securing trust. This is the theme developed within both the Children Act 2008 and the Laming Report 2009, where the onus is placed on reflective and relationship-based practice when managing complex child protection cases.

**4.7** Cases of good practice have shown that an investigation into the circumstances of a trafficking case cannot be undertaken quickly, and involve securing some trust with the child or young person. Practitioners began to realise that they needed to allow time to engage in a relationship with the young people before securing the evidence that was needed to identify a case of trafficking.

However, while holding the welfare of the child first and foremost in mind, practitioners were mindful that the silence needed to be broken in order to secure a prosecution against the trafficker. This need to break the silence can conflict with the need to allow the young person to disclose at their own pace. Building a relationship means being available to the young person on an ongoing basis. However, it was noted that this is not always straightforward or possible to achieve.

You might be here for some time...are you going to be available for that length of time? Again, with the police officers, trying to ensure that somebody isn't going on leave or they're not part-time workers and things like that...we tried to keep the same social worker, the same interpreter, the same officer dealing with it. (CS150b)

In these situations, even if a child is identified as trafficked through the intelligence gathered, there may not be sufficient evidence to charge a perpetrator with trafficking. In order to follow a child protection response, it would be prudent to consider all other offences that can be used against the perpetrator.

It is unlikely for a young person to be immediately identified as trafficked or to disclose information about their circumstances at the point of arrival at UK borders. Disclosure can be complicated by a child's or young person's worry about their immigration status.

**4.8** At the point of arrival in the country the child or young person may feel confident with the trafficker, and may want to stay with them. Alternatively, if they have been abused, they will be frightened to disclose.

**4.9** There was concern expressed by practitioners that children and young people who had been trafficked into the country may not know their rights, and may be confused about which adults to trust and which to fear. Many had come from situations where abuses had been acted out by “officials” such as police. In such situations, the child or young person might feel that it would be better to remain silent, as saying anything might risk them being returned for further questioning or being returned to the traffickers. There was a feeling that the extent of questioning experienced by the young person could be overwhelming.

They always have to be dealing with this sort of two-pronged issue. On the one side they are giving this information about themselves because of their asylum claim, which is always a worry for them in terms of what that means, whether they are going to be allowed to stay and what the terms and conditions of that are. On the other side you've got this agency here probing them with similar questions about their background but for reasons of need. Most of the time it is too much for them. (Int. 13)

It was also noted that children and young people might be concerned that any disclosures they made may adversely affect their claim for asylum. However, there was a clear recognition by child care practitioners that the child's needs must be placed first in any investigation.

If you've got a trafficked young person the most important thing is to reiterate the trust of social services, and that we are separate from the immigration and the police. Because we have to remember they've just come from being interviewed by immigration... (Int. 13)

The mere fact that the interviews might take place in or close to the airport on arrival was seen to add to the stress experienced by the young person.

He felt scared about his new surroundings, particularly because he arrived during the night and there was no interpreter to explain what was happening, and the close proximity to the airport led him to worry about what the future held for him. (CS025)

**4.10** There is a clear argument for the young person to be allocated a keyworker when they are identified as possibly having been trafficked. In the localities where the LSCB was informed and equipped to respond to an enquiry about a trafficking case, allocating a

keyworker to support the child or young person through to a place of safety, the number going missing was reduced and the child was better safeguarded from further harm. It was advocated that each LSCB should have a trained and supported practitioner who is available to respond to potential cases of trafficking, with scope to meet the child or young person, engage with them as much as possible and take responsibility for the case. This worker would, with the assistance of an interpreter if necessary, try to begin to establish a feeling of trust and safety, and support the child or young person throughout each of the interview processes necessary. This keyworker would stay with the young person through to the point of a place of safety being found and a permanent local authority keyworker being allocated (see chapters 5 and 6 for more details on this). In addition, an independent legal guardian would be allocated to the case. This guardian would ensure that the child or young person is provided with adequate protection and would be available to advocate on the child's or young person's behalf.

## **Disclosure is gradual and incremental**

**4.11** Like trafficking, disclosure was shown to be part of a process: it was rarely a single event. It was common for the young people to provide details intermittently, at points when they felt safe to disclose. This gradual and incremental process sometimes used non-verbal communication. Sometimes disclosure took several months, sometimes up to a year or more before enough information was collected to assign the young person as trafficked or to gather enough information that could be used to pursue a prosecution against the trafficker(s).

For example, a young woman trafficked into the country for domestic servitude, and who was subsequently sexually exploited, started to talk about what had happened to her after five months of building a relationship with her social worker.

After five months she told a social worker that she had been told she would marry someone in the UK and considered this to be a better option than the existence she had in her country of origin. (CS001)

A further example of a young woman who, with her keyworker, began to disclose information about her experiences after 16 months of support:

Understanding that this process can take a while in gaining her trust, understanding of where she has come from, where she is, where she needs to be and what she needs to do to get there. (CS021)

A different practitioner noted that:

For a long time children will feel the consequences of what has happened to them and they need that support...there is something that these children have lost... (Int. 11)

**4.12** It was noted that good practice also gave the child or young person the licence not to talk until they were ready. They had to be given time to disclose, with a practitioner being available to listen when they were ready to talk.

One of things is not letting the fact that they are saying absolutely nothing about what's happened to them – not [to] let that put me off doing my work and planning what they need. Because they are often very frightened and they're often either completely silent or tell you a different story. (Int. 10)

A strategy that several practitioners discussed as being effective was to focus on the young person's future:

I mostly focus on her education and hobbies and things like that rather than the investigation. A lot of times spending that time with her and developing that bond, she has disclosed information about the investigation. So it kind of works well both ways. (Int. 13)

The concept of a "road map" or "life story map" was used by another practitioner as a method of trying to help the young person engage in a discussion about their future:

I used a "road map" as a piece of direct work. You draw a road, with curves in it and you map along the way with the young person. For example, where do you see yourself now, and in three or five years? It depends on the age of the child. It gets them to think about where their future is, where they see themselves. It also helps with identity and provokes children to look at where they've come from, where they are now and where they see themselves going...With one child this tool opened up a huge discussion about her disclosure around what I perceived to be her trafficking. (Int. 28)

Consistency, or the lack of it, also had an impact on the young person's engagement in conversation:

She said it...she was given papers asking her to attend a particular event and she didn't...I contacted social services and asked where is this child...They didn't know what had happened to the paper work or there was some kind of miscommunication...a subsequent appointment was set up and she was asked to complete forms and she said "I was brought over here to look after somebody"...it was an outright disclosure...she's had legal services, provided housing, translation and language facilities. (CS009)

**4.13** In some situations practitioners learnt that it was important to postpone efforts to gather information until the child or young person was ready to talk. One practitioner accepted that information might never be gained in one case where a young woman had been trafficked for domestic servitude and then sold on for sexual exploitation:

No information regarding this [two pregnancies and terminations] was ever disclosed. (CS025)

It was important that child protection considerations were held first and foremost in mind when information was being sought from the child or young person. A review of the methods of gathering intelligence, and of the relationship between the amount of intelligence shared with the police and the Crown Prosecution Service and the evidence used in prosecutions for particular offences, would helpfully develop the existing scoping work undertaken in this area (Jago & Pearce 2009).

### **Allowing a number of different practitioners from different agencies to interview the child or young person might, in itself, be abusive**

**4.14** Practitioners noted that it is counter-productive, and against the best interests of the child, if the process of gaining evidence further disturbs or traumatises the young person. It was noted that, during an investigation, be it at the point of arrival, during a child protection enquiry, or during a court case, the child or young person should be supported by one worker with whom they felt confident. The process of answering questions from a range of different practitioners and repeating the same information could, in itself, be abusive, and the child or young person needs support to manage the process.

I clearly remember being in video interviewing on about the fourth day and we've had yet another person change...and it's just on her face "Oh God, have I got someone else again" and at that point it was like "No, we're not having this, we'll just have one person and that's it."...I think had we looked back in hindsight we would have planned it very differently and made sure that whoever was there at the start was there at the finish. (CS015)

...because the child then is so confused by who's doing what for them, and they blank off really, they don't want to share information, don't want to talk to you, because "Why would I talk to her when he's asked me the same question?" or "Why would I talk to him when she's asked me the same question?" You know, we risk overburdening these kids. It's about having the resources for one person to slowly work alongside that young person... (Int. 20)

Such provision of resources for one professional adult to work alongside a young person is a key finding of this research, a finding that is further elaborated in chapters 5 and 6.

**4.15** The Crown Prosecution Service has developed guidelines for supporting vulnerable victims through the process of taking a case out against an abuser ([www.cps.gov.uk/victims\\_witnesses/going\\_to\\_court/vulnerable.html](http://www.cps.gov.uk/victims_witnesses/going_to_court/vulnerable.html))

These guidelines can helpfully inform court-based interventions. However, practitioners noted that children and young people trafficked into the country may be asked to repeat their stories a number of times to different practitioners. This could compound fears of further abuse.

The problem is, you know, she's been sold seven times, she's been sexually abused or raped by god knows how many men, the last thing you want to do is be putting more faces in front of her. She's probably had 100s of different faces in front of her, so the last thing you want to be doing is keep changing. So we try to ensure that we do get consistency throughout...we try, generally, to stick to the same people. (CS015b)

And another practitioner talking about the same case:

We had about, first, six days from morning till late in the evening gruelling interview sessions. It was intense, it was in detail, a lot of details...the questions they were asking her...how she was used, how she was touched, what exactly they had done to her. So those days were very intense, very tiring. (CS015c)

And another practitioner talks of a different case:

...if people are effectively raping you several times on a daily basis...you're not going to want to rush to speak to someone else and say what's wrong just in case they're going to do the same. (CS001)

Another young woman's behaviour during an interview with a practitioner demonstrated her high levels of distress, showing that the interview process itself was damaging and needed to be postponed. Indeed, in this case the young woman's behaviour was accepted as an indicator of abuse, identifying her as being in need of protection:

We'll never get anywhere with it, we did interview her and I think she has been raped. She just goes into convulsions when you start taking her down a certain line. She is petrified and couldn't give evidence. But she is safe and that's the key thing. She is out of whatever she was in. (Int. 29)

And here is a further illustration from another case:

Disclosure is still a problem because she does not want to remember or recall the sexual abuse...The interview was very emotional and we only discussed that "bad things" happened. (CS003)

### **The capacity to disclose may be influenced by the types and levels of abuse experienced**

**4.16** As noted in chapter 3, it is important that all forms of trafficking are considered by addressing the individual circumstances and needs of the child or young person. In some cases, the disclosure was straightforward and the form that the exploitation took was evident.

It was evident from her statement of evidence that she was brought over here to look after someone. This is domestic servitude. She said outright, "I was brought over here to look after someone." We didn't have to probe her and there were no suspicions – it was outright disclosure. (CS009)

The young people, and their traffickers, may be aware that they had been brought into the country for labour exploitation.

It was a very low rate of pay he was receiving for manual labour, like that compared with what you can get even on benefits from here. So you have someone from a poor background, an unfortunate home background... (CS010)

**4.17** In other situations, the disclosure of abuse through trafficking might be only one aspect of the overall abuse experienced by the child or young person. The disclosures often included details of traumatic experiences in the child's or young person's country of origin. These might include descriptions of being imprisoned, of receiving physical abuse, and of being blindfolded and tied up. The descriptions could also include descriptions of rooms and vehicles used in the process of abuse. It was sometimes hard for young people to distinguish between abuse experienced at the hands of the traffickers and abuse experienced for other reasons.

She has disclosed that she was repeatedly raped by a group of men in her country of origin and that she did not receive any medical treatment at that time... Her emotions were controlled and her speech was delivered after much thought. She stated she'd had traumatic experiences in her past, which were being kept secret. (CS001)

In these situations, the impact of post-traumatic stress disorder needed to be considered and a time-sensitive approach adopted. As noted above, pushing for details of the age of the child or young person concerned, names of those who had trafficked them, addresses and countries through which they had travelled, and experiences of abuse they received can, in itself, be abusive if the child or young person is not ready or able to discuss what had happened to them.

**4.18** The ease of disclosure is also influenced by whether the child or young person has reached a point where they want to leave an exploitative situation. If they can feel released from the fear of reprisal, or if they have escaped from an abusive situation, they may be ready and eager to share intelligence about what has happened to them. Much can be learnt here by referring to lessons gained from studies of victims of domestic violence. Many victims will be ready to disclose and prosecute their abuser when they have reached a particular stage in their own emotional development, wanting to leave the situation of abuse behind them.

## **Disclosure of abuse may be different for UK nationals trafficked for sexual exploitation than for children and young people brought into the country from abroad**

**4.19** It was clear from some of the cases in which indigenous UK nationals had been trafficked that a familiarity with the language, and the care received from support services, helped them to talk about the abuse they had experienced. Conversely, a lack of knowledge of the language and of the roles of different social, welfare and law enforcement agencies hampered disclosure for those children and young people brought in from abroad.

A practitioner noted that, if a young person is identified at the airport at the point of arrival, a successful interview could ensure that the young person has appropriate information about their rights as a child. However, they may still go missing after identification.

We tried to interview them within 24 hours and sort of briefed them on different issues of trafficking. We do have a new leaflet on trafficking issues that we've made and that we've put into different languages...you know, I mean we have seven days to do an initial assessment...our aim has been to give them as much information as possible...but that doesn't necessarily change them going missing...knowing their rights in the UK doesn't necessarily change what's being held over them or what the deception is... (Int. 13)

The vulnerability connected to a temporary status of residence, and a lack of knowledge of rights and entitlements, was thought to make it harder for young people brought into the country from abroad to disclose information about abuse they had experienced. Young people born in the UK may have more knowledge of the authorities and justice system and may, therefore, find it easier to break the silence around their abuse.

## **Disclosure for young people who were UK nationals was also a complex process**

**4.20** The mechanisms used to control young people, whether they were UK nationals or young people from abroad, were complex. Drugs and alcohol featured strongly in accounts of how young women had been groomed for sexual exploitation. The fear of physical violence and abuse, of rape and being forced to perform other sexual acts was also recorded in some of the case histories collected here.

She has seen a video of several of the men having sex with another young woman and she has said she was raped by four men at the same time. She also says physical violence was used and that she'd had a drink which she thinks was spiked with drugs and she woke up 16 hours later. She has seen violence used often against other girls and also she has had violence used towards her, and all the girls are forced into sexual acts. She talks about punching, kicking, pulling hair, throwing the girls around naked and being burned with cigarettes. (CS019)

It was recognised that such threats, intimidation and violence can silence a child or young person, making it difficult for them to disclose information. This level of intimidation can be experienced by UK nationals trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, with similar evidence of prolonged periods during which the young person goes missing.

Evidence from practitioners' caseloads suggests that, if sufficient evidence is not available for a prosecution for trafficking offences or for sexual exploitation offences, there might be circumstantial evidence that can be used in court for other offences such as abduction offences:

She appeared to be very distressed and at times broke down in tears. Again, there was no disclosure of any sexual assault but clear disclosure of forced imprisonment. (CS006)

### **Disclosure can be harder for boys and young men as they are not expected to be victims of abuse**

**4.21** The relationship between gender and the trafficking of children and young people has been shown to be important. The reasons why boys typically may find it harder to disclose can relate to gendered expectations within families, communities and wider cultures. Recent research into the experiences of separated children found that boys were less likely to express their emotional feelings and less likely to ask for support than girls and young women (Chase et al. 2008: 133).

Contrary to stereotype, there is evidence of boys and young men being trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In these situations, practitioners noted the need for sensitivity in understanding that boys and young men might, or might not, be able to express their emotions.

Something that is coming more and more to notice now is that it is so much more difficult to get young men to talk about it...I've got an African boy at the moment who has got really high emotional needs. Because he is so used to not disclosing anything, he is dealing with it in a completely different way to another girl who is quite used to showing her emotion. They may have been through exactly the same situation but they are dealing with it in completely different ways because that is how they have been brought up. (Int. 26)

**4.22** The development of a gender-aware practice that was open both to challenging gender stereotypes and to understanding the different ways that individual young people might manage their emotions was essential. This meant developing a child-centred practice that focused on the needs of the child or young person.

**Disclosure can depend upon the availability of a suitably qualified interpreter. This is not always possible and can cause problems that need addressing**

**4.23** As noted above, disclosure can be stressful and traumatic for a young person. If, in addition, the young person is providing evidence that will stand up in court, an interpreter will need to be sensitive to the young person's mental and emotional welfare. They will also need to recognise the importance of child protection concerns and be able to demonstrate to the young person that, although they may speak the same language as the young person's trafficker, they are not associated with them.

This is explained in chapter 3. For the present it is important to note that the availability of interpreters, as well as the information they can identify and convey, was an important concern when evidence was being collated.

That there were some differences between the account which we got via the language line and the subsequent interviews which she gave...The number of interpreters was very limited, the number of these specialist language interpreters is fairly limited. You're often tending to be looking at people within the M25 circuit. So first you've got to find your interpreter, then you've got to bring them here. (Int. 30)

**4.24** As noted above, there might be a time pressure in securing a full disclosure and securing evidence against traffickers. Conveying the impact of the abuse was challenging for many interpreters. For example:

She needed counselling with maybe a native speaker because something is missing when it goes through the interpreter. The facts can be passed on, but you cannot always pass the emotions, no matter how good you are as an interpreter. (CS015c)

Sometimes, the extent of abuse and distress portrayed by the young person was difficult for the interpreter to manage:

Looking at the...experience of the interpreters in dealing with these young people because the interpreter that we had...was obviously shocked by what she was hearing...That was a joint interview I did with a police officer and both of us had the same anxieties about what was being interpreted...I think it's around developing a specialist interpreter. (Int. 9)

When an inappropriate interpreter was used, this caused extra anxiety, as noted by a different young person reflecting on her disclosure:

The interpreter was "embarrassed by my life"...I was an embarrassment to her. (CS001c)

**4.25** Other situations suggested that the limited availability of interpreters may mean that some might be used who are not appropriately qualified.

Two days into the trial we discovered that one of the interpreters for one of the defendants wasn't properly qualified and didn't seem to be interpreting properly. (CS001c)

Not only is this disruptive of the court procedure and upsetting for the interpreter themselves, but it also means that the young person has to establish yet another relationship with a new, different interpreter. This can add to the stress experienced by the child.

However, despite some difficulties, interpreters can play an essential role in helping the young person disclose:

I think it's fair to say that had it not been for the second interpreter, we wouldn't have had a job...she did an outstanding effort on this young girl, from befriending her, to being able to relate to her... (CS015b)

And, on a different case, their role was considered key to prosecution:

The people to use are the interpreters. They can tell you so much about the background, the culture of the place. You've really got to tap into them. A good interpreter is key to an investigation like this. (CS015b)

**4.26** The above sections have explored some of the ways that children and young people who have been trafficked into or within the country can be silenced. They have also looked at ways that disclosure can be facilitated and argued for one trained and supported keyworker or guardian to be allocated to support the child. This argument is developed further in chapter 6. The next section looks at the way that traffickers were seen to create and sustain a wall of silence through coercion, abuse and violence.

### **The wall of silence is maintained through control and abuse from traffickers. Disclosure is hampered by the control that traffickers can exert over children and young people**

**4.27** The time taken and types of disclosure made were inextricably linked with the form and degrees of violence and control imposed upon young people by their traffickers. The control mechanisms of traffickers who brought children and young people into the UK encompassed the full range of physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

...there are things she does not want to tell me because she is frightened of what the repercussions might be. (Int. 13)

Fear is one of the main inhibitors of disclosure. It silences children and young people. Young people live in fear of their traffickers for many reasons – they may fear physical abuse, sexual abuse, and repercussions on their families. Traffickers may threaten to inform immigration authorities of the young person's presence in the country, which could lead to possible deportation. In many cases, the threat of deportation potentially applies to young people once they reach the age of 17 years 6 months and, as such, is used as another mechanism of control.

Traffickers can also be skilled at exploiting the vulnerabilities of children and young people, which may stem from previous experiences of abuse or neglect. Their self-esteem may be

lowered and they may “expect” to be maltreated. In essence, abuse and harm have become normalised within the child’s or young person’s life.

### **Traffickers can exploit a child’s or young person’s mental health problems and implicate them in offences**

**4.28** The case files we analysed and the interviews with practitioners showed that it was not uncommon for trafficked children and young people to be encouraged to recruit others into exploitative situations. The more vulnerable the young person is, the more likely they are to be implicated in offences orchestrated by the traffickers. For example, this young woman presented a very difficult case as she was suffering from a range of different mental health problems.

...given to us as a trafficking case...unclear if girl actually trafficked into the UK for exploitation or whether she came to live with an aunt after her caregivers in Africa had deceased. Her engagement in sexual exploitation was both putting herself at risk as well as grooming other girls, maybe a consequence of personal trauma suffered in Africa and sexual exploitation/child prostitution in the UK. Her mental health is of great concern as she suffers from mood swings, displays violent behaviour, self-harms and has been suicidal on a number of occasions. (CS029)

**4.29** The work that needed to occur with this case was, in the main, focused on addressing the mental health problems. However, there was understandable pressure to create some control over the situation. The good practice enacted here showed that, as a victim of abuse, the young woman should be responded to through therapeutic and mental health interventions. As argued in chapters 5 and 6, this need not involve the use of secure accommodation, but should engage key health and child protection practitioners in intensive support during interventions targeted at working with mental health problems. In this way, the welfare of the child is seen as being of paramount importance. The case raises important questions, considered in chapter 6, about how crisis intervention support can be given that diverts children and young people away from the more expensive – and in the long run counter-productive – route of secure accommodation.

## Manipulation could be subtle and coercive

**4.30** Some forms of manipulation and control were understood to be subtle, as is illustrated in this case of an indigenous UK national young woman who was trafficked between cities:

There would always be this sense of blame that she accepted the first cigarette or drink. She continued to do what she did with these men to protect her family. (CS016)

The traffickers may maintain control through contact via mobile phones given to the young person:

The young people often have two phones and one of them is provided by the groomers so they've got a line directly to them, and if that one goes and they have to answer, you can see the agitation when they have to get out and go. (Int. 25)

And with another case of an indigenous UK national, the young person was controlled through threats to her family:

...this girl might have shared, by the time they have groomed her, all about her family like who's her sister, all the details about where her sister might be studying, who her younger brother is and what her dad does or where her mum works or what car they have and all these details. Then they drop things like, "Oh, I've seen your little sister on her way back from school, does she take the same road every day?" (CS011)

**4.31** In a different case, where a young person had been brought into the UK from an African country, manipulation had included ostracising the young woman and making her feel responsible for her situation.

Someone...although she has never said it to me...suggested she was raped in Africa. She may have disclosed to social services, I'm not sure. Or it might even have come from the suspects. But obviously the question is how she got her hepatitis...they used to belittle her and call her names and say she was a witch and she brought darkness into the house. (CS014)

Discussion of a different case reveals how traffickers will know that it is hard for many young people to disclose. This may be particularly hard for children and young people from specific cultures where experiences of sexual exploitation may incur a high level of stigmatisation. Notions of "honour" and "shame" may be powerful in preventing children and young people

from disclosing abuse, particularly sexual abuse (see Mirza 2007 for further details on this). As noted by a practitioner:

...the Chinese are really difficult to interview...all I could get them to say was "I was forced to go into a room and do things that I didn't want to do." (Int. 29)

### **In other cases, manipulation is too soft a word to explain the levels of violence and abuse used to control young people**

**4.32** Practitioners reported cases where extreme violence had been used to control children and young people. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the forms of violence used by traffickers against children and young people, summarised to note that in over 80 per cent of the cases, trafficked children and young people were victims of extreme violence including rape and physical abuse. It was noted that, in many cases, it was a network of people who were involved in diverse areas of criminality controlling the young person:

Young person was violently raped on a weekly basis and some of that included oral and sexual abrasions. She has had deodorant sprayed all over her and [they] threatened to set fire to her and that they would smash her brains in with a crowbar and a gun was held to her head. (CS018)

And in a different case:

She might be groomed by one criminal gang, but there might be another criminal gang who grooms young people and might be involved in other big crimes like guns or drugs or stuff like that. So she was friendly with one group and then one person from another group befriended her and she's probably moving from here to there and here to there...what ultimately happens is that she will receive abuse from both gangs and it could potentially put her life at risk because of the nature of the crimes they are otherwise involved in. (Int. 24)

### **Despite abuse, manipulation and violence, some silences are broken by the young person concerned: disclosures are "purposeful"**

**4.33** There was evidence from interviews and from the case studies of some young people actively trying to escape from the violence and exploitation they experienced. Sometimes it

was because they wanted to escape from the relationship with the trafficker, or from the violence they experienced. At other times it was because their health was failing and they had escaped to go to a hospital.

...She presented herself to social services because she thought that she was going to die, because of the hepatitis...again, it's not because she identified herself as being a victim of trafficking...it was because she was scared she was going to die. (CS011)

This young woman below ran from a flat where she had been held against her will and immediately worked with the police to give evidence that could be used in a prosecution against those who had abducted her.

...he asked if she wanted a lift, which she refused, but then she was pulled into the car and taken to a flat. She said this male took her to the bedroom in the flat and raped her vaginally and anally and then locked her in the flat and took her mobile phone and didn't return...she was there for two days...she was left in the flat without any food all weekend. When this man returned this man went upstairs to the room and the girl ran out the front door...three police picked her up in a distressed state...she had a medical examination so there was some evidence that she had had sex, there was DNA. (CS019)

**4.34** Another young woman managed to escape from a situation of domestic servitude and benefit fraud:

When she presented at the local authority, she was being fostered by a lady, and when we did direct work and I'd meet up with her...some of the things that she would say about what she was expected to do within the home sounded distinctly like domestic servitude...she was explaining that she was washing the floor, or she had to clean the whole house from top to bottom. She wasn't allowed to eat with the family, she had to eat afterwards...she was given small amounts of food, she didn't receive any money, I mean the looked after money that is, the door was locked which would prevent her from going outside...she's presented at social services because she'd managed to get out from the locked door somehow, and she was in tears saying she didn't want to go back there. (Int. 28)

It is evident from the above that there are a number of problems to be faced by the child or young person in reaching a full disclosure of the exploitation experienced when trafficked. In the main, when exploitation was disclosed, the child's account was taken seriously and action

followed. However, practitioners noted that in some situations, they were working in a “culture of disbelief”.

### **The other side of the wall: the culture of disbelief**

**4.35** Disclosure can be met by a culture of disbelief, and there are various ways in which this is manifested:

- Practitioners may dispute the young person’s age, not believing that the child or young person is under 18.
- Practitioners may not believe the child or young person to have been trafficked into the country. Although, theoretically, children under the age of 18 trafficked into the country have the same rights as indigenous young people, disputes over immigration status and age can undermine the recognition, established in law, that the needs of the child are paramount.
- Some practitioners may not be aware of the indicators for identifying cases of trafficking.
- The extent of the violence and abuse disclosed may be unbelievable to some practitioners.
- The environment may not be conducive for disclosure or for the practitioner to hear or acknowledge the story. Practitioners may not have the ongoing support necessary to maintain contact with the young person over time. There may be pressure on the practitioner to achieve a disclosure quickly, placing the onus on them to encourage the child or young person to explain their circumstances before they are ready. Each of these issues can have an adverse impact on the ability or desire to “listen” to the child.

Although there were many cases of excellent practice, some practitioners were aware that there might be suspicions about the young person’s intentions. There was a lack of clarity about the Palermo Protocol’s definition of trafficking, specifically around the fact that children under the age of 18 cannot legally give consent. There could be a culture of disbelief facing children and young people once they did disclose their story.

She was very clearly at point of entry defining herself as being trafficked, she was telling everybody that she had been trafficked ...and nobody was listening to her. (CS001)

At the root of many of the misunderstandings was a lack of awareness about what trafficking means. Disbelief of this was invariably linked to the apparent ability of the young person to have some control over their situation:

It must inevitably beg the question of whether they were consenting or not...I still think there are a lot of people who would express disapproval at someone who had voluntarily worked in that kind of sector...the fact that someone doesn't run off may lead people to be a little bit more suspicious...If someone were to be trafficked over here a second time we would have to think long and hard about it...Although there would be some who would say, well, once is a misfortune but to be trafficked twice implies a willingness on your part to be trafficked. (Int. 30)

**4.36** This perception, that a young person could “willingly” be re-trafficked, is clearly incorrect. It was also linked to questions about the child's or young person's age. For example, this practitioner noted that some trafficked people would be knowledgeable enough about the welfare system to lie, calling themselves children so that they were placed in care, rather than in a detention centre.

They'll come in, they will all claim to be children...they know that if they claim to be children and get accommodated as a child they will be put in a children's home rather than a detention centre. They can abscond from a children's home, they can't abscond from a detention centre...or somebody can go in and fetch them, which they do. (CS011)

And in another case a practitioner showed a worry that the young person was manipulating for their own gain:

The young person is a very intelligent young woman and knows how to work the system to her own benefit and how much information to divulge to keep people involved without giving too much away. (CS004)

**4.37** This young person had been sexually exploited and made to work in domestic servitude for over five years. After she had been brought into care she had a history of repeatedly going missing and was very challenging to practitioners who tried to help her. The frustration that

they experienced was clear. However, she was a 15-year-old young woman with a history of abuse, abduction and forced labour. A number of practitioners involved in her case argued that her behaviour needed to be understood in that context, and that while it was helpful for her to be given clear boundaries, it was not helpful to penalise her for appearing to “work the system”. Indeed, it was pointed out that if a young person has had all forms of control over their own lives removed from them, they will look for alternative ways to gain some responsibility and self-management. It is understandable that the child or young person might try to gain some control over the “system”, if they have been stripped of all other power in the past.

**Practitioners frequently struggled with the fact that some young people appeared determined to act in ways that the professional did not think were in their own best interest.**

**4.38** As noted above, the dominant image of the trafficked child or young person is that they are a passive victim of abuse and exploitation. This was often linked to questions around a young person’s apparent ability to take decisions for themselves. When the child or young person did present in a more confident manner, they were often assumed to be mature beyond their biological age. Notions of “premature adulthood” are frequently borne out of past experiences that may have required a trafficked young person to mature more quickly than children in the UK or children who have not experienced such traumatic past events. This also ties in with cultural variations of “childhood” as discussed earlier:

It’s very difficult to judge age, to a definite age. I wouldn’t say she dressed provocatively, she was quite smart and still is very proud of her appearance, is perhaps a better way of putting it. And very strong character, naturally, which is showing in her recovery, but quite a mature girl. That might be part of her life...if a child’s had a hard life then they’re more mature, more streetwise, more equipped to deal with things...the next case was 19 but looked very much younger... (CS015a)

**In some situations, young people were faced with outright disbelief**

**4.39** The following cases show situations where the circumstances presented by the child or young person have not been believed.

Two African girls brought over for domestic servitude...first girl came to our attention...dropped into a police station by a couple who said "We've been given this child, we can't keep her any more"...the police record her as an abandoned child...not identify[ing] her as a trafficking victim. Without the training they're never going to. With social services, in the first month or so, she says "I was brought into the UK, I've been living in this house in central London"...names the block of flats...who she's been living with etc. The social worker records all the information on the file and does nothing with it. The girl claims asylum, says the same story and they say "That's trafficking, the girl's a trafficking victim." They refer her to us, we launch an investigation. The social worker had put "This child has a very vivid imagination. I'm not even going to record a lot of our conversation because it's clearly not true." (CS011)

A different practitioner noted that:

We do have Russian and Ukrainian girls who pretend to come from Poland or other parts of Eastern Europe as a way of lying their way into the country...So if someone were to be trafficked over here a second time, we would have to think long and hard about it and very probably write to the solicitors representing the defendant in the earlier case pointing it out. (CS015a)

Terms such as "bogus" are highly contested in the asylum debate and were sometimes used uncritically by professionals:

I've also had one bogus trafficking case in which we had a girl who we suspect was from Africa [but] that was nigh-on impossible to prove, who for six months led the police quite a merry dance saying that she'd been shipped in, she'd been put in a brothel in London, she'd been having 30 clients a day...She was trying to obtain support from the system. (Int. 15)

The quotations above clearly suggest confusion between concern for immigration status and the need to make child protection the central consideration. They highlight the need for further training and support to be offered to practitioners in understanding the Palermo Protocol and in implementing the procedures for practice as outlined in the DCSF guidance for safeguarding children and young people who may have been trafficked (DCSF 2007). The CEOP scoping exercise (2007) shows that it is common for children and young people to be re-trafficked. It is evident that this information needs to be widely circulated and for training of practitioners to include awareness of the way that trafficking experiences can continue

throughout the child's or young person's life. As explained in chapter 3, it is a process rather than a single event.

## **The question of the credibility of the child's or young person's account**

**4.40** The question of credibility was particularly apparent when there was an underlying question about the validity of the account given by the young person in cases of alleged benefit fraud:

...you'll get in some cases babies arriving who are coming to extended family members that the parents will have "Oh, the parents sent the child to live with an aunt" and we're talking about one-year-old infants, children who are still at breastfeeding age and this kind of thing being sent over, and one of the first things you will be asked is "Can I get any financial assistance for these children?" So it sets off alarms in terms of why are these children being brought in? Often there isn't necessarily a welfare issue with these children. We're not concerned that they're being abused or what have you because we're then subsequently checking they're attending school and are registered with a GP and all those type of things, but the parents are definitely focused on what can we claim for the child, or the carers are definitely focused on what can we claim for the child. It's a trend we see that seems to be growing. (Int. 29)

While the quote above expresses surprise over the cultural practice of sending a young baby abroad to live with relatives, it also reveals concern about taking advantage of the British welfare system. This was a theme that recurred in other accounts.

Afghan minors, you get private fostering arrangements, often their carers will ask for money for subsistence. (Int. 7)

**4.41** The notion of migrants being a drain on national resources was not restricted to cases of benefit fraud but also extended to alleged cases of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

This was one of the more entertaining little aspects, if she was a juvenile, I understood it, she got help from social services. If she wasn't a juvenile she wasn't going to get support on the same level. Obviously if she's claiming, the younger she's claiming to be, the greater chance of remaining in the UK, rather than being deported as an illegal immigrant. So we think that she was older than she claimed to be. It's then a matter of actually proving it...we believe that the identity she'd given us was

false...The place she claimed to come from was a sprawling shanty town outside one of their main towns there, and so with people living in a whole succession of mud huts and inadequate record-keeping, the chances of tracking the name down was going to be fairly remote.

...a cynic might say she was trying to get money out of us...she was pregnant at the time. (Int. 12)

The idea that children and young people were seeking a so-called “better life” permeated many practitioners’ accounts and, in this way, implied that the young person had consented to their trafficking. This is, of course, highly contestable given the definition of trafficking in the Palermo Protocol 2000.

### **Practitioners need to have confidence in the credibility of the account given by the young person so that they can defend this in court if needed**

**4.42** The situations where practitioners doubted the credibility of the young person’s story were rare. More common was for practitioners to express concern that, if a prosecution is taken forward through court, they would have to educate a jury into understanding how long it might take for a young person to have the confidence to try to escape from an abusive situation. To do this, they themselves must feel confident about the young person’s account.

If you’ve got a psychiatric report...it can say this woman is suffering from post-traumatic stress...Now go before a jury and ask them which of the three accounts is the correct one...whether the post-traumatic stress stems from the rape here or somewhere else...you find yourself wondering just whether the average jury is ready for this concept...she was trafficked against her will, she was sold against her will and reached the stage where she was sold on and then says “Sorry, I’ve had enough of this guy.” (CS015a)

Another practitioner recognised the impact that inappropriate dress might have on a jury, but also felt that the young person should be given the right to dress as they chose:

There was one point where I seem to remember at court, she was wearing boots that were quite pointed and had a high heel, which was quite modern and why shouldn’t a 16/17-year-old girl dress modern? That was in the early stages of giving evidence

and she was quite uncomfortable – she didn't expect having to stand up for so long so that was quite clearly a problem...but she wanted to stand up in the box. The advantage was it made her look taller in the box. I think it's important that a jury see people how they would normally dress. We shouldn't be dressing her down if that isn't her everyday appearance, we should be letting her have her freedom and she dresses how she chooses. (CS015c)

## **Practitioners were aware that children and young people may receive contradictory messages or hostility from the general public**

**4.43** Practitioners were, at times, working within communities that may hold discriminatory views of migrants, asylum seekers and sex workers. This can put an extra burden on resources and may require additional safeguarding measures to guarantee the security of trafficked children and young people:

...our scheme...didn't have staff at night all the time. We did if we were worried about a kid, if they were ill, and we did at weekends but that was to protect them from the local community who...because once they realised they were asylum seekers sometimes the local community would harass them. So we did have sleep-ins sometimes... (Int. 5)

Underlying discriminatory attitudes towards sex work also, at times, undermined practice around young people who had been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The account of an interpreter who accompanied a trafficked young woman to a clinic illustrates such discriminatory undercurrents.

...I felt she was mistreated by the doctor who she was seeing – treated as a prostitute and sort of looked upon as a prostitute because she was there, just for the report to see if there were any diseases passed onto her, nothing because she was working as a prostitute...The questions which were put to her and the person who was dealing with her were completely unprofessional. I believe there was a complaint made against that woman because she was questioning her, interrogating her, as if she was a prostitute, "How many men did you sleep with? Did you use a condom?"... Some of the questions she was able to understand anyway, which made her feel that small. (CS015c)

## **Children and young people are adversely affected by the culture of disbelief**

**4.44** Viewing trafficked children and young people in the context of immigration rather than child protection has major implications for practice. It shapes how these children and young people are perceived and treated. One young person from the NSPCC National Child trafficking Advice and Information Line (CTAIL) young people's advisory group who discussed the general themes that emerged from this research (see chapter 2 for a further explanation of the involvement of the CTAIL advisory group) described her experience while she was in detention as follows:

We were given sandwiches, they were looking at us and laughing at us...When I was told I had somewhere to live, I knelt down and thanked them...they told us we're going to somewhere to live, they showed us we were going to prison, they showed us a video with barbed wire...They don't give you your coat, the girl next to me was pregnant, she didn't tell anyone she was pregnant...it was not explained the reason why I was being locked up...is this because of who I am? Even when social services picked me up [from the detention centre] I started a film in my head, is she taking me back? I had gynaecological problems, I started telling the social worker because I had trust...in the detention centre, men in white shirts took this woman next to me, she was shouting and they were dragging her...you don't know if you should stop them pulling her...I ended up in psychiatric hospital it was too much to bear...what if I had not been taken out by social services? What happens to the girls who are 18, is anyone helping them, what they have been through?... (CS015a)

This chapter has described a wall of silence that may surround situations in which children or young people have been trafficked. This wall of silence can be maintained because the young person is fearful of the consequences of disclosure. Alternatively, the individual may be unable to talk because they are not ready to disclose, or because their stories and accounts are difficult to believe or understand. The remaining chapters look at practitioners' views on the provision of services to young people, first in terms of universal services (chapter 5) and then in relation to specialist services (chapter 6).

## Chapter 5 The role of mainstream services for trafficked children and young people

### Introduction

**5.1** Providers of universal services, such as those in education, youth work and health, have a central role to play in helping to identify and support children and young people who may have been trafficked. Most of the children and young people concerned want to attend school, to make use of youth work and to access health services. In essence, they want to be seen just as any other child, as “normal” rather than solely as victims whose experiences have undermined or even destroyed their will to participate.

This chapter focuses on how practitioners in universal services can help trafficked young people to settle and to feel part of a home and community. Drawing on the themes emerging from practitioners’ accounts, we look at the importance of multi-agency work to achieve the five outcomes identified by Every Child Matters:

- stay safe
- be healthy
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution and
- achieve economic wellbeing.

The chapter addresses the important role played by practitioners who work in universal services. They can play a part by identifying trafficked children and young people, by helping them to access the provisions available and by responding to their needs under each of these five outcomes.

## Helping trafficked children and young people to use their resilience

**5.2** Practitioners highlighted the often-remarkable resilience many children and young people displayed in coping with the trauma they had suffered, challenging traditional assumptions about children as victims.

They're still, in a lot of respects, more positive about their outlook...more kind of...wise and knowledgeable about a lot of current issues than some of the children in this country that have had a much more privileged upbringing...One of the remarkable things for me about working with trafficked young children is how some of them change my perceptions that they would all be kind of...really traumatised by that – some of them are living quite active lives, and on the face of it admittedly seem quite mature in the way they've handled it. (Int. 3)

It was felt that, by supporting children and young people into universal services, they could be encouraged to reclaim some sense of “normality” and begin to feel some control and agency over their lives. If identified as victims of trafficking there were worries that the label “victim” could obliterate other aspects of their personality and restrict their opportunities to engage, enjoy and achieve. It could hide the young person’s coping capacities, their resilience and their ability to overcome past trauma and start afresh. One practitioner explained:

And not to treat them as victims too much because they don't want to be feeling too much...they know they're victims anyway, but they don't want people to feel too much for them because that makes them annoyed...they think “Oh, just leave me alone. I've just had enough of you. Be normal; speak to me in a normal way.” (Int. 9)

Another explained that engaging in a “normal” life was, in itself, therapeutic, as it was part of a process of rebuilding a life free from abuse:

She went through so much in those initial stages, but she was so resilient in trying to make sure that she wasn't going to let this defeat her... (CS001)

## Staying safe: the challenge for practitioners of identifying the child and working together in the child's best interests

**5.3** The relationship between having the ability to trust service providers and feeling safe has been identified consistently throughout this report. As noted in chapters 3 and 4, the focus on

“relationship-based thinking” advocates that a child or young person is more likely to disclose information about the abuse they have experienced and find the support needed to access universal services if they are in a secure relationship with a trusted adult. However, a number of barriers that hindered the achievement of this aim were identified.

## **Difficulties in identifying the trafficked child and young person**

**5.4** Practitioners were aware that the trafficked child or young person might not understand that all professionals will work with the aim of keeping them safe. Similarly, there was concern that not all practitioners would fully understand their role in safeguarding the trafficked child or young person.

...the challenge that the government has given safeguarding children boards [LSCBs] is that the staff working in universal services and the third sector – the voluntary, private and faith sectors – they need to be people who have an awareness of safeguarding children...awareness of these issues [and] that the world is a complicated place... (Int. 19)

The child’s or young person’s previous experiences with services elsewhere, particularly with police and immigration from different countries, might lead them to be cautious of many universal service providers. Practitioners in universal services are tasked with trying to overcome the barriers that this might create. They are also expected to help the general public, who, living in this “complicated place”, also have a role in communicating with service providers if they are suspicious about a child’s or young person’s circumstances.

...in terms of trafficking it’s when we get the glimpse of the child that we need to be more active...we’ve a case at the moment where members of the public saw the situation in the pub, the child being badly neglected. Not one of them rang to report it...We need a friendly person at the end of the phone “Tell me everything you know.” (Int. 19)

As explored in chapters 3 and 4, a number of examples that illustrated the need for raising better awareness among the general public came to light during the research. Many practitioners felt that an awareness campaign drawing on experience from work by agencies in this area would be extremely helpful.

## **Practitioners might feel “overburdened” by the need to keep every child and young person safe from harm**

**5.5** If keeping the child or young person safe means that agencies are to share information effectively, and establish joint interventions with individual cases, it means that they must establish genuine and effective multi-agency work. While there were many examples of this happening, there was a concern that staff feeling over-burdened could hamper the good intention of agencies working together. There was a worry that developing multi-agency work with trafficked young people could place an unwelcome strain on already stretched resources.

All services suffer from a lack of staff at the moment but in itself that makes working together extremely difficult... (Int. 27)

There was concern that the introduction of a protocol to safeguard trafficked children and young people added pressure on staff who were already struggling to develop multi-agency work for existing protocols. One practitioner noted that they have:

...got a runaways protocol...the difficulty we're finding at the moment is trying to get agencies committed to it. (Int. 19)

Other practitioners felt daunted by the range of different agencies that needed to be included in working together to secure the safety of trafficked children and young people, as is illustrated here:

...I mean I just do think that the UKBA needs to make far, far, far better links with the whole multi-agency group...we've got to make good relationships with CPS. And it's borough police that we're doing this work with, not the child abuse investigation teams. (Int. 10)

## **No action might feel like a safer response for some individuals or agencies than limited action**

**5.6** Some agencies were aware that they may be penalised if their service is not seen to meet the needs of the child or young person, and that they might therefore feel reticent about taking on dangerous cases. The recent focus on the tragic and high-profile case of Baby P has raised anxiety about being the next individual or local authority to be vilified for bad practice, for

failing to keep a child or young person safe. The demand for agencies be accountable for delivering improved outcomes in the child's or young person's development might be hard, if not impossible, to meet. For example, if the child or young person is finding it difficult to integrate into a school, or if they go missing from accommodation, this might be noted as a failure on the part of the service provider. This can mean that an agency might be unwilling to take on an extra, seemingly difficult young person.

There is that huge emphasis on accountability...there is a culture among different agencies and teams where they don't necessarily want to own decisions and the child is treated like a hot potato. (Int. 28)

This is an important issue to try to understand properly, and one that needs to be taken very seriously. There are a number of reasons that the child or young person might be passed on, rather than allocated within an agency. It could be the result of staffing pressures. For example, one agency felt they were being given a case with too high an expectation of what can be achieved.

...other agencies often use us as their extra resource...they will recognise the young people in care have gone missing and will let us know and we then spend all our time running around looking for things that we shouldn't be doing really. (Int. 26)

It could be because the agency does not have the resources available to meet the scale of the problems associated with trafficked children and young people. Therefore either passing the case on or staying quiet about the existence of the problem might be better than trying to respond without adequate services available.

There is a tendency to not acknowledge the problem...Because often they are scared that if they acknowledge, they ought to put a response in place and they don't have the resources. (CS010)

In addition, it might be that the whole topic of trafficking and the extent of the damage caused to the child or young person is frightening for some practitioners. A fear of recognising the problem will be compounded if there is not a culture of support and supervision within the agency. Further discussion is needed to fully identify why these children and young people remain without adequate support.

**5.7** It is clear that the aim of keeping the young person safe cannot be achieved without full participation of the range of child protection and law enforcement agencies. Effective local protocols to guide practice are needed, as are resources to support the staff, who need to be trained and managed through ongoing supervision. If these practices are not in place, practitioners may feel daunted by the range of needs presented by the trafficked child or young person, by the dangers faced from organised crime, and by their potential failure to prevent harm. Although failing to identify and engage with cases cannot be condoned, the pressures facing staff need to be understood and addressed.

### **Benefits of working together to keep the child or young person safe**

**5.8** Close collaboration between different agencies was seen as essential for ensuring that services were able to work together to keep trafficked children and young people safe.

For example, one practitioner noted how better assessments of the needs of the child or young person are made when child protection works alongside immigration. Referring to a multi-agency team based in the airport where child protection staff from the LSCB could work alongside UK Border Agency staff, the practitioner noted that this dedicated teamwork could:

...make better assessments at the beginning so that you can have a safeguarding response, we've got that in place now...the case is both child protection and immigration case. The two areas of work have to be developed together. (Int. 5)

Another individual stressed that multi-agency work helped each professional to define and work to their own criteria and skills:

Working together with other professionals – the more that happens the better it is for everyone...That frees us to support the young person...it allows each professional to fulfil their specific role as best as possible...No one agency can do it on their own... collaborating and working together but also keeping their roles to an extent as well. (Int. 13)

**5.9** Some felt that good multi-agency work developed through the use of guidance documents and local protocols, with a checklist monitoring the work undertaken by different agencies. Others noted that while protocols were useful, good multi-agency work developed best through experience of dealing with cases of trafficked children and young people. For

example, it was noted that the basic questions that arose when faced with an unfamiliar case were often manifestations of the confusion over whether the child or young person was primarily a child protection or immigration case:

...there was an issue because it was the first time that anything like this had happened...does she come within children and families or the asylum team? (Int. 23)

In this particular case of an EU young person, she was ultimately dealt with by the children and families team. For a non-EU child, however, there might have been a different outcome, depending on practitioners' own perceptions of the circumstances.

**5.10** Practitioners noted that working together built a team spirit, which helped different agencies better understand each other:

The relationship between social services and immigration is improving as well...a few years ago you wouldn't have got them sitting in the same room... (CS010)

It was also noted that multi-agency work was more likely to develop as the demands placed on each service increased through additional referrals:

Because of the numbers we have here...and the agencies we work with...we're quite established in setting up the networks that we have here to work with...schools, health workers, social workers and the police... [We] can get them referred to CAMHS...getting extra support in terms of foster placements – if the carers need extra support we can put that in place. (Int. 12)

It is important that any future proposals to accommodate children and young people within the UK take into account these existing networks, which have developed through experience.

### **Working together can keep the case “live” and therefore “in mind” when the child or young person has gone missing**

**5.11** It was noted that if a range of professionals shared and monitored responsibility for the young person, there was less scope for the young person to be overlooked or forgotten during periods of going missing. As noted by a police officer working on a case of a child trafficked for sexual exploitation:

One of the obstacles is having limited information...no concrete information that gives us anything to investigate, then it sort of goes dead...they may go missing down the line. (Int. 13)

If a range of workers is focused on “holding the young person in mind” (see chapter 6), there is more possibility that intelligence about the whereabouts and wellbeing of the child might be identified. As noted:

You are like a mechanism where each one of you is accountable to each other. You're bringing in different expertise. (Int. 10)

It was seen as important that this varied expertise is understood and respected:

With the best will in the world, social workers are social workers, police officers are police officers. While we try to dabble in each other's work, we know what we want and others know what they want. They wouldn't have gone out with an evidential head on. You know, they just want to know where this baby's come from, whereas I want to know how to get the information into court to bolster my prosecution against this woman. (CS010)

Being able to share information and understand the roles and requirements of different agencies are essential when maintaining a focus on keeping the child or young person safe. One model for “keeping the young person in mind” is the practice established by many local authorities for safeguarding sexually exploited children and young people. This model consists of three components:

- a multi-agency subgroup of the LSCB following a protocol that informs staff in the borough of procedures they should follow, and agencies that they should refer to, in potential and confirmed cases of trafficking;
- each service (youth work, CAMHS, sexual health, education: including individual schools, drug and alcohol services, police, CPS, YOT) allocating a designated practitioner who attends the LSCB subgroup meetings. Depending upon the size and role of the service, it may need to develop its own protocol (in line with the LSCB's protocol) to guide the practitioners on how to respond; and

- a dedicated, specialist and trained youth work service that can act as a resource for ongoing contact work with the children and young people. Ideally, the latter includes staff employed to provide outreach and therapeutic services for trafficked children and young people.

While recommendations are made for an independent guardian to work in the best interests of the child, this cannot replace the need for each service to develop its own protocol and service delivery plan, with its own designated key workers allocated for face-to-face-work with the young people.

**5.12** Research and evaluation in the field have demonstrated that this model works effectively through multi-agency work to safeguard sexually exploited children and young people (Scott & Skidmore 2006). Practitioners interviewed for this research referred to this model as one that was effective in their service, noting that the development of the public protection units (PPU) also helps to formalise the organisation of joint work through multi-agency partnerships.

We've got our own dedicated police officer for sexual exploitation...For every young person identified there's at least an initial assessment done by a social worker, the strategy meeting...obviously you've got the police there...chaired by the detective inspector from the PPU...we've got a drugs worker as well and we work closely with the youth work part of the service. (Int. 18)

**5.13** The results of the research suggest that one way of raising awareness of how to keep trafficked children and young people safe was for local authorities to have both overarching written guidance for LSCBs explaining the nature of the problems faced by the children and young people, and for each specific agency to have its own protocol outlining the specific tasks it could fulfil. A range of national and local guidance does exist, ranging from the DCSF guidance (DCSF 2008), the London Safeguarding Children Board's guidance (LSCB 2008), to the trafficking toolkit that is currently being piloted throughout London (LSCB 2009). These guidance documents can be adopted and adapted for local use by authorities wanting to provide an overview of who should be doing what within their locality.

## Local agency protocols are supportive for practitioners in individual agencies

**5.14** As noted above, practitioners felt that, as well as the overarching guidance being available for LSCBs to specify the tasks for which each agency is responsible, it was also important for individual agencies to provide a protocol for its staff, outlining what their service can offer to keep the young person safe. Sometimes these were best developed by drawing on the experience of practice.

We've developed protocols from the way we work...because it's very important that we can define what we do, so we're more open and people look at what we do for us to improve... (Int. 4)

The existence of a local protocol listing tasks of specific local agencies was also helpful when trying to follow through joint work with other agencies:

...and we may use some of those protocols in terms of getting action from others. (Int. 12)

However, it was noted that developing an effective protocol took time and resources, and that its creation could become yet another burden if not supported properly. For example, a health worker noted that the development of a protocol might be a task for the future, but that his service is already stretched:

I am sure there is one in social services, but we don't have one in health as far as I know, specifically because, as I say, most of the time they don't get to my service...I suppose it's a gap. It is one of those things where it is on a never-ending list of things that you have got to do...There is only one of me and the number of children and the changes of policies are never-ending...I think we are reviewing at least 70 young people at any one time. (Int. 2)

It is evident that additional resources will need to be allocated to support the work if this service is to develop its own protocol advising on practice.

## **Reconciling difference: different professions might have a different focus on how to keep the trafficked child or young person safe**

**5.15** It was evident that one of the key components to good practice in working together was the capacity for each agency to understand and respect the different roles they play in safeguarding trafficked children and young people. The existence of a protocol could help this to happen. However, it is through active joint work that the complexities of multi-agency initiatives become evident.

For example, while the police and the Crown Prosecution Service work with the need to protect the child or young person, they are also tasked with gathering intelligence about the perpetrators of the crime and with considering the viability of taking a case through court.

The Crown Prosecution Service's and indeed the general public's best interests lie in both protecting vulnerable witnesses and developing credible evidence to secure a conviction. This will lead them to look at a case through a particular lens, with a focus on the need for intelligence.

If you carry out an examination and you find semen inside her then yes, you can prosecute. I have prosecuted on that basis before, but someone's got to think to organise the medical examination. (Int. 30)

Similarly, the police noted that they looked for intelligence during interviews that could be used as evidence. An example was given where a young person was:

...able to describe the organised abuse; they have not been able to recognise and recall any street names, addresses or phone numbers or even any accurate names and descriptions that might lead the police to a prosecution. (CS003)

**5.16** While this focus on intelligence may sound clinical, it is essential that practitioners are able to work together to gather intelligence that can help to provide evidence in a case against an abuser. However, this has to be done while also bearing the child's or young person's welfare and emotional needs in mind. Those working from experience of court had genuine worries about taking a case forward without substantial evidence. They had insight into some of the prejudices that the case might meet at court and were aware of the difficulties that might be faced when trying to secure a prosecution.

I know that she's been in front of a jury and told a story about being raped over there. I know she wasn't believed. I know they wouldn't believe that the guy had been trafficking her...I get three different accounts of the time she was raped...as I say, how much reliance would you put on a witness like that? How keen would you be to charge on her word?...I mean we are asking the court to believe a 15-year-old girl against, what was it, four or five adults we had here in total, no corroboration, they were all denying everything. Where it's one person's word, even against one other person's word let alone four or five, you look for corroboration, you look for consistency. And where there isn't consistency it makes us less willing to prosecute. (Int. 30)

It could be argued here that the practitioner is trying to protect the young person and their associated workers from going through a process of interrogation, which could feel undermining and might not result in a prosecution. The practitioner is drawing on their experience of the damage caused when taking forward cases that have then been rejected through lack of evidence or the existence of an "unreliable witness".

**5.17** Alternatively, this could be understood as a lack of the particular practitioner's conviction in the need to believe and protect the child. It might be seen as an excuse for not taking the case to court. If interpreted in this way, bad feelings between agencies can result, with some then trying to proceed on their own, a strategy that invariably fails.

Crown Prosecution Service had a legal strategy meeting with social services. And CPS...decided not to further that course of action...social services went on their own. They obtained information that was relevant to the prosecution, but it wasn't obtained in evidential form. So it couldn't be used in the prosecution...What the care workers actually had in that case was not something which was really in a fit state to put before a court. (Int. 29)

The different approaches explained above need further exploration between practitioners to secure effective multi-agency work to protect the child or young person. This includes the need for a shared awareness of the demands on the different professions, which, in turn, can help develop further effective methods of working together. As noted in section 5.11 above, this is best achieved by a three-pronged approach, where the LSCB facilitates a specific protocol for work with trafficked children and young people, where agencies identify how their service will respond to needs presented by the young person and where there is a dedicated specialist provision to engage and provide a direct service.

## Identification through youth offending teams

**5.18** There was some evidence that children and young people who might have been trafficked into the country become, either intentionally or otherwise, engaged in petty crime. If their involvement is intentional it might result from hunger, or from the desire to survive if they are “on the run” after going missing. Alternatively, it was noted that involvement in crime could be a method of the young person gaining the attention of professionals. One example was provided by a practitioner who, following work with the young person, realised that she had gone shoplifting as an attention-seeking behaviour. If caught by the police, the young person would have to be taken away from the family for whom she worked in domestic servitude.

She was staying with this lady and then went out shoplifting and was caught by the police. That’s how she came to our attention. She had been put into foster care and they noticed a man hanging around the address and that caused some concern...this guy was hanging around and was obviously waiting for her. (CS025)

It could be contested whether cases such as this are categorically ones where criminality is used as a means of gaining attention. However, it is a proposition that cannot be ruled out, and it was of particular interest that the awareness of the practitioner, an immigration officer, was acute enough to recognise this.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 specifies that children and young people coerced into sexual exploitation (which can involve committing prostitution-related offences) should be directed to child protection services and be treated as victims of abuse on the part of coercive and manipulative adults. In the same vein, trafficked children and young people’s behaviour, even if it involves criminal behaviour, should be seen in context of the manipulation and abuse they receive from traffickers. As is the case for children and young people working illegally in cannabis factories, this means that they should not be criminalised for offences but should be worked with through child protection services as victims of abuse. As well as police being mindful of this, it is important that practitioners in youth offending teams are equipped to identify indicators of trafficking, so that they can understand and work with the offending behaviour in context.

But saying that, on the other hand, we can get youngsters who will commit very minor offences to get noticed, as maybe a plea for help. So they may commit a minor

shoplifting offence, come to the notice of the police and then hope that somebody is going to notice or find out what might have happened to them. (Int. 13)

## **A protocol for keeping the child safe needs to be supported by a training programme**

**5.19** The issues raised above argue that each local agency should have a protocol that clarifies its role and resource allocation to trafficked children and young people. Whether the protocol is adapted from one that has been used by another geographical area, or generated from an agency's own local practice, its existence provides a momentum for the development of the service.

However, the existence of a protocol is not enough. Training is needed to bring staff together within and between agencies to address how they each identify and support trafficked children and young people. It was proposed that each agency have a lead practitioner whose brief was to lead the development of training and practice in this area.

...what the protocols are for are to develop awareness in the first place...then we need some training, we need to have lead professionals in agencies who know more than the rest about it. (Int. 19)

**5.20** A central component to staff training was the need for staff from different agencies to work together, to break down barriers that might be developed because of a perceived hierarchy of skills, knowledge and experience. While it was recognised that different professionals had different tasks, roles and responsibilities, these should not privilege one profession over another:

Sometimes the person who has seen the child protection issue is a housing official. They've got it right, they've reported it but no notice is taken of it, because of the source it came from. (CS020)

Indeed, casework showed how important joint work and information sharing was between some universal service providers, such as housing, which might not immediately be considered to play an important role in safeguarding trafficked children and young people:

...so there's a team manager and a couple of housing officers all of whom have had dealings with this woman...They knew the woman's teenage child was no longer in

the country, so she'd lost entitlement to housing, or she went further down the list, so they evicted her from the accommodation she had. As a result of that she went to Nigeria to get the baby...The arrest was planned, we got social services with us because clearly there was going to be a baby and a teenager there...When we went in the girl really worried me...she just lay there on the bed looking at us...she was very withdrawn...We worked together, at the legal strategy meeting we decided we were going to work together...That case was a really good example of working together...everyone was quite open with each other and I think everyone acted in the best interest of that baby. (CS010)

A number of cases illustrated the need for all universal service providers to be tasked with responsibility for identifying and working with trafficked children and young people, and with training to meet those tasks. This meant pressing for training for education, police, CPS, solicitors, housing, health, youth work and care providers, such as foster and residential care staff, as well as child protection staff, respecting all agencies' capacity to recognise cases and to be part of a process of intervention.

## **The benefits of a trained and resourced police service**

**5.21** A number of cases showed that where police were trained and resourced to identify and work with trafficked children and young people, the quality of delivery improved. This included gathering evidence against abusers and in taking children and young people away from abusive contexts. There was a realisation that through multi-agency working it would be possible to make the child feel safe.

The following situation was a case where a young woman had been trafficked into the country and, following a period of sexual exploitation, escaped, running straight to a police station. As the particular police force had been funded, trained and resourced to identify and respond to a trafficking case, they were able to support the young woman, to transcribe the interviews and to pursue the gathering of intelligence immediately.

City centre police stations aren't always open 24 hours so you've basically got a distressed 15-year-old who couldn't speak a word of English banging on the door of the police station...Normally with a situation like this, with a rape investigation, you've got specially trained officers who do the interview. We were quite fortunate with the funding we'd got from an operation...Yeah, she was quite fortunate. (CS015b)

**5.22** In another case, the police were able to act on suspicion that a UK national was being trafficked within the UK and to support her through the interview process and court case. As there had been an active operation focusing on sexual exploitation, funding, training and resources were made available.

Staff at the residential unit found £670 in the girl's room and she said this bloke had lent it to her...So the police went and spoke to her...they were saying it was evident she was infatuated with him...beside being 15 and she agreed to be video interviewed...There was one male that got 10 years for anal and vaginal rape...five others were charged with immigration offences...She was really brave actually. She gave evidence and she was commended in the end by the judge as to how brave she was giving evidence...But then we did have operation experience and so the police were involved with that as they had the dedicated time to do that...The police stuff was really ongoing and looking at serving abduction letters on whoever they could find, so there was quite a lot of police activity and things like the residential unit were actually seeing if they could get any car registration numbers that were seen.  
(CS020)

In some other situations, however, there was worry as to whether resources were available to follow the movement of a young person within the UK:

We did have a problem that she was trafficked from one police region to another and that information is not communicated and there was a lack of resources to spend time joining up that investigation... (CS016)

There was awareness that, when faced with a complex case involving a number of young people involved with a large criminal network:

...the real problem is that there is insufficient policing of these criminal networks.  
(CS017)

Despite this, as seen in the cases above, where policing was resourced and staff trained, there were examples of very successful interventions where the child or young person was safeguarded from further abuse.

There is an ongoing investigation with trafficking and the two people that they suspect are being charged...Working with the police, they've been excellent, really good, come to see the young person again and again, so that they're familiar with them and trust them. (Int. 13)

## **Solicitors played an important role in keeping the child or young person safe by providing relevant information to trafficked children and young people and to those who worked with them**

**5.23** Practitioners were keenly aware that children and young people were often first and foremost concerned about their immigration status and that their experiences in claiming asylum were often not conducive to disclosure:

The way the screening unit at the Home Office interviews children means they do not disclose the information professionals need to identify a child as trafficked. (Int. 10)

An essential part of supporting the young person to stay safe was ensuring that she or he was able to access solicitors who understood the emotional context and other difficulties the child or young person may face.

She needs to claim asylum and be registered with a solicitor...She needs to be placed in a safe placement like a foster placement and settle down before she can start to go through her story with a solicitor...It's too dangerous for her...because all the traffickers are outside and looking for young girls so her social workers are trying to arrange for her to claim asylum elsewhere... (CS003)

**5.24** Access to a supportive and informed solicitor, or to an appropriate legal advisor would help the child or young person understand their rights if they were taking a case to court. For example, this practitioner was aware that many of the trafficked children and young people wanted, first and foremost, to understand their rights.

I think legal is also quite an important one...some of them don't want to see a doctor or a GP; they aren't concerned about this...they want to know what their right to stay here is. (Int. 17)

And:

We say to the young people that if they're not happy with the age assessment they do have the opportunity to seek advice from their legal representative. (CS011)

Another practitioner noted the need for joined-up work between all those concerned with the legal context of the case:

...got a solicitor for her defence...We formed a very strong working relationship with social services legal team as well...we applied to the judge for the disclosure of her account in the family court...because obviously family court stuff is private... (CS010)

As well as children and young people feeling supported through access to an informed solicitor, practitioners themselves relied upon legal services:

We know that she had a legal representative, because they made a representation on her behalf, and we've also consulted with them when she went missing... (CS004)

And:

We've learnt to select a certain group of solicitors that have got experience in trafficking now. You gather those little bits of anecdotal information that say, "Well, this one was really good on that case", and about joining cases together. (CS033)

Finally, it was noted that the general public might consider the solicitor to be the first point of contact if they had a concern about the status or wellbeing of a child:

After escaping from her traffickers she was tended by a lady from Hong Kong for a week. When the lady had to go back to Hong Kong, she arranged for the girl to stay with another lady...where she stayed for two weeks until the lady put the girl in touch with a firm of solicitors. (CS024)

## **Be healthy: the importance of sensitive and aware health service interventions with trafficked children and young people**

**5.25** It has been noted throughout chapters 3 and 4 that many trafficked children and young people present a range of different health problems, often including a combination of mental, sexual and physical health issues. Health service providers play an essential role in identifying and working with these children and young people.

Practitioners identified some specific health-related indicators for trafficked children and young people. It is important to note that there were no cases identified in this research where a trafficked child or young person did not have a sexual, physical or mental health problem.

Trafficking invariably involves emotional and physical abuse, neglect and, for many, sexual abuse. The physical and behavioural signs of these different forms of abuse are the same as with any other child. There may also be multiple forms of abuse occurring at the same time. For health professionals, who are operating in environments where ambiguity is always a factor, being able to read these signs can be complex and require skills in observation:

It's a lot to do with observation. It is how they present when you ask specific questions about their background and their journey. You see what their responses are like and their interaction with you. (Int. 13)

This emphasis on the intangible signs that could indicate trafficking was considered by many to be something that could be developed:

I do not think that those involved in working with trafficking are probably aware of a wide enough number of different profiles of signs and symptoms and behaviour. It is more that they expect it will be about children going missing, and actually it isn't necessarily. (Int. 10)

I suppose it has reinforced my feelings around the need to use instinct as an indicator. (Int. 26)

## **Universal health services play an important role in identifying the trafficked child or young person**

**5.26** A number of examples showed the important role that health service workers can play in identifying a trafficked child or young person. In the following case it was a health worker who first identified the young person as trafficked for domestic servitude. The evidence recorded by the health workers provided the main source of information for a later prosecution of the trafficker:

She went through the hands of a number of local authorities who sent her back to her cousin...She was saying that he wasn't my cousin, I'm being trafficked, you know they're not treating me nicely...before finally presenting at a hospital and one of the medics picked it up this was somebody that's been trafficked...but she's not disclosing half the information...We know a lot about her from medical examinations. (Int. 5)

And in a different case:

Yes, and he had quite severe injuries...We were very pleased because it was the hospital adult staff who alerted us to that. (Int. 26)

Another case was identified and reported by a health worker who felt that the young person might be using access to the hospital as a way of escaping from her situation of abuse. As noted, the child or young person may commit an offence in the hope that this will enable them to access service providers who will take them away from the situation of abuse within which they feel trapped. Similarly, the young person may try to be admitted to hospital in an attempt to escape.

...although she was clearly unwell the hospital consultant felt she might have exaggerated her illness in order to escape whatever situation she was in. (CS001)

### **The hospital can be the first “safe place” where the child or young person may be able to disclose information about their experiences following arrival into the UK**

**5.27** In some cases, the hospital can be the first place that a trafficked child or young person is referred to on arrival in the country. While good practice following DCSF guidance (2008) means that all trafficked children and young people are to be registered with a GP, the circumstances of some on arrival mean that they have to have an emergency referral to hospital. Sensitivity was required with this, as the young person may feel fearful of a health inspection or may have little trust in or experience of healthcare practitioners. For example:

Sometimes physically they haven't been cared for in their own country...you almost have to have a medical that goes into everything, which some young people would find very intrusive. (Int. 1)

And:

If they have been trafficked and they have not been looked after or cared for, then they may not have eaten properly, drunk properly, slept well. They certainly wouldn't have been given the immunisations they need, you know, all the basic things we take for granted. (Int. 2)

In another case, the young woman needed specific care because of her experience of having been raped and being pregnant:

She was about three months pregnant when she arrived in February...She was 14...it was a result of rape...She claims it was part of the persecution essentially. She was raped because she was part of a particular minority clan...coming here to live with a man...I don't really know how well she knew him... (CS007)

It was noted that many trafficked children and young people had a range of health problems that needed attention.

...If any of them have immediate health needs we get them addressed right away, whether it's going straight to A&E or whether it's going to a healthcare clinic with a support worker...We've had that, we've had girls arrive at airport eight and a half months pregnant, who have gone straight to hospital... (Int. 13)

**5.28** These concerns were not limited to children and young people who were trafficked from abroad. This particular case of a UK national young women raised concern about a number of different health problems:

Concerns for young person as she was found to have blood poisoning, and concerns about drug use. She appears to be undernourished, anaemic and is reported to have numerous sexually transmitted diseases and is in desperate need of a full medical and sexual health check. (CS022)

**5.29** In these and other cases the hospital setting can become a safe place for the police to interview the young person. If supported appropriately, the young person can feel secure within the ward where nurses and security staff are present in shifts, providing 24-hour cover. The positive relationship with the ward nurses, the familiarity between the police and the hospital staff, and the fact that the young person feels safe and believed can all contribute to disclosure of evidence that could, with hospital records, be used in court.

We had her medically examined at the children's hospital. She was seen by a forensic doctor and a paediatrician for both the forensic side of things and her health and wellbeing...tests for STDs and things were carried out...We also video interviewed her... (Int. 22)

Another case showed how interviews with the young person were conducted through collaboration between health workers, children's services staff and the police. In this case of a young woman trafficked into the country, the information gained through medical examination was crucial to the prosecution that followed:

She was admitted to hospital late January 08, for a stomach virus. Hospital staff advised that she had possibly given birth before arriving in UK. Repeatedly raped when abroad in 2008. Clear during the interview conducted by police in January that she was anxious and that her body language and hesitant answers indicated that she may have been withholding information that may have been upsetting to talk about. (CS001)

**5.30** It was also noted that hospitals played an important role in identifying UK national children and young people who may be trafficked within the UK for sexual exploitation. This case of a UK national who had been trafficked within the UK was identified as the hospital was concerned about the relationship between the child and her partner:

Has had second termination...was obtained without the knowledge of both her foster carer and the GP. In both instances appointments were made for young person at the hospital and she was taken there and collected by an adult male. The young person has reiterated that the father of her child is a 17-year-old but she was accompanied to the hospital by a male who was reported to be about 25 years. (CS016)

Suspicious about the relationship between this young woman and her partner were reported to children's services, and an assessment followed that identified sexual exploitation. It was noted that the hospital can also play an important role in advising the GP and the children's services about missed appointments, helping to identify if a young person has gone missing.

...Young person is not attending her medical appointments, she was due to meet with designated nurse but she did not attend this appointment... (CS025)

**“Walk-in” centres, GPs, health clinic staff and health visitors all play an important role in identifying and supporting trafficked children and young people, sharing information with children's services**

**5.31** Other healthcare settings are important places for trafficked children and young people to access and to receive support. If the young person is in domestic servitude, they may be

prevented from registering with a GP. As a result, they may approach walk-in centres for specific health problems.

They walk into things like walk-in centres because they can't register with a GP so they use A&E and walk-in centres. (Int. 27)

The young person might “walk in” with a number of health problems that need attention. For example, one case noted that a young woman dropped into a walk-in centre with:

- bruising to upper arm
- bruising to right eye which is sore when she looks to the right
- lesion to the eye, was pushed to the floor to be beaten and then couldn't see
- loss of consciousness, has flu and headache
- beaten with a fist several weeks ago
- been beaten three times before. (CS006)

Walk-in centres will ask, as a matter of course, for details of the GP with whom the young person should be registered. If they do not have a GP, this will be an indicator of potential trafficking that can be followed up through the sharing of information with children's services.

**5.32** There were different accounts of information sharing within the research, as well as awareness that this was essential if good practice was to be upheld. For example, one practitioner from children's services noted that they do receive some referrals of potential cases of trafficked children and young people from GP surgeries:

The odd one we do find out about through GP surgeries. (Int. 29)

While another noted that they...

...can't remember ever a young trafficked child being reported to me by a GP.  
(Int. 27)

There were concerns that some cases were slipping through the net without any support for health-related matters being available to the child or young person.

An unaccompanied minor from abroad who may have been trafficked into the UK for the purposes of prostitution... in addition the young person has had two terminations and appears to have had little or no support on both occasions; she will not discuss the matter. (CS023)

## Listening to the voice of the child

**5.33** One medical practitioner noted that an indicator of a child being trafficked or coerced into an exploitative situation can be when the child is accompanied by an adult who does not allow the child to talk. For example, discussing a UK national who was trafficked within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation the practitioner notes that:

...she fell pregnant and attended the surgery to have a pregnancy test done...Accompanied by a white male in his mid 30s. Nurse suspected that he might be responsible for the pregnancy and described him as “being very much in control of the little girl”. GP expressed concern regarding [the] child’s emotional wellbeing as she had previously taken an overdose. (CS034)

This case was referred on for assessment through child protection procedures, the main indicators of concern being the age discrepancy between the young woman and her partner and the fact that he silenced her. The situation where adults talk for the child or young person was also noted to be a strong indicator in situations of domestic servitude. A health practitioner noted that health visitors making home visits sometimes had suspicions:

We have had cases where health visitors have gone into homes and there has been an unknown person with a child lurking around somewhere. It is just about being alert really. (Int. 27)

While another professional emphasised the role health visitors can play in identifying possible cases of trafficking:

Health visitors are very important in gathering that kind of information but often may not want to ask those questions. We had one child who a health visitor found wandering the streets. The child was naked and it was a real can of worms because, when we took them back, there were about five or six children living at that address all with different surnames and it seemed like a group of fathers looking after them. It

was a very strange set-up. We need to know the histories of these children, it is very important. (Int. 25)

**5.34** The research showed a number of cases where GPs, health visitors and nurses in walk-in centres identified indicators of trafficking and were central to ensuring that interventions to support the child followed. There were also a number of cases where health workers in specialist health services, such as sexual health and mental health services, played an important role in identifying and supporting trafficked children and young people. Further training for health professionals in identifying potential cases of trafficking for all forms of exploitation, including and more than just cases of sexual exploitation, is needed.

### **Sexual health or GUM clinics play an important role in identifying and supporting a trafficked child or young person**

**5.35** A number of the trafficked children and young people, both male and female, had experienced sexual health problems. While these problems were more common among those who had been trafficked for sexual exploitation, including UK nationals trafficked for sexual exploitation within the UK, there was evidence of young people being trafficked for domestic servitude who were then raped or abused:

We had a young woman who had been facilitated into the country...She was made pregnant by a foster carer's brother...then she was pregnant again within nine months and...in fact she took herself to the GUM clinic and told a completely false story about herself and it was only because our designated nurse made a link with the GUM clinic that all the issues came together. (Int. 10)

This case demonstrated how an awareness of the indicators of trafficking is important in raising suspicions of trafficking. Clearly multi-agency work is essential in identifying these cases. A further comment from a GUM clinic nurse noted that something as simple as the age of the child could be an indicator that something was wrong:

We've taken initiatives in the past in relation to young women who appear at sexual health clinics, especially if they're young. And take the view, "Look, we've got to be interested in why this young woman is coming for contraceptives." (CS034)

A different sexual health practitioner noted that staff would need to recognise indicators when, as noted in 5.18 above, the young person may not be able to speak about their situation.

She was taken to a sexual diseases clinic at some point for testing, but on the other hand, well I don't really know whether she could have been spotted at that time or not. But if she wasn't jumping up and down saying "Help something's wrong here," it wouldn't necessarily alert anyone to it. (Int. 30)

## **Mental health: providing time-aware practice**

**5.36** The work above recognises that sexual health workers play an important role in identifying and working with trafficked children and young people. There was also some recognition of the role that mental health workers, particularly child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) workers could play. But there were concerns that the services might not be adapted to reach the young people concerned or sustain a service for them, particularly for the range of severe mental health issues the children and young people presented.

Like GPs, health visitors, nurses in schools, looked-after children (LAC) nurses and sexual health workers, it was important that CAMHS workers were not only able to identify indicators of abuse but were also equipped and supported to respond appropriately. They needed to recognise the time that it may take for the harm to be revealed, and to be able to engage in multi-agency work with other service providers.

## **It was widely recognised that the impact of trauma and abuse had significant consequences for the child's mental health, and that these consequences needed particular attention**

**5.37** Practitioners did not argue for a separate, specialist mental health intervention with trafficked children and young people. Instead, they argued that CAMHS workers should be provided with additional training. This should enable them to recognise the indicators, be tolerant of the time taken by a child or young person to disclose, and know when and how to work with other agencies, such as police, child protection workers and local authority carers.

There was a strong emphasis on the need for mental health workers to be prepared for the extent of harm experienced by the child or young person. For example, a residential worker talked of the withdrawn state of a young man from abroad who had been:

...kidnapped with mother and sister and locked in a room in a house for a long period of time. They had little food or water. His sister was raped repeatedly, became ill and died, but the body remained in the room with him and his mum for a long period of time. Unclear what happened to mother. When escaped from room, a man offered to get him to the UK. (CS018)

The young man in this case was referred to CAMHS for support. He needed intensive contact with the CAMHS worker over a long period of time before he was able to discuss the impact his experiences had had on him. Similarly, a number of cases of self-harm and attempted suicide were reported.

She reported suffering from headaches, which do not ease. There are concerns about her emotional wellbeing, not sleeping, nightmares, suicidal thoughts and self-harm. She has previously planned to kill herself by drinking bleach in initial health assessment. (CS001)

Another young woman was noted to have:

...mood swings, displays violent behaviour, allegedly tried to kill another young person, and self-harms. A lot of assessments were made, three interventions at three different adolescent psychiatric departments but no mental health diagnosis made... A referral to CAMHS was suggested as well as a behavioural programme in a residential or secure unit... (CS029)

And a young man who was trafficked for sexual exploitation:

...has on several occasions attempted to swallow tacks, pieces of broken glass and CDs. He has stated that he has at times thought of throwing himself off a bridge over a motorway and has indicated that he does not think he will be alive in two years time. (CS031)

**Practitioners noted that while there were CAMHS workers who have been trained to identify indicators of trafficking, many had not, and thus warning signs might remain unidentified**

We aren't very good at identification of trafficking...I think we are in the early stages of identification. (Int. 25)

**5.38** This quote from a hospital-based nurse was just one small fragment of the data that emerged to suggest that identification of trafficked children and young people by health professionals and through medical conditions could be enhanced. In particular, the monitoring role of health visitors and post-natal care providers available for babies and younger children was considered an area that could be developed further in terms of identification of trafficking. It might be considered that after the age of five, schools would take over this monitoring role in terms of safeguarding children and young people's wellbeing. While this is being advanced through the Children Act 2008, it is possible that children and young people who have been trafficked may be missed, as they are not always enrolled in schools. This is a gap that requires attention.

**As explored in chapters 3 and 4, few trafficked children and young people will immediately disclose information about the abuse they have experienced**

**5.39** It was noted that young people employed sophisticated ways to avoid talking about the impact of the abuse on their lives, and it was often noted that it took a long time in a trusting relationship before details emerged. Mental health workers played an important role in supporting the young person through the process of disclosure and helping them to manage the feelings that were associated with this disclosure.

Right at the moment she doesn't want to talk to anyone, she's keeping it very private. But you know it's a door that should never be closed because at one point she might actually say "What happened to me was wrong and I don't want it to happen to any other children, therefore I would like to talk." (CS011)

And:

...[she] states she can't talk about what she has been through with anyone. She can't even talk about it to her best friend because she doesn't want to remember what happened to her... (CS003)

Indeed, many young people did appear, at face value, to manage on their own, rejecting any support in addressing the impact of abuse. This was particularly common for young men, as can be seen by practitioners' comments on two separate cases below:

Emotionally well balanced and able to take care of himself...suppressing his emotions. (CS002)

And:

He had regularly said that he was not going to talk. (CS023)

## **A dedicated service for young people's wellbeing was highly valued**

**5.40** In one locality there was an example of a specific project targeted at supporting young people's wellbeing. It provided CAMHS services for vulnerable and marginalised children and young people.

Following a health assessment, the project tailored specific work for the young people by linking CAMHS workers with other youth work and child protection staff. Employing a child psychologist, a counsellor and an administrator, the project used different mechanisms to engage with the young people and was able to focus on identifying signs of trafficking.

It's through the health assessment...what's called the wellbeing project...a CAMHS project, and all of the young people will have filled in what's called a strengths and difficulties questionnaire...Obviously that's a project and has time-limited funding, so we don't know what's happening after that...When we see a young person we do a full physical examination, looking for evidence...any concern they have we look at. (Int. 9)

**5.41** An advantage of developing close links between CAMHS workers and other professions tasked to support vulnerable young people is that holistic support can be provided. This was

particularly important in linking young people into services that could help them with drug-related problems. For example, this young woman from the UK was:

...found in the early hours...she had used crack the previous day and she had become very distressed and said she had spiders all over her, which was a result of the drug taking. (CS021)

And another indigenous young woman was:

...[a] severely depressed, vulnerable individual who is sexually exploited, has drug issues and is at risk of self-harm through overdosing and is [a] risk to herself and other young people...[She] needs [a] psychological and psychiatric assessment to determine the level of damage...[It has] been recommended that she has cognitive behaviour therapy. (CS022)

## **Enjoy and achieve: the trafficked child or young person reaching their full potential**

**5.42** The Children Act 2008 specifies that a person should be designated from within the school staff team to oversee work with each looked-after child in the school (Children and Young Persons Act 2008, part 2, section 20). This development recognises the importance of a good relationship between the child or young person and the school. It acknowledges that engagement and attendance are more likely if there is a particular staff member who is keeping the child in mind. This research showed the importance of the role played by the school for trafficked children and young people. It advocates that the school allocate a staff member to oversee the trafficked child's or young person's engagement with education, so that they, like other children, can enjoy and achieve.

This section of the report addresses the reasons that some trafficked children and young people were not able to attend school, many being denied access by traffickers who are intent on keeping them hidden from service providers. It looks at the problems faced by those who were absent from school, and the achievements of many who were able to engage with the education provided.

## **Many trafficked children and young people are not on a school roll because they are hidden, working in domestic servitude**

**5.43** A component of the exploitation of children and young people working in domestic servitude or in some other form of exploitation is to deprive them of access to education. If the child were to attend school, their whereabouts and circumstances would be known and the exploitation revealed. These children are therefore hidden from the education system.

She came into the UK in 2004...She was brought in for the sole purpose of being a domestic to look after the child, denied schooling... (CS010)

One practitioner noted that, while the local school was equipped to support children for whom English may not be the first language, many of the trafficked children were unable to benefit as they were not on the school roll.

Provision is there within the schools...there are lots of resources being made available to translate and bring these children onto the same level as their peers, but because they're not in school they're not able to access the resources that are there for them. (Int. 17)

Indeed, one practitioner was worried that the child or young person might not be aware that they were entitled to attend school:

If a child's brought in from a foreign country – never allowed out and told to get dinner ready every night and look after the baby – do they know? Do they have that same deep down feeling that this isn't right? I don't think they do. (CS012)

## **School was recognised to be an important place where trafficked children could be identified and where they could develop peer group relationships and keep occupied**

**5.44** Practitioners noted the importance of trafficked children and young people being able to attend school. As noted by this practitioner, it is a place where indicators of trafficking might be identified:

...you know these children are going to come to school at some point or they'll come to the attention of health visitors. (CS011)

And for another it was a place where children and young people could build peer group relationships and feel part of a community:

Not just for education's sake in the early days, but so that we could have a structure to their life where they had somewhere to go. Otherwise they would just be so vulnerable, being chaotic and bored and easily picked up. So the whole structure was around keeping them safe and occupied and healthy. (Int. 6)

However, it was noted that a range of problems could face schools working with trafficked children and young people.

## Identification through educational professionals

**5.45** Several practitioners highlighted the important role that schools could play in identifying trafficked children and young people. One practitioner noted that schools were places where children could speak out:

You'd think sources of intelligence would be schools, for example. They would be places where children universally go, where they would be looking out in particular communities. Encouraging children, saying, look, come forward and talk confidentially. I think that's where we ought to be really, rather than discovering that so-and-so stopped coming to school and then discovering that she'd gone off to some country abroad and nobody knows. (Int. 19)

Another practitioner reinforced the need for effective and active protocols in each agency, and in particular in child protection services, so that teachers in schools knew to whom to refer the potential case, and could be reassured that the situation and risks involved would be understood.

If a teacher suspects that this child is trafficked, before it ever gets to me or to the team, it has to go through social services, because education automatically refer to social services...If it goes to a social worker who doesn't know much about trafficking, it may never get to the police. (CS011)

It was noted that teachers and school support staff could use the indicators of trafficking to identify cases and to make appropriate referrals. It was also noted that the school was an important place where general awareness of trafficking could be raised among all young people, and, by default, the general public at large. Awareness-raising programmes and teaching materials could helpfully be used in schools. These might equip children and young people with skills to identify indicators and to feel confident about what to do if they, or friends or peers, are at risk or vulnerable. The research revealed cases where the exploitation experienced by the child or young person was brought to the attention of professionals through a friend from the peer group reporting their concern.

## **Language barriers might prevent the young person from integrating into the school**

**5.46** Even if the young person's behaviour is acceptable, they may have to take time out of school to learn to speak English.

On arrival, she was not in school...I mean they send them to English lessons so she'd need to get that before she got sent to mainstream school...They do sometimes voice their concerns [and] say "I want to go to school", and we have to explain that "You don't yet speak the language."... (CS007)

The time taken to improve the child's or young person's English to the point that they can attend school might leave them behind others in their year group. This might mean that they have to join a class with children and young people who are younger than they are.

Education is a bit of a problem; getting them into schools in the appropriate year group – that's a big problem. (Int. 1)

It was also noted that, if the young people who need to learn English are located outside the school in a specific learning environment, traffickers might target such an environment as a place to locate young people for further trafficking. Rather than keeping the young person out of school until they have learnt English, one of the sites where the research was carried out ran the English language support work within the school. However, even here the practitioner was mindful that the young people might be encouraged into further exploitation through being grouped together in English language courses.

...[we] offer support [with] getting them into education...We do have projects that are in our schools...where they can work with other young people who have limited English...They are integrated into the mainstream school once they have picked up English as well...Also they can access counselling in the schools...We may need to look at more protection for some...If there is an ongoing investigation, we may not want them to be mixing with certain other groups of peers where they could be influenced...It's looking again at how all these different needs interlink with each other... (Int. 12)

Having said this, there was encouragement for the provision of classes in English as a second language to be run within the school, with the child or young person being integrated into as many different school activities as possible while they learn to speak English.

## Support work within schools

**5.47** As well as trying to facilitate language development within school, practitioners noted the important role that looked-after children nurses played in identifying and working with trafficking cases.

...[we] developed a service within school nursing to provide a better service to our looked-after children. (Int. 2)

Other school support staff felt confident in making referrals to a school nurse if they identified a problem, especially if the school advocated a multi-agency approach to supporting the children and young people:

...we've got a worker at the main secondary school who's actually been employed to support the Slovakian pupils...He's taken part in home visiting with us...he's been quite useful support...and because we're working as a multi-agency team now, if there were any medical needs we would be encouraging the school to refer to the school nurse. (Int. 17)

Another keyworker from the child protection team noted that:

Education is very important...we provide a computer for the young person, home tutors, interpreters where necessary...I think that health support was very good... (Int. 28)

**5.48** As argued above, there was significant awareness of the benefit of multi-agency work, be it driven by schools, LSCBs, police or youth offender teams. School was recognised as playing a central role in helping the trafficked child or young person integrate into a community and begin to develop alongside peers. Multi-agency work, ideally following protocols that outlined specific tasks for each agency, was essential in helping this to take place. Unfortunately, a number of cases were identified where this multi-agency work did not take place, either because the staffing or the infrastructure to support the work was not in place. Where it did exist, the support for the particular case was greatly improved.

## Receiving education outside school

**5.49** Trafficked children and young people might experience a range of different emotional and mental health problems. The successful integration into mainstream schooling might take a long time and need specific support resources. However, in some cases it might either be perceived as too late to integrate the child or young person into the school, or too difficult to achieve.

The following case was of a young woman who had been trafficked into the UK for sexual exploitation. Her sexualised behaviour was difficult to manage within the classroom environment, and was coupled with aggressive and destructive self-abuse. She was felt to be beyond the control of the school:

In the UK living with her alleged father and uncle but not blood relative. Young person was not in education for three months until referral...Excluded from her secondary school due to behaviour problems, including disruption and sexualised behaviour to peers...Social worker states that mainstream education is not appropriate due to her behaviour problems...Looking into finding a therapeutic residential placement with education...Young person is a risk to male staff due to her past behaviour. (CS027)

Other cases revealed particular behaviours that were extremely difficult for the school to manage. The young woman described below had been trafficked into the country for domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. She had been badly bullied, was pregnant and was being educated through home tuition outside the school environment.

...Is being bullied at school because of her eye...Currently receiving home tuition...Happy in her foster placement and seems to have a good attachment with

her foster carers. She has given birth to a healthy baby girl and appears to be a caring mother, receiving support from a health visitor, wishes to resume her education and train as an accountant, has no contact with the baby's father. (CS034)

**5.50** In another situation, the young person was referred to a local further education college that provided specific classes for young people who needed language support and other applied education, and for whom school attendance was too demanding.

The college had various systems...They had very small classes, two teachers, most of our kids went there...but if they were 16, 17 and had no education in their own country, we often sent them to a work-based learning scheme. Because some of them had already worked as welders and mechanics and things...They would get their basic English and maths and computer studies, but also work placements...It was a place where you could mess around if you wanted to...a lot of British kids did...but if they were really keen, the staff would back them up...Some of them ended up getting jobs...they'd get a work placement and if they worked well it would sometimes lead to a job. (Int. 2)

Another practitioner noted the range of support that was necessary to enable the young people to begin to settle within the community. They noted that the young person needed help with some basic skills before they were able to manage referral to a school.

...peer group mentoring, we'd put them in a flat with someone else who spoke the same language who'd been here a bit longer...If there was a responsible sort of peer we'd get them to teach them how to do shopping and food and managing money...We started getting them to have little certificates: we'd teach them how to look after the flat and how to keep safe, how to telephone for the police, how to get health help, how to cook a simple meal and shop and their money...We had different sort of charts and when they were all ticked they proved that they had that part of independent living...We wouldn't let them move on until they'd reached the criteria. (Int. 6)

In these cases, home tuition was considered the most supportive and appropriate method of enabling the young people to continue their education. While not ideal, as it separated the young person from his/her peer group, it enabled them to continue with education until they were ready to try to integrate into the school. This again depended upon close work between the home tutor, health visitor, GP and child protection services.

While there were these cases, there were others where the child or young person had managed to settle into the school and were achieving to reach their potential.

## Doing well at school

**5.51** The research highlighted a number of cases where the child or young person was achieving at school. However, this was often as a result of good multi-agency work, where the young person had received support from a variety of service providers. This case below was of a young person who had been trafficked for domestic servitude. She had received counselling support from CAMHS workers to address the post-traumatic stress disorder that she experienced. She also received support from her social worker who, while working on child protection issues, also took her on trips and encouraged her to integrate in day-to-day activities.

Young person taken to Chessington World of Adventures by social worker...Doing well at school, takes her work very seriously and she would like to further her education in this country. (CS025)

A different practitioner reiterated the importance of multi-agency work, with child care support workers engaging with the educational needs presented by the young person. The young person here was achieving well at school and was motivated to continue to university. However, the child protection workers were concerned that she might be targeted further by abusers through the internet. This meant that, while providing her with a laptop so that she could undertake her course work, practitioners liaised closely with school IT staff to alert them to the specific dangers that the young woman faced.

Leaving care team managed to get her a second-hand laptop so that she can do her coursework. Internet access – professionals at the meeting discussed her having access to [the] internet, given that she might be at risk when online. (CS025)

Another young woman who had been trafficked into the UK was motivated to achieve:

...started school in China when she was seven years old and continued until she was 10 years old...She was not subject to any previous school exclusions...is on roll now and attending...Went to school every day without any problems, received a “good progress award” certificate...Enjoys student life and appears to be achieving well.

Took SATs and doing GCSEs – achieved a C in science, B in maths and A in art...  
(CS024)

## **Make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing**

**5.52** A major concern identified by a number of practitioners was about what would happen to the young people once they reached 18 and were faced with the prospect of being returned to their country of origin. This research does not intend to duplicate existing work that is ongoing to ensure that the human rights of young people are upheld through the decision making process of individual cases. The findings do, however, identify some of the issues that some practitioners face when working with young people who are approaching 18.

One practitioner noted that the insecurity faced by the young people about their future makes it very hard for them to plan for their education or career:

While that process is going on they are in limbo, they don't know what's going to happen to them and they can't make plans for the future. It hinders their education...  
(Int. 17)

It was noted that many of the children and young people who had been trafficked into the country had settled into the UK to the extent that they considered it to be their “home”. In many cases, their knowledge of their country of origin was diminishing and, crucially, this included their knowledge of the education system, child protection systems or employment and welfare prospects.

**5.53** While managing the uncertainties of this period is a specific problem for children and young people whose immigration status is unclear, it was also noted that the 16 to 18 age group of indigenous young people who are trafficked within the UK for sexual exploitation often fall through the net. Once they have reached the age of 16, they can be assumed to carry a status of “adulthood”, which they are poorly equipped to manage. The resource pressures facing local authorities can mean that their service delivery is more specifically targeted towards children and younger teenagers. As noted by a practitioner:

...social services will say “No, they're over 16 so they're not our responsibility.” The 16 to 18 age group is a massive problem for us...You're dealing with young police officers who perhaps don't know a lot about trafficking, you're 300 miles away via

telephone and you have to say “Look, you need to tell them that they have a duty to care...” (CS015c)

This issue is being taken up elsewhere through a number of agencies working with sexually exploited children and young people. The important consideration here is to note that, if the Every Child Matters agenda is to be taken seriously, and children and young people are to be enabled to make a positive contribution to the overall achievement of their own and the general society’s economic wellbeing, the interventions that support the 16 to 18 age group are essential. This age group equally needs opportunities that support the high ambitions of those who want to achieve and the fragilities of those damaged by abuse. In this way, children and young people can both contribute to the overall wellbeing of the society at large and be diverted from becoming an ongoing and expensive drain on adult services through early intervention.

## **Conclusion**

**5.54** This chapter has explored the difficulties faced by practitioners in identifying and responding to the needs of the child or young person in line with the agenda of Every Child Matters. If all children and young people, including those who have been trafficked into or within the UK, are to have the opportunity to achieve the five outcomes, practitioners need support in accessing and working with these cases. Keyworkers in agencies need to be supported through regular supervision that encourages reflective practice and helps the practitioner to build positive, trusting relationships with the children and young people concerned. To achieve genuine multi-agency work where intelligence is shared, skills need to be combined for the benefit of the child. Importantly, this means welfare and justice agencies working closely together throughout the different developmental stages of the child or young person. This must include paying attention to the problems that young people face in their transition to adulthood. The needs of the 16 to 18 age group must not be overlooked within the agenda of Every Child Matters.

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## Chapter 6 Specialist services for trafficked children and young people

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### Case study 6: Wen Xi's story

Wen Xi was a toddler when her mother died. After her mother's death, her father suffered from depression and could not cope. He died when she was six. Wen Xi lived in a small village where the abuse of human rights was routine and where there were few, if any jobs. Many people lived in poverty. Wen Xi was then taken in by an elderly neighbour whom she referred to as "grandmother". Her "grandmother" looked after her and sent her to school. When Wen Xi was 10, her "grandmother" passed away and left her in the care of a couple who lived in the same community. After Wen Xi started living with the couple, they started abusing and exploiting her. The couple made her work long hours in a physically demanding and potentially dangerous job. Wen Xi was also sexually abused by the man and accused by his wife of having an affair with him. The wife subsequently maltreated Wen Xi physically and emotionally.

When Wen Xi was 14, she was approached by a man in her village who told her that he was aware of her difficulties and offered to help her get out of the country. After the couple tried to force Wen Xi to work as a prostitute, she decided to take the man up on his offer. The man told Wen Xi he would arrange her journey to leave China in order to escape to a safe place. Wen Xi was subsequently trafficked to the UK for the purpose of domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. After a period of being entrapped within a family home, where she undertook childcare and unpaid domestic work, a friend of the family raped her. She was then placed in a brothel from which she managed to escape.

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### Introduction

**6.1** From the point of her escape, Wen Xi experienced a number of additional problems. She had been displaced from the home she had known with her "grandmother". She had not known where her next home was, as she did not know the address. She was traumatised by the rape and abuse she had experienced. She knew little English and did not know of her legal rights as an unaccompanied minor in the UK, but she did know that she did not want to be forced to return to her village or to the couple who had abused her there. Following some excellent specialist support, including specialist foster care and an allocated keyworker, Wen

Xi quickly learnt enough English to attend her local UK school. She is now a very motivated A\* pupil at GCSE level and is keen to become a solicitor working on human rights issues.

**6.2** As seen in chapter 5 of this report, practitioners noted that universal, mainstream service providers need to be able to:

- identify suspected cases of trafficking
- provide a context within which trafficked young people can be supported to access and use universal services.

However, because of the trauma, abuse and displacement that many of the young people might have experienced, either before or within the UK, many trafficked children and young people do have specialist needs that require dedicated services staffed by trained practitioners.

**6.3** In this chapter we explore three themes emerging from the practitioners' experiences concerning the need for specialist services for trafficked children and young people.

- There is a need for some specialist services to exist outside and separate from mainstream services. These might, for example, include the allocation of a specialist keyworker to create a relationship with the young person, or the development of a pool of specialist, trained foster carers who can provide safe accommodation for the young people concerned.
- These specialist services need to be able to work alongside universal provision, with the intention of integrating (or reintegrating) the young person into mainstream service provision.
- In some instances, specialist services are seen as being relevant to children and young people trafficked into the country from abroad. In others, they are designed specifically to meet the needs of indigenous UK nationals trafficked within the UK.

## **Providing a keyworker at the point of arrival, with the dual aim of supporting the child or young person and prosecuting the trafficker**

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### **Case study 7: Rosa's story**

Rosa arrived in the UK in June 2007 from China when she was 14½ years old. In initial age assessment she was thought to be 18 years old, as she had been told to say this by the agent who brought her into the country. The amount of debt owed to this agent remains unknown.

When she first arrived she was placed in accommodation close to the airport, where there was no Chinese-speaking worker or interpreter. While in this accommodation she met another Chinese young woman who said she would help her. She was then taken to a man and forced to work in a brothel for seven months.

She managed to escape. She was able to return to the original accommodation, as she had been able to hold onto the address and a leaflet with a map that had been given to her. Importantly, key information on the leaflet was translated into a number of different languages, including Chinese.

When interviewed, she stated that bad things had happened to her in the UK but would not provide any further details. There were physical signs on her body of having been tied up. Some information was provided to the police about the people who held her, but very little is known about her personal experiences to date.

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**6.4** Practitioners confirmed that one of the immediate needs presented by young people at the point of arrival is the need to feel safe. The need for safety operates at two levels: an emotional and a physical safety. The young person needed to be placed in accommodation that was safe and support to manage the emotional trauma they had experienced. At the point of arrival, it is unlikely that a child or young person will be able to identify, understand or describe feelings of fear, displacement or pain that they will be carrying. Indeed, it is likely that the child or young person will be in a state of crisis, unable to understand the situation that they are in. They will struggle to keep their experience in perspective or to be able to think about or describe their current, medium-term and long-term needs. Therefore, some basic information is essential, such as a map and/or a leaflet in their own language to explain where they are, what their rights are and who to contact if in need.

**6.5** Practitioners felt that to help the young person to secure a feeling of emotional as well as physical safety, a dedicated, specialist trained staff member should be allocated to the young

person at the point of arrival. This keyworker should work with the young person throughout the initial stages following arrival. They would oversee the young person's progress from the point of identification on arrival to the time that they were handed over to a permanent guardian and to a carer who was providing accommodation.

This develops the points already made in chapters 3, 4 and 5: that the children and young people need a safe and secure relationship within which to disclose abuse and help to identify the perpetrators of abuse. If we are attempting to stop the trafficking of children and young people, we have to engage with the victims of trafficking at this level.

The evidence suggests that for a prosecution to take place, engagement with the young person is necessary for gathering intelligence. This reflects findings on effective methods of gathering evidence to protect children and young people from sexual exploitation. This advocates a four-stage strategy: "*identification of*" and "*engagement with*" the young person to effect "*disruption*" and "*prosecution*" of the abuser. The disruption and prosecution of the abuser are unlikely to happen without the identification and engagement with the young person. Each stage of this four-pronged strategy is as important as the other: they are interdependent (Jago and Pearce 2008). This means that allocating a keyworker to support the child or young person from the very point of arrival is not only serving the best interests of the child, but also taking proactive steps to disrupt and prosecute the traffickers.

**6.6** The child or young person can be reassured that the keyworker who works with them will be aware of the confused and damaging emotions they have experienced. The practitioner would be trained to manage a crisis intervention response that will not compound feelings of insecurity or fear.

Practitioners noted concern that a number of factors contribute to the young person being in a state of crisis at arrival in the UK. For example:

- They may be suffering from violence and intimidation:

...they're just so frightened... (Int. 10)

- They may be displaced and confused:

...and he'll never know where he comes from, which is sad... (CS004)

- And/or they may be recounting a story that they have been told to tell:

...they're often either completely silent or tell you a different story...When they are told by a lot of people...that we're not to be trusted, it's a big barrier to overcome...They [the traffickers] will often say to the young person before we get to meet them "Don't tell social services anything" and they all have a very common story, you know. They can't remember anything. (Int. 13)

...because their stories are all very similar, basically they're identical the stories – "I got on a plane," "I don't remember where I got here from," "The agent left me at the airport." – they're all exactly the same. (Int. 6)

If allocated one keyworker, it was felt that, the child or young person should have an advocate to support them through the interview process, which was seen as essential in establishing their situation during the early stages after arrival.

### **Specialist provision that responds to the needs of the child at the point of entry places the needs of the child or young person first: child protection concerns come before concerns about age assessment and immigration status**

**6.7** It was clear from work with the practitioners that the needs of the child were seen to hold paramount importance: the first consideration at the point of entry into the UK was focused on the safety of the child or young person, on child protection and child welfare considerations. These should override considerations such as immigration status or age. This was in line with the UNCRC, the Home Office/The Scottish Government Update to the UK Action Plan on Tackling *Human Trafficking* (2008) and the DCSF guidance on safeguarding children and young people who may have been trafficked (2007). It acknowledges that disputes about the age of the child at the point of arrival can undermine the child's welfare. Indeed, the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA) publication *When is a child not a child?* confirms that:

...the problem of age disputes is linked to prevailing cultures of cynicism and disbelief among immigration officers and some social workers...There is a potential conflict of interest between the requirement of social service departments to undertake age assessments and the obligation to provide services to children in need...and...the current approach to age disputes and the process of age assessment is high-risk,

costly and does not deliver high-quality outcomes for the Home Office, social services departments or separated asylum seeking children. (ILPA 2007: 1)

**6.8** Placing the child's needs first means practitioners making every effort to create a feeling of emotional safety and security. This was endorsed by a number of practitioners:

It is mainly around keeping them safe at the beginning... (Int. 4)

...they've got to feel safe before they can address any of these issues...before they can be examined by people. (Int. 5)

The first thing is safety. They need to feel safe...We always did initial assessments...but this was followed within usually two or three days but not more than a week by a planning meeting, when we'd have an interpreter present. (Int. 6)

Another practitioner described how young people often emphasised gaining legal status as a route to some form of emotional safety and security.

Some of them don't want to see a doctor or a GP. They aren't concerned about STIs or STDs, they want to know what their right to stay here is, and if they are at risk of being deported or removed... (Int. 17)

**6.9** While the responsibility for enabling the young person to feel safe rests with all services, it was recognised that different professions may have a different approach to their work. Some, such as UKBA staff, will have time-limited interventions with a targeted goal to achieve, while others will have opportunities for longer-term work. As noted in chapter 4, the process of being interviewed by a range of different practitioners can be experienced as abusive in itself, irrespective of how sympathetic and supportive the interviewers are. The allocation of a specialist, allocated keyworker would provide one point of contact, through which other interviews could take place. This would help the child or young person to understand why they are being asked questions by a range of professionals, and would help them to manage the process with which they are engaged.

If you've got a trafficked young person the most important thing is to reiterate the trust of social services, and that we are separate from the immigration and the police. Because we have to remember they've just come from being interviewed by immigration...a lot of that stuff's going to come out much further down the line than in

the beginning...More of this stuff emotionally comes out once they've settled, once the sort of immediate crisis need's over... (Int. 13)

**6.10** Whatever the profession, all practitioners were in agreement that the needs of the child or young person were of paramount importance. Practitioners suggest that following the first point of contact with the child or young person, good practice would be to allocate one keyworker who could help the young person to manage the range of interviews necessary and to settle into safe accommodation. This will not only place the needs of the child first, as of paramount importance, but it will also help to disrupt or prosecute the trafficker. The child or young person also benefits from being given clear messages, written in different languages where possible, that show them where they are and who they can contact if they go missing.

**6.11** It was felt that a distinction between the role of a keyworker employed by an agency and an independent guardian needed to be emphasised. Practitioners noted the advantage of a child or young person being allocated an independent guardian, who supported the child through the change process involved in transferring from the point of arrival through to settling into more permanent accommodation and engaging with a local school. However, there was a concern that if each agency failed to allocate a designated worker with responsibility to oversee the management of their service the child or young person may be overlooked and fail to be held in mind. That is, it was felt that each agency needed to have a worker who felt some ownership for the case, and who was supported to engage with the issues it presented. In essence, it was felt important that the child should have a champion from within each agency as well as an independent guardian who might be working with them from outside the different agencies.

Concern has been raised that this might create too many relationships for the child or young person to manage. While aware of this potential problem, the point made was that each agency itself needed to make sure that it did not require the child or young person to develop a string of different relationships with practitioners from within the one profession. For this reason, it was advocated that each agency should model their work with children and young people on a keyworker approach.

## **Specialist interpreters trained to work with trafficked children and young people**

**6.12** The need for specialist interpreters has been explored in chapter 1 of this report. Interviews with practitioners and the analysis of case studies confirmed the importance of the availability of trained and supported interpreters for work with trafficked children and young people. It is unlikely that the dedicated keyworker will be able to speak the language of the different young people who might arrive into the country at the points of entry. It will often be necessary to communicate with the young person through an interpreter. The interpreter can play a crucial role during the process of engaging with the child or young person, in helping them to settle, and to feel safe in interviews and in decisions about their welfare.

Practitioners and interpreters interviewed noted that interpreters might need additional training and support to undertake this role. Skilled and supported interpreters appeared to be invaluable mediators between practitioners and trafficked children and young people. They needed to be able to contextualise the young person's experiences and build up trust with the young person, which was a prerequisite for disclosure.

To undertake this task, it was noted that the interpreter would need to be able to manage working with the child or young person who may be:

- suffering from harm, with emotional, physical and/or sexual health problems
- fearful or distrustful of an interpreter who may be from the same community, cultural or racial origin as the people who trafficked them
- unable to talk about the information that police or UKBA officials require
- disclosing information that could later be used in court.

The interpreter would also need to be aware that they themselves:

- might need to interpret body language as well as spoken language
- might be approached to work for traffickers
- might be threatened by traffickers and those who work with them
- might be upset and confused by, or unable to believe, some of the details disclosed by the young person
- might disagree with what is being proposed to ensure the best interests of the child or young person.

**6.13** The need for a sensitive interpreter to be available at the point where the child or young person arrives in the UK was noted. This sensitivity was required at many levels, even something that might seem as basic as recording the child's or young person's name.

I mean how can...their names don't actually translate...if the young person couldn't read and write in their own language the way the name would be written would be the name that the interpreter wrote. When we had the first planning meeting we'd ask the child to say how they thought their name was spelt, they'd work it out with their interpreter, then we would agree a spelling. (Int. 6)

It was recognised that while this might be demanding for the child or young person, it also has its own impact on other practitioners involved.

You've got a question, you've got the interpreter translating it, you've got the answer in the foreign language, you've got the interpreter translating it back...it's like watching paint dry. (CS015b)

**6.14** Being sensitive to the dynamics that can occur between the interpreter, the young person and other practitioners involved also meant being aware of cultural issues that might come into play. The child or young person might see the interviewer or interpreter in a particular way, thinking that the interpreter could represent those who have abducted or abused the young person; or the interpreter may, in ways unknown to the practitioners, offend the young person in some way. Alternatively, they may prefer to work with an interpreter who is from their own community, feeling that this would give them a bond with something familiar. The important issue here is that, wherever possible, the child or young person should be consulted and their request taken into consideration.

This would not mean changing practice away from what has been accepted as good practice within the UK, but it would mean being sensitive to issues that the child or young person might bring to an interview. For example, a respondent noted:

...we have to look at it through the victim's cultural values...In some cultures women are regarded as second rate. So while we naturally assume female victim, female officer, female interviewer, in actual fact, some cases they'll think: "I'm getting a second rate service here – they don't believe me. Why aren't I getting a man to deal with me?" (CS015)

## The extended role of the interpreter

**6.15** While interpreting the dialogue between the interviewer or keyworker and the child or young person, the interpreter will need to be prepared for the young person to be upset or distressed. They would need to be able to embrace this behaviour and work with other practitioners to manage it while interpreting and translating. They would need to be mindful that they convey empathy and encouragement during the interview, and recognise the importance of creating an atmosphere of support and belief, rather than one of interrogation and disbelief. Assisting in a process of “bearing witness” to what has happened may assist in the process of recovery and be helpful. For example, during a looked-after child review interview, a social worker noted that:

...she attended this review and contributed to discussions via the interpreter. She cried quite a lot during the review...It was explained that the assessment must be completed as social services have a duty to care...During the review she raised [the issue] that she wanted to leave the placement. (CS028)

The interpreter needed to be able to convey the importance of the review continuing, while being mindful of the impact that it was having on the young person who was in tears. They needed to be able to work within this context where they were part of managing the child’s or young person’s stress and emotional state.

**6.16** It was also noted that damage could be caused if an interpreter was not prepared for the difficult details of a case with which they may have to work. For example, a social worker recounted an experience with a Chinese young woman who had been trafficked into the country and then held in a brothel and raped. Following identification, the worker and an interpreter accompanied the young woman to a doctor as she had a pain in her arm.

...[the doctor] found it was a contraceptive implant...I’m still duty bound to tell her what it is, because it’s her option as to whether she wants it left in or out because it’s hurting her...I said, “Look, this is quite difficult to explain so rather than interpreting exactly what I say to you, if you can tell her that, what we believe is, she’s got a contraceptive implant, and that if we take it out, were she to have sex with anyone she may get pregnant, but that’s a decision down to her. Can you interpret for me?” She said yes. So she interpreted it and then turned back to me and said she had said I’ve told her that what’s in her arm is one of those things that married couples use to stop getting pregnant. (CS011)

The interpreter had explained the situation to the young woman in a way that she felt would be accessible and understandable. The social worker, however, went on to express her concern that between herself, the doctor and the interpreter, the full range of options available to the young woman had not been made clear. Neither did she feel confident that the young woman understood the reason for the implant, its removal or other forms of contraception that might be available to her if needed. She had not wanted to prolong the time in the doctor's surgery and could see that the young woman was both embarrassed and tired by the appointment. She was concerned that the time available with the interpreter was limited and that, in order to raise the topic again, she might have to draw on another interpreter, something she did not want to do as it would mean that the young woman would have to have her circumstances exposed to yet another adult.

### **The interpreter also needs to be aware of the possibility of the child or young person becoming attached to them**

**6.17** If an interpreter is allocated to a particular case, or is called back to interpret for a young person more than once, it is possible that the beginnings of a relationship will become established. This is very likely where the interpreter is working with sensitive material and is being patient and tolerant with regard to the young person's moods and feelings. For example, in one case it was noted that the interpreter was needed throughout the whole process for the young person to pursue charges against an alleged trafficker.

The young person had turned up at a police station after escaping from a nightclub. She said that she had been trafficked into the country, sold more than three times, raped and used for sex. The interpreter noted that:

It took time to warm up to her and it took her time to warm up to me. There's no way she's going to say everything to me within the first minute she sees me because I'm not there to make friendship with her. I'm there in a professional role as an interpreter and I basically convey from one side to another what was being said. So it did take time for us to establish that close sort of, I wouldn't say friendship, but yes she felt...though I'm almost twice her age...perhaps trust as well and get over shock from what she had been in the last three or four months before she met me. But I think we built through that period of time a very strong bond and she felt very comfortable, very comfortable and confident telling me...I think because, being from that country myself, you sort of know how perhaps to approach, slowly and gently and not in a horrible way and she sort of gave in. (CS015c)

The quotation shows the delicate balance that the interpreter needs to maintain between creating a feeling of trust with the young person while retaining a professional relationship based on their role as interpreter. The role that this interpreter played was not only important to the young person, but also to the other practitioners involved in the case. Those who worked on this case and were interviewed for the research all felt that the case might not have moved to prosecution without the relationship between this interpreter and the trafficked young person.

This case presented an added difficulty, as the young person was not allowed to have the same interpreter work with them when inside the court. As noted by one of the practitioners:

The times we had to use an independent interpreter for court and things like that and you got somebody else in, you could see the shutters went up on the young girl and she was like “No, I want my interpreter.” (CS015b)

Although the role of the interpreter is to translate from one language to another, there was evidence that they might also, through the course of their work, gather evidence that could later be used in a case against a perpetrator.

We had a phone call from the barrister in London who’d got a case, which was linked with our name; the only reason he knew was because we had used the same translator who noticed the link. (CS015b)

**6.18** Practitioners suggest that there is a need for specialist interpreters who have been trained in interviewing techniques with damaged and difficult children and young people. If running training for interpreters on this is unrealistic, then as a bare minimum they need to have been familiarised with the extent of trauma and displacement that the child or young person may have experienced. They need to be aware of child protection legislation and policies and procedures, and be mindful of the boundary that they will have to maintain, between being a confidant and a detached interpreter. In addition, the interpreter will need to be aware that the young person for whom they are interpreting might, at some point, be providing intelligence that can be used as evidence in court. They need to be aware of both the bond and the threat that their own nationality might present to the young person, and feel confidence in managing this throughout the process of interpreting. Finally, they need to understand and manage the risks that might be presented to them if identified by traffickers. They may be targeted because they are supporting police-led investigations. These pressures mean that training at

best, or a familiarisation programme at least, needs to be available to interpreters who specialise in work with trafficked children and young people.

Practitioners suggested that specialist and trained interpreters were needed to manage this process. It is necessary for them to be trained in child protection, crisis intervention, child and adolescent mental health and in methods of engaging with traumatised and damaged individuals.

## **Specialist accommodation for trafficked children and young people**

**6.19** As well as encouraging the child or young person to feel safe through the allocation of a keyworker who can help them to contain and manage their emotional needs, the child or young person will also have the immediate need for their physical safety to be secured. This applies to both children and young people trafficked from abroad into the UK and indigenous UK nationals. However, there were additional, specific issues when placing children and young people trafficked from abroad relating to giving them knowledge both of the geographical area within which they might be placed and knowledge of how to access the physical resources available to them.

Many practitioners felt that securing the child or young person in a safe physical environment was of utmost significance. Most importantly, it was felt that the initial placement should be one unknown to traffickers. The following two quotes note the different practitioners' concern that the young people will be targeted by traffickers following being placed in their accommodation.

She is a young girl trafficked to the UK by relatives and she was abused sexually and physically and locked in a brothel for two years...Needs to be in an environment with a lot of emotional support outside the city. She is afraid that she will bump into traffickers here...She needs to be placed in a safe foster placement where she is not having a risk to meet the trafficker. (CS003)

And:

I think we could probably do with some accommodation, which is more, I don't know...safe and kept confidential. If you've got a destination where all the traffickers know...it's easier for them to go and pick them up. (Int. 9)

Another reiterated the need for the young people to be placed in a safe place, while recognising the constraints they have on their own resources.

Placed away from the usual children's home so that traffickers couldn't find them...We have limited places to put young people and you can't lock people up.  
(Int. 2)

Others noted that the child or young person is unlikely to settle or to engage with "normal" activities if they do not feel safe and protected.

She needs to stay in a safe, secure and emotionally warm environment to be able to grow and develop and gain self-care skills. (CS003)

And:

...it is not only that she is well or that she is healthy emotionally, but that she is safe. This is the first baseline to achieve. (CS027)

**6.20** Some practitioners were mindful that, if placed together, trafficked children and young people could become a target for those who want to re-traffic young people. It was noted that young people could be placed at further risk if they were located in accommodation that was commonly used for a number of trafficked or other vulnerable children and young people:

They would need very high levels of security; they wouldn't be mixing trafficked with other vulnerable young people. The major risk factor is that if you simply lump one group of very vulnerable young people with another it makes a situation worse.  
(Int. 17)

In some situations it was felt that the young person needed to be placed out of borough to secure their safety.

...often when children are given safe accommodation in other areas, which means taking them away from where the abuse is happening, [this] has helped...far enough away where it is not very easy for the child to come out and just take a train back...It's the control that these men have on them...Care home staff, they say "Oh, we are helpless,...We see these men outside the care homes, waiting in their cars and picking up young girls and we are still unable to do anything." (Int. 24)

And:

I can think of one young woman who couldn't stay in [name of area]...Because her abductors were still roaming around [there]...and she was terrified and obviously, in that case, we moved her out of the borough. (Int. 10)

**6.21** Not only could the traffickers target a location known for emergency placement of displaced children and young people, but the young people themselves could have an adverse influence on each other.

There are no locks or bars, so the child can come and go as they wish and it's very easy for people to contact them underground...There are several kids there all from one or another country, they would talk to each other and even if the kid hadn't been trafficked in the first place, one kid might put them in touch with traffickers. I think it is difficult as a local authority to have "safe homes" because there are so many ways of contacting people. (CS027)

The point made throughout a number of the interviews was that when we think about accommodation for children and young people who had been trafficked (whether it be trafficked from abroad into the country or the trafficking of UK nationals), we need to be able to make a conceptual shift.

**6.22** This conceptual shift needs to move us away from thinking that the existing local authority accommodation for looked-after children or young people will suffice. Instead, a specialist and supported provision is needed: one that employs trained carers who are supported by a multidisciplinary team, including child protection services, health and police.

I think that also in the local authority the blanket view is "OK, well this child is looked after by us now so they're going to be safe." And that's not necessarily the view and you know, with organised crime like this, that the child can be looked after, almost housed by foster carers, but when that child's leaving the house...what does that mean for the young person? I think they can still be at a huge amount of risk even if they are looked after. (Int. 28)

**6.23** The dedicated, specialist provision needs to be able to work with the range of different emotional and physical concerns presented by the children and young people. This includes:

- managing the risk of intimidation of children and young people and of care home staff;
- helping to prevent the abduction of the young people;
- helping to prevent the child or young person from going missing;
- working with other related practitioners, including police who might be engaged, or about to engage in an operation against the traffickers;
- helping the child or young person
  - to resettle, and to engage with mainstream universal services; particularly education and health;
  - to understand their legal and immigration rights;
  - to understand their emotional, physical and sexual health needs;
  - to incorporate the experience of specialist provision within their everyday lives (for example, therapeutic support, sexual and physical health checks, attendance at special education such as courses to learn English);
  - to manage their own emotional development as disclosure of previous abuse takes place;
  - to disclose, where possible, details that would help to secure evidence against those who trafficked them.

**6.24** As the needs of the child or young person could be diverse, it was noted that a full risk assessment needed to be carried out both on the young person's needs and potential behaviour, and on the security of the placement being allocated.

There would be issues around security, the safety of addresses being disclosed and so on...the lack of sufficient safeguards and checks being carried out prior to them being placed there... (Int. 17)

Although condemned as bad practice, it is not unknown for trafficked children and young people to be placed in bed and breakfast accommodation, in partially supervised residential accommodation or with unsupported and untrained foster carers. Practitioners noted the harm that such accommodation arrangements can cause, with the placement adding to the risks faced by the young person. Such arrangements should be avoided. They are inappropriate and potentially abusive to the child. They may be part of the reason that so many trafficked children and young people (over half in most studies) go missing.

**6.25** Existing research has shown that many children and young people may go missing before an assessment has taken place, as they have failed to be identified on arrival as

potentially trafficked (ECPAT UK 2007, CEOP 2007). More recent work undertaken by co-ordinated teamwork between UKBA, police and children's services has begun to improve the process of identification in specific areas (see chapter 2). However, many do still go missing following identification, assessment and placement in accommodation. It is essential that the place and type of accommodation are made safe for the children and young people, and do not reinforce their feeling of neglect or abuse. The sites where the research took place noted that good practice is based upon an understanding of the specific accommodation needs of trafficked children and young people.

**6.26** A conceptual shift needs to take place. It needs to be recognised that generic foster care provision or other unsupported alternative accommodation can be dangerous for the child or young person. The specific needs presented by the trafficked child or young person require specialist, trained and supported accommodation. The process through which they settle into the accommodation and are encouraged to remain needs to be facilitated by a designated keyworker from children's services, who not only supports the child but also helps other related professionals to understand some of the complexities involved when understanding and managing a trafficking case.

**Relationship-based thinking: specialist, supported accommodation relies upon provision of a carer with whom the child or young person can build a relationship**

**6.27** The quotation below notes the high risk of the child or young person going missing and the important part that a relationship with a keyworker can play in preventing this from happening. It recognises that different children and young people might have fears that they bring to a placement, such as a fear of adults, or, more specifically, a fear of men. It also notes that, even after being successfully settled into a placement, the child or young person may have a number of follow-up interviews and appointments to manage. An important support for them in managing these appointments is the stability of a nurturing environment.

They've presented at the Home Office and said they've been trafficked by an agent to come into the country and...[we've] put them in a foster placement, and the following morning they've gone and left the placement...In the initial weeks there might be a lot of appointments to do, with the foster carer and the social worker communicating quite closely with the young person about what would be expected and how we can assist them in that way...When we've had trafficked girls, sometimes they say they

just want a female carer, they don't want any men in the house...It's not just about offering them somewhere to stay, it's got to be really nurturing...[so we] look at working closely with the foster carers or the agencies around...so it's quite demanding. (Int. 12)

We note above the need for a trained keyworker to be allocated to the young person at the point of entry into the UK. This role is essential in preventing the young person from going missing within the immediate period following arrival, and in helping to build a feeling of trust and safety.

**6.28** Once safe accommodation has been located, this keyworker then needs to be able to hand over the child or young person to a permanent keyworker from within children's services, following the advice outlined in both the Children Act 2008 and Lord Laming's report (2009). Together these note the importance of the relationship between the client and the practitioner, and the need for reflective practice where supervision encourages an ongoing review of the changing relationship between client and practitioner, and where the changing circumstances of the case are assessed regularly. Importantly, Lord Laming's report (2009) notes the need for experienced social work staff to take responsibility for the most difficult cases, either through they themselves taking on the role of keyworker, or through them overseeing the work of an allocated keyworker in their own role as a social work consultant. Findings from practitioners endorse the importance of a keyworker relationship between a trafficked child or young person and an allocated, specially trained child protection, child care professional.

There are two points here:

- the allocated foster carer or residential worker needs to be trained to understand and manage the different presenting concerns raised by the child or young person;
- the carer or residential worker cannot be left to manage the young person on their own. They, and the young person, need access to one trained child protection keyworker, who holds responsibility for overseeing all aspects of the work with the young person.

## **The carer or residential worker needs to be within the premises around the clock to provide the safe home**

**6.29** Evidence suggested that the young person was less likely to go missing following being placed in a foster or alternative care home if the carer were present full time. Indeed, this is part of the conceptual shift that needs to take place as outlined in section 6.7. The young people do, in the main, need 24-hour support from specialist, trained carers.

A practitioner describes the accommodation used for young people who are in need of emergency accommodation.

The majority of young people, when they first arrive, here are taken to a housing project...consists of a number of flats...specifically let to our team...We have staff present at that project... (Int. 22)

**6.30** This practitioner notes concern that the young person might go missing if the carers are not present throughout the day and night. While some young people might be abducted, others are intent on “escape”, either to return to their traffickers to whom they owe money, or because they are following instructions. Some children or young people felt that running away gave them some control over a situation that they did not understand. They would often take extreme measures to run from accommodation that they were given.

What they would do was jump out of the window, so now we've put them on the first floor, just to prevent that very thing – jumping out of the window and legging it in the early hours of the morning...If they're coming in on an 8 o'clock flight and they're being placed kind of 10 o'clock, 11 o'clock at night, if you can stop them going at 3 in the morning out of their window, by getting a member of staff in there the next day, beginning to start making a relationship with them, then maybe they won't go. But some of them still go after 24 hours you know, the next opportunity...the first opportunity that they get of having the front door and they're out... (Int. 29)

The important part of the quotation above is the acknowledgement that “getting a member of staff in there the next day, beginning to start making a relationship with them” might mean that the young person could be prevented from running. Through the support of a trained, designated carer, it is possible to try to establish a relationship and to bond, with the child or young person in some way.

...then, when she went to the specialist foster carer, she was one to one with her, that was her sole role, she didn't have any other jobs and she was just destined to look after the young girl until she was enrolled in the local college. (CS015)

**6.31** Two goals can be achieved through engaging with a young person and building a trusting relationship. First, the young person can form a safe attachment that will help them to settle. Second, they can be supported to provide intelligence that can be used as evidence against those who have trafficked them. Again, a dedicated foster carer who had time to commit to one young person was essential:

We have had success with prosecution, that's the only case that we think is successful, was a foster home where the child was given therapeutic care. So that foster parents only take one child at each time and they offer therapeutic care. That did help the child, see through what was happening...and she went through the criminal justice process and those people were committed. She was placed quite far away from her family home. (Int. 24)

**6.32** The accommodation provided to the child or young person, the place of safety, relies upon them having a safe relationship with a trained and responsible adult carer; a relationship that the child or young person can trust and rely upon. Ideally this would be a foster carer, as residential workers inevitably have to follow shifts, which disrupt the ongoing provision of care. The carer needs to be:

- trained to understand the complex issues relating to a trafficked child or young person;
- given access to support from a guardian allocated to work with the young person, access to police and to youth work provisions, and to health and education services;
- given time to commit to developing a trusting relationship to withstand the inevitable disruptions that will occur as the child or young person settles.

This carer cannot support the child or young person on their own. They need ongoing access to a designated child protection “keyworker” who is managing all other aspects of the case. If not a consultant social worker (as specified in Lord Laming’s report, 2009), this keyworker should be supervised by a consultant social worker. They need to report regularly to the LSCB (or its trafficking subcommittee), where designated representatives from police, education and health participate in active provision of services to the child or young person concerned.

## **The use of a secure environment: the problems raised by the use of secure provision**

**6.33** Before moving to address the role of the “keyworker” for the young person, it is important to consider the findings from practitioners who argued for the provision of secure accommodation in extreme circumstances for some of the children and young people.

Many practitioners were concerned that, even if allocated the opportunity to build a secure relationship with a trained carer and keyworker, the much damaged children and young people might continue to run from care or home and place themselves and others in extremely dangerous situations. In these cases, albeit with an edge of desperation, practitioners turned to discussing the use of secure accommodation.

**6.34** There was an overriding acceptance that placing the child or young person into secure accommodation was counterproductive. Practitioners were aware that the young person often felt that they were being punished despite the fact that they “hadn’t done anything” as, after all, they were the victims rather than the perpetrators of abuse. Also, they recognised that removing the child or young person failed to address the underlying problem of the existence of the perpetrator. Despite these reservations, there was discussion of the need to hold some of the young people, recognising that they are in severe danger when running from care.

I’ve sat there for two hours with a young person saying “These are the risks, please don’t abscond” and then next day they’ve absconded... (Int. 13)

And:

Young person went missing from residential open placement – he was kidnapped. So he had to go to a different safe accommodation. (CS002)

Practitioners noted that secure accommodation provided temporary relief, as they could feel, at least for a while, that the child or young person was behind closed walls, not missing and being “held”.

**6.35** In therapeutic terms, it is recognised that a secure relationship with a trusting adult can provide a context where the child can feel contained, that is they feel safe and secure enough in the relationship to be able to release some of their fears, worries and show their distress. If the young person has experienced a sequence of broken attachments and has learnt to be very

distrustful of adults who first offer, and then abuse, a trusting relationship, they will be wary of allowing a containing relationship with a new carer to develop.

Some practitioners noted that trafficked children and young people might have had a series of broken attachments, and might find it very difficult to stay in one place long enough to develop an attachment with a new carer. In these situations, and where the child or young person was running away, self-harming and experiencing continued abuse, some practitioners looked to the use of secure accommodation. Indeed, talking of an indigenous UK national trafficked for sexual exploitation, one practitioner noted that if the child was contained in secure accommodation, they did then sometimes feel safer and begin to disclose details of their abuse.

...they may have been in care...although it's supposed to be a place of safety, it isn't, because they can still walk out of that residential or foster care placement... Sometimes we've used out-of-city placements, so away from perpetrators... Sometimes that's worked...for others it doesn't work because they're actually trying to get back...We've also used secure accommodation...sometimes that has made a difference in a positive way...gives them the breathing space where they're able to disclose...which they haven't before because they've not felt safe. (Int. 18)

While another noted that:

Young person does not attend meetings with professionals and only engages when placed in secure accommodation. (CS022)

**6.36** Again talking about an indigenous UK national who had a history of repeatedly going missing, and how she had been abducted and raped by those who were sexually exploiting her, this practitioner noted that the young woman began to talk about what was happening because she was in a place where she knew her abusers could not contact her:

When she was in the secure unit, that was when she started to make those disclosures...she started to feel safer...She knew that the men couldn't get in there and that's when she started to talk about it...While she was in secure [they] also did all sorts of psychological assessments...so it was actually positive...It's about protecting her, as there was nothing else that can be done with safeguarding in mind. (C018)

Another practitioner spoke of a different case of internal trafficking:

She actually did well after she came out of secure. She made all those disclosures but what happened was she couldn't make the formal complaint so, although she made those disclosures about the drugs and the rape and the violence...it was frustrating because it was such a responsibility to put on a young person who is still only 13 all of that trauma to actually get something done about the men...It would be better if it could be a bit different so we could rely on other people's statements.  
(CS019)

**6.37** Although this practitioner felt that the young person “did well” after she came from secure accommodation, practitioners noted concern that this provided little other than a temporary respite. The longer-term problems were rarely addressed through the experience of secure accommodation:

The need that she did have was stability, but even when she was in secure people would still visit her and she would come out and be with those people she knew.  
(CS019)

Alongside this, secure accommodation was not deemed to be the right environment for children and young people, who experienced it as penalising. It appeared to do little to equip them with methods of establishing a “normal” life integrating with universal services:

Then she comes out of secure and everything goes wrong again...The young person was in a lot of secure placements because basically they didn't know what else to do because the risks...She expressed that she was being punished by being in secure [accommodation] and she talked about her past experience and has been prostituting herself since the age of 12. She continues to feel that she has the right to engage in this activity...

There needs to be some places of safety, we've been known to put looked-after children in secure units just to keep them safe, which isn't the right place for them.  
(CS020)

**6.38** There needs to be a thorough review of the reasons that practitioners refer trafficked children and young people to secure accommodation. If the young person has diagnosed mental health and emotional and behavioural difficulties that mean a therapeutic community environment is the only resource that can keep the young person safe, there may be arguments

for assessing the applicability of some therapeutic communities for some of the very damaged children and young people (see for example, the work of Childhood First at [www.childhoodfirst.co.uk](http://www.childhoodfirst.co.uk)). However, it is inappropriate for children and young people to be referred to secure accommodation simply because there is no alternative accommodation provision. Specialist foster care, or, indeed, specialist residential care, can work effectively with the young people if there is intensive support from community-based mental health services, from child protection keyworker arrangements and from police cover. Although resource-intensive, this is invariably more cost effective than using secure accommodation and provides a more conducive home environment for the child or young person concerned.

### **The keyworker approach: keeping the young person in mind**

**6.39** Practitioners felt that one keyworker should be allocated to the child or young person to oversee the young person's settlement into the care home, helping them to negotiate entry to education or healthcare services, consider their legal and immigration status and support them through any work with the police or through court if a prosecution is taking place.

...and I suppose when you look at resources, the thing that you need is somebody that's pulling all that together, that's saying "This is what I'm doing, can you do this, can you do that?" (Int. 20)

**6.40** The role of the keyworker role is complex. It covers working with other professions to identify and respond to a range of needs presented by the young person. These include mental, sexual and physical health needs, integration into education, and support during court cases with which they may be involved. In the main, it was noted that this was about building a relationship of trust with the young person. As noted above, it is through the relationship of trust that a young person can begin to settle into using services and address any problems they have. It is through such a relationship that they might begin to disclose intelligence that can be used as evidence in a prosecution.

...from what we have learnt it's constantly having someone, like a keyworker, building that trusting relationship with the child to take them through, not just dismantling all that these men are doing, in terms of the so-called brainwashing, and then making them realise what exactly [a] positive relationship means to building that confidence in them to be able to stand up to these men and co-operate with the police and go through with the prosecution. (Int. 24)

A local authority child protection worker mentioned a 16-year-old woman who had been brought into the country when she was 10 years old. Following a number of private foster care breakdowns, she had been placed with a local authority specialist foster carer, with whom she developed a trusting relationship. She started to disclose information about the way that she had been trafficked within the country. However, the foster carer found it difficult to manage the young woman's eating disorder, which escalated as the police became involved in the case.

...when police try and contact her in the first place and make these video recordings and take the statements...this child was exhibiting suicidal tendencies, she had eating disorder – anorexia and all that. When she was moved into a psychiatric institution, all they were trying to treat was how they could make her eat... (Int. 21)

**6.41** With a keyworker allocated to oversee the work with this case, their task would be to maintain the important connection between the young woman and the police as she disclosed intelligence, while supporting the foster carer who was managing the young woman's hospital appointments and admissions. At the same time, the young person's school needed to be aware of the developing stages in the young woman's health and emotional development. If, as required by the Children Act 2008, the school has designated a staff member to maintain contact with the child looked after by the local authority, the keyworker has an immediate point of contact within the school to maintain accurate and ongoing information sharing.

The keyworker would, therefore, play an important role in both supporting the young person's carer, be they a foster or residential carer, and in overseeing the management of the young person's overall development through and with other services.

**6.42** Two more examples of different young women who had been trafficked into the country for domestic servitude develop this argument.

The first young woman had been placed with a local authority foster carer after being removed from a situation of domestic servitude. She had been repeatedly raped by a man in the household where she was working. The allocated keyworker notes that she needed to support not only the young woman, but also the foster carer with whom the young woman was placed.

We had one girl conceal a pregnancy for a good while, and I was saying we really ought to get her to a doctor just to get her checked over, you know a medical

assessment. But she was just very, very scared. And the foster carer was having terrible trouble getting her to undress for the shower and things like that, just because she was so scared... (Int. 25)

The second young person had recently been removed from domestic servitude and was working with her foster carer and keyworker to take a case out against the abusers. The keyworker was faced with the task of trying to explain to the foster carer why the young woman had not run away from the family who abused her:

...yes, she had a key to the house, but I think that...if you were to allow your daughter to come and go freely, that would be a child who has a social network, because she goes to school and maybe has after-school clubs etc. etc. A domestic, to give them the key to the door...you know, she had no social networks, she had no friends other than the house owner...And defence barristers will always say "Well, you know, why didn't you run away?" But if you put yourself in that child's position... (CS011)

The keyworker noted that she was not only explaining why the young woman had not run away before, but also why, living in a safe home with a carer who was offering support, she was now agoraphobic. The young woman was afraid to leave her room and wanted to stay in all of the time. The carer was working sensitively with this, but needed the support of the young person's keyworker to understand and manage the behaviour over the long term.

**6.43** A designated, trained and supported child care keyworker should be allocated to the trafficked young person to help them to understand and manage the transitions through which they move. The child or young person needs the keyworker to help them to negotiate integration into health and education services and to support the carers who are providing their accommodation. In essence, they are needed to help the young person and the carer with whom they live to gain some sort of normality.

So I think they need to feel safe and they need to know that their health needs are taken care of, and you know, one of the old-fashioned child protection things...when you did child protection medicals you'd reassure the child that they weren't horribly damaged or diseased. (Int. 10)

**The keyworker needs to be trained to maintain an “open case” approach, that is keeping the case open, even if the young person misses appointments and runs away**

**6.44** The keyworker, and the child protection team within which they sit, play an important role in keeping the young person in mind throughout periods of them going missing. This is crucial as there is a worry that some trafficked children and young people who go missing are forgotten and that their case slips off the list. On a more basic level, it is important to report the fact that the child or young person is missing and to make regular attempts to trace them and support their return.

In line with other work carried out with children and young people who go missing, practitioners in this research suggest that the behaviours of going missing and running away are not informed, all-knowing rebellious acts, but can be the result of coercion and entanglement in an abusive relationship or the result of a confused state of mind.

**6.45** A crucial role of the keyworker was to report the missing event, and to place renewed effort in tracing the young person and supporting their return. Holding the young person in mind in this way valued them and supported their effort to invest trust in a caring relationship. If, for example, one were to imagine the pain experienced by a parent whose child goes missing for an afternoon or evening, with no explanation of where they are or what they are doing, one can imagine the anxiety held by workers who are managing perhaps one or more cases of children or young people going missing for days, weeks or sometimes longer. The genuine concern for the child is coupled with a fear that their own practice could have contributed in some way to the going missing, and that an enquiry could focus on shortfalls of the service. Combined, these factors create an anxiety that can be hard for practitioners to manage. Indeed, as noted in this chapter, it can act as a deterrent to taking on a case. This is a well-rehearsed argument in much of the debate about managing casework of children who go missing, but is noted here as the circumstances for trafficked children and young people provide an added dimension. Those who have been trafficked into the country from abroad will be unfamiliar with the geography, language and culture of the environment within which they are missing. They may have been abducted and may be being abused and exploited while missing.

**6.46** The child or young person who runs away and who goes missing will be reassured to know that there is someone left behind who is concerned, and who will be there for them if

and when they return. Even if the young person is not able to make use of the relationship with a guardian, the fact that they know someone is there is important. That is, it is therapeutic for the young person to feel that there is someone waiting for them, holding them in mind.

It was recognised that if young people do go missing, they might be away for some time, but that they may well return. This young woman was a UK national trafficked in the UK for sexual exploitation:

With family at first then she was placed in local authority foster care, which was in same location as the perpetrators and so she continued to go missing. She went from bad to worse. She was trafficked around towns...She was picked up along with another girl and she made an allegation of multiple rape...placed in therapeutic care and after a week of that, that's when these men abducted her...She was then placed elsewhere...there were a couple of placements and she was then returned to the family. (CS017)

And:

...we've had a lad recently that's run from there and now come back. (Int. 4)

**6.47** A practitioner talked of the importance of the knowledge that the safe place and a safe relationship exists, even if the young person is unable to use it at the time. She noted how many young people do return after going missing, sometimes even after a year.

They have come back...They feel safe there...We have had young people...who have gone missing quite close to arrival, so before we've had very much information on them at all, and have come back down the line, like several months later, some even a year or so later. There's not a lot of those, there have been a handful of them but enough... (Int. 13)

In another example of this happening, the young person returned bringing another vulnerable young person with her:

She was placed in emergency accommodation here but went missing before any assessment could be undertaken...and returned with another Chinese young female who was not known to us... (CS004)

This led to recognising that practical support, such as the provision of leaflets, addresses or even mobile phones with contact telephone numbers on them helped the young person to feel that they were kept in mind.

...and they have fed back that having a place to come back to, knowing where that is, is what has allowed them to do that. Which again is some of our thought process behind the leaflet...Some of the people who have returned and said knowing that we could come back here is what allowed us to do that...knowing we could have a place to go. (Int. 13)

**6.48** In some situations, contact could be maintained through telephone conversations:

For the first six weeks that the young person went missing, a police officer from the sexual exploitation unit had weekly telephone contact with the young person who outlined that she was safe at that time. The police officer arranged to meet with the young person on several occasions but the young person failed to show, young person's phone was turned off and contact could not be made. (CS030)

## Conclusion

**6.49** This chapter has explored the use of specialist and dedicated services that need to be targeted towards trafficked children and young people. This does not imply that the trafficked child is inherently different from other children and young people. As argued in chapter 5, universal mainstream services have a responsibility to make their services accessible to all children and young people. However, this chapter notes that some of the experiences of the trafficked child or young person can precipitate needs and behaviours that require specialist intervention. To summarise, this includes the need for interpreters who have been trained to understand child protection issues presented in trafficking cases and in methods of engaging with difficult and damaged children and young people. It means providing specialist, trained and supported carers, who, through 24-hour support from police and child care agencies, provide safe accommodation for the young person, both at the point of arrival into the country and through longer-term provision that enables them to settle and engage with mainstream activities, such as attending school, youth and health services. It was noted that it was important for children and young people who had been trafficked from abroad to be given some basic information about the location of their home and how to contact the carer or guardian. The chapter argues that the use of secure accommodation is inappropriate for these young people, but that in extreme circumstances, therapeutic community-based residential

accommodation, again supported through child care agencies and the police, may be applicable.

Finally, and most importantly, the chapter argues that the young person needs a trusted, secure and ongoing relationship with a trained, specialist keyworker. While the use of a legal guardian is to be encouraged for supporting the child or young person, each agency cannot use this as a reason for overlooking the need to train and support their own staff to be able to engage and work with the trafficked child or young person. Practitioners note that it is through a secure and ongoing relationship with a trained and supported keyworker that the young person will begin to discuss and try to reconcile their experiences with their current situation. Each keyworker needs to be trained in how to manage and support a child or young person who goes missing. It was also noted that this needs to incorporate providing support for the carer left behind, with the intention of helping them to reintegrate the child on return. If we are to develop a support service for trafficked children and young people that is meaningful and productive, we have to place the care and support for the worker concerned in the centre of planning the provision.

## Recommendations drawn from the findings of the research

1. Interventions with trafficked children and young people should be based around the best interests of the child or young person, and should not be framed within concerns about immigration or asylum status.
2. Age assessments should be carried out independently in regional assessment centres supported by an independent age-assessment panel in each region. This independent panel of professionals should have experience and qualifications in child development and safeguarding children, as well as a thorough knowledge of contexts in countries of origin, global forms of child abuse and UK safeguarding procedures. The panel also needs to comprise professionals who do not ultimately assume financial responsibility for the young person or have other conflicts of interest. The best interests of the child or young person should be the core value of these panels. Age assessments should follow recommendations for independent, regional, multi-agency, age-assessment centres as outlined in key reform 4 of the UK Border Agency's paper *Better outcomes: the way forward. Improving the care of unaccompanied asylum seeking children* (UK Border and Immigration Agency, 2008) and by the Immigration Law Practitioners' Association's research report *When is a child not a child? Asylum, age disputes and the process of age assessment* (ILPA, 2007).
3. Young people should be given the benefit of the doubt during the age-assessment process in accordance with Article 10 of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (ratified by the UK in 2007 and enforced in 2008). The default position should be that applicants for asylum whose age is uncertain are potentially children and procedures should be in place to reflect this.
4. Immediately on arrival, all children and young people should be provided with language-appropriate information on what trafficking is and where they can seek help in emergencies, including being abducted or going missing.
5. Interpreters should be trained so that they are aware of safeguarding considerations, the forms of manipulation, coercion and violence that can be used by traffickers, and the

potential health needs of trafficked children and young people. Rather than assuming that someone from the same or similar culture will best understand the child or young person, interpreters should be selected on their suitability to the particular case. Wherever possible, the same interpreter should be used throughout the duration of a case.

6. Independent legal guardians should be appointed to support children through the process of safeguarding and access to services.
7. At the point of entry into the UK, a social work keyworker, trained in safeguarding children and young people, should be allocated to each child or young person. An independent guardian should also be employed (see recommendation 6), but this should not negate the need for the LSCB to allocate a social work keyworker to oversee the management of the child's case from the outset.
8. LSCBs should support and train foster carers to accept emergency and ongoing placements of children and young people at their point of arrival in the UK or on their return from going missing. Some LSCBs may also need to support residential care providers for this purpose. These residential care providers would need to provide staff cover 24 hours a day with specially trained and supervised carers adopting a keyworker approach. The foster carers or residential workers should be given a direct point of contact with the local police, and should have regular and ongoing support from the allocated social work keyworker accountable to the LSCB.
9. Trafficked children and young people should not be accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation. They should be placed in settings where 24-hour supervision is available from trained, supported and supervised carers (see recommendation 8).
10. A keyworker approach should be adopted for safeguarding trafficked children and young people. This should be developed in consideration of the recommendations of Lord Laming's report *The protection of children in England: a progress report* (TSO, 2009) for reflective practice and for practice with complex cases to be undertaken (or closely supervised) by a social work consultant within safeguarding teams. The keyworker approach notes that disclosure is more likely to take place once the child or young person has developed a trusting and supportive relationship with a keyworker.
11. Practitioners in all children's welfare and justice agencies should be trained to identify indicators of trafficking and know how their agency can respond. Interpreters who are

employed to work with trafficked children and young people should also receive this training, which should cover:

- the principles within the Palermo protocol on trafficking persons
- children's rights
- indicators of trafficking
- discrepancies in casework between smuggling and trafficking cases
- an understanding of the wide range of different forms of abuse a trafficked child may experience, in their country of origin and/or with their traffickers
- awareness of the different control mechanisms used by traffickers to facilitate the exploitation of the child or young person
- knowledge of the need for and whereabouts of information on the civil, political, social and economic contexts within countries of origin
- awareness of the different understandings within and between cultures about family structures and the roles that different family members may play in childcare
- awareness of the barriers faced by children and young people trafficked from abroad and the issues facing UK nationals trafficked within the UK
- an understanding of the mechanisms traffickers may use to abuse and exploit children
- methods of gathering and sharing intelligence
- principles behind child-centred, child protection interventions
- potential health and educational needs of trafficked children and young people
- cultural sensitivity and awareness of diversity
- use of national guidance documents and local protocols
- the importance of multi-agency work through LSCBs
- keyworker or relationship-based approaches to casework with trafficked children and young people.

**12.** Each LSCB needs to undertake a scoping exercise in their locality to establish the scale of trafficking (both of children and young people from abroad and of children and young people who are UK citizens). Each LSCB should assess its provision to meet the needs identified in the scoping exercise and to comply with the DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked* (2008). Each LSCB should establish a subcommittee or subgroup to focus on safeguarding trafficked children and young people.

This subcommittee or subgroup should be responsible for ensuring that the LSCB is acting in compliance with the DCSF guidance and that local agencies (including police, health, education and youth offending teams) have designated keyworkers available to

oversee work with trafficked children and young people within their work setting.

The LSCB is essential when maintaining a focus on keeping the child or young person safe. One practice model advocated for keeping the young person in mind was that established by many local authorities for safeguarding sexually exploited children and young people, which requires three components:

- a) A multi-agency subgroup of the LSCB adheres to a protocol that informs staff in the borough of procedures they should follow and agencies to which they should refer in potential and confirmed cases of trafficking.
- b) Each service – child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), crown prosecution service (CPS), youth offending team (YOT) or education, drug and alcohol, police, sexual health or youth work service – designates a practitioner to attend the LSCB subgroup meetings. Depending upon the size and role of each of these separate services, they may need to develop their own protocol (in line with the LSCB’s protocol) to guide their practitioners’ responses.
- c) A dedicated, specialist and trained youth work service acts as a resource for ongoing contact work with the children and young people. Ideally, this should include staff employed to provide outreach and therapeutic services for trafficked children and young people.

**13.** Following from recommendation 12, if local agencies are developing their own protocol as specified in (b) above, this should specify:

- how and where training for all employees can be found and funded to inform their work with trafficked children and young people;
- the procedures the agency has in place to help employees identify trafficked children and young people and to guide good practice once identified;
- the designated worker(s) employed within the agency, who will offer ongoing advice to practitioners and be available to develop a keyworker relationship with the young person; and
- how and when information that they may gather about cases of potential or actual trafficking of children and young people is shared with other agencies in the local area and with the LSCB – this needs to meet requirements of the DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked* (2008) and the new National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

- 14.** Health service providers within each local authority should take part in the local scoping exercise as outlined in recommendation 12. They should assess through this exercise whether their sexual and mental health services are available and accessible to children and young people who may have been trafficked. Each local child and mental health service should ensure that they are aware of the therapeutic needs of trafficked children and young people and consider the development of an outreach service that is targeted to the most damaged and socially excluded children and young people in their area. Reference to the body of work on therapeutic outreach services by Pearce (2009)<sup>1</sup> and the forthcoming DCSF guidance on safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation<sup>2</sup> would be helpful when developing this area of work.
- 15.** A safe and effective mechanism for storing and sharing of information on cases of trafficked children and young people within a local authority is essential. This is necessary because:
- data is needed to track the reasons for children and young people being trafficked and of the country of origin and the outcomes for the child;
  - the LSCB has the responsibility for referring cases of trafficked young people through the new NRM to the designated authorities (the UK Border Agency and the UK Human Trafficking Centre);
  - evidence of good practice needs to be available for new staff who might be involved in casework with a child or young person; and
  - information on children and young people who have gone missing needs to be cross-referenced with information on children and young people who may have been trafficked.
- 16.** Use of the NRM should be reviewed to ensure that different forms of trafficking are being taken into account and that practitioners are identifying cases of trafficking at the different stages during the trafficking process.
- 17.** Government offices should have regional-based subgroups focusing on the trafficking of children and young people. This would encourage sharing of good practice and help to address issues across different boroughs or countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Pearce, J. (2009) *Young people and sexual exploitation: it isn't hidden, you just aren't looking*. (London: Routledge)

<sup>2</sup> DCSF *Safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation* (forthcoming)

- 18.** Youth offending team (YOT) workers need to establish an active way of identifying and assessing trafficking. This should be used to enhance the understanding of the relationship between the informal economy and the trafficking of children and young people. A review of cases held by YOT workers where there might be suspicion that the child or young person had been trafficked should be undertaken by each YOT team. A national conference should be designed by the Youth Justice Board to highlight the relationship between youth crime and experiences of being trafficked.
- 19.** In line with recommendations made in the Children and Young Persons Act 2008, each school or college should designate a worker for all looked-after children. This worker should also be given responsibility for supporting trafficked children and young people, including overseeing the process of settling them into their peer group, and helping them to engage with their coursework and manage their extracurricular activities, such as learning English. The worker should also ensure that school staff are aware of the indicators of trafficking and the procedures to follow if a case is identified.
- 20.** Wherever possible, English classes for trafficked children and young people, and for separated children, need to be run within the school premises, with the young person integrating with their year and peer groups as much as possible. This research, supported by other studies, shows that the more isolated the trafficked child or young person is from mainstream services, the more vulnerable they are to being re-trafficked.
- 21.** The local education authority should ensure that it has representation on the LSCB. It needs to ensure that all education staff – including teaching staff, teaching support staff and education welfare officers or education social workers – are trained to identify indicators of trafficking and to follow procedures if a case is identified.
- 22.** Each LSCB should undertake a review of the range and scope of their child protection procedures, assessing whether they reach and meet the needs of young people aged 16 to 18 who may have been trafficked. This should also include an assessment of the education and training facilities of young people in this age group, who may not have received a traditional education through usual formal routes and who may have emotional and mental health needs.

- 23.** If a young person is approaching 18 years of age and there is some concern that they may have been trafficked, they should be taken out of the asylum procedure to allow adequate time for disclosure of their circumstances.
- 24.** This and other research has noted the need for practice centred on the child or young person. It has revealed a gap in knowledge of children and young people's own accounts of their experiences of being trafficked and of their resulting needs. Future research should be carried out with trafficked children and young people themselves to explore these questions. It should follow strict ethical guidelines in partnership with a service provider who can facilitate the protection and wellbeing of the child or young person.

## Appendix 1 Possible Indicators that a child may have been trafficked

The following indicators are taken from the DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked* (DCSF, 2008) ([www.dcsf.gov.uk](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk)): pages 24-26

### At port of entry:

The child:

- Has entered the country illegally;
- Has no passport or other means of identification;
- Has false documentation;
- Possesses money and goods not accounted for;
- Is malnourished;
- Is unable to confirm the name and address of the person meeting them on arrival;
- Has had their journey or visa arranged by someone other than themselves or their family;
- Is accompanied by an adult who insists on remaining with the child at all times;
- Is withdrawn and refuses to talk or appears afraid to talk to a person in authority;
- Has a prepared story very similar to those that other children have given;
- Exhibits self-assurance, maturity and self-confidence not expected to be seen in a child of such age;
- Does not appear to have money but does have a mobile phone; and/or
- Is unable, or reluctant to give details of accommodation or other personal details.

The sponsor:

- Has previously made multiple visa applications for other children and/or has acted as the guarantor for other children's visa applications; and/or
- Is known to have acted as the guarantor on the visa applications for other visitors who have not returned to their countries or origin on the expiry of those visas.

### While resident in the UK:

The child:

- Does not appear to have money but does have a mobile phone;

- Receives unexplained/unidentified phone calls whilst in placement/temporary accommodation;
- Possesses money and goods not accounted for;
- Exhibits self assurance, maturity and self-confidence not expected to be seen in a child of such age;
- Has a prepared story very similar to those that other children have given;
- Shows signs of physical or sexual abuse, and/or has contracted a sexually transmitted infection or has an unwanted pregnancy;
- Has a history with missing links and unexplained moves;
- Has gone missing from local authority care;
- Is required to earn a minimum amount of money every day;
- Works in various locations;
- Has limited freedom of movement;
- Appears to be missing for periods;
- Is known to beg for money;
- Performs excessive housework chores and rarely leaves the residence;
- Is malnourished;
- Is being cared for by adult/s who are not their parents and the quality of the relationship between the child and their adult carers is not good;
- Is one among a number of unrelated children found at one address;
- Has not been registered with or attended a GP practice;
- Has not been enrolled in school;
- Has to pay off an exorbitant debt, e.g. for travel costs, before having control over own earnings;
- Is permanently deprived of a large part of their earnings by another person; and/or
- Is excessively afraid of being deported.

### **Children internally trafficked within the UK:**

Indicators include:

- Physical symptoms (bruising indicating either physical or sexual assault);
- Prevalence of a sexually transmitted infection or unwanted pregnancy;
- Young person known to be sexually active;
- Reports from reliable sources suggesting the likelihood of involvement in sexual exploitation;

- Reports that the child has been seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation;
- Evidence of drug, alcohol or substance misuse;
- Leaving home/care setting in clothing unusual for the individual child (inappropriate for age, borrowing clothing from older people);
- Phone calls or letters from adults outside the usual range of social contacts;
- Adults loitering outside the child's usual place of residence;
- Significantly older boyfriends;
- Persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation;
- Returning after having been missing, looking well cared for despite having no known base;
- Missing for long periods, with no known base;
- Placement breakdown;
- Pattern of street homelessness;
- Possession of large amounts of money with no plausible explanation;
- Acquisition of expensive clothes, mobile phones or other possessions without plausible explanation;
- Having keys to premises other than those known about;
- Low self-image, low self-esteem, self-harming behaviour including cutting, overdosing, eating disorder, promiscuity;
- Truancy/disengagement with education;
- Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults;
- Going missing and being found in areas where the child or young person has no known links; and/or
- Possible inappropriate use of the internet and forming online relationships, particularly with adults.

The following indicators that a child may have been trafficked are taken from pages 8 to 9 of the London Child Protection Committee's *London procedure for safeguarding trafficked and exploited children* at [www.londonscb.gov.uk/files/procedures/ProcedureforSafeguardingTraffickedChildren\\_001.doc](http://www.londonscb.gov.uk/files/procedures/ProcedureforSafeguardingTraffickedChildren_001.doc)

There are a number of circumstances which could indicate that a child may have been trafficked to the UK, and may still be being controlled by the traffickers or receiving adults. These include situations in which the child:

- Does not appear to have money but does have a mobile phone
- Is driven around by an older male or “boyfriend”
- Is withdrawn and refuses to talk
- Shows signs of sexual behaviour or language
- Shows signs of physical or sexual abuse, and/or has contracted a sexually transmitted disease
- Has a history with missing links and unexplained moves
- Is required to earn a minimum amount of money every day
- Works in various locations
- Has limited freedom of movement
- Appears to be missing for periods
- Is known to beg for money
- Is being cared for by adult/s who are not their parents. The quality of the relationship between the child and their adult carers is not good
- Has not been registered with or attended a GP practice
- Has not been enrolled in school
- Is required to earn a minimum amount of money every day
- Has to pay off an exorbitant debt, perhaps for the travel costs, before being able to have control over his/her own earnings
- Hands over a large part of their earnings to another person
- Is excessively afraid of being deported
- Has had their journey or visa arranged by someone other than themselves or their family
- Does not have possession of their own travel documents
- Has false papers, and these have been provided by another person
- Is unable to confirm which adult is going to accept responsibility for her/him
- Fits current profiles for those at risk of exploitation
- Has entered the country illegally

or, the person:

- In control of the child has applied for visas on behalf of many others, or acts as guarantor for other visa applications
- Who guarantees the visa application has acted for other visitors who have not returned to their countries of origin on the expiry of the visa.

## Appendix 2 Indicators of trafficking emerging from the research

Potential indicators from country of origin context:

The child or young person:

- is an orphan
- comes from a country where human rights violations occur with impunity
- comes from a country where they lived in extreme and protracted socio-economic deprivation
- has been separated from parents due to conflict, war or natural disasters
- has a family background of abuse
- does not wish to use family tracing services - this may be the result of a history of familial abuse or it may indicate that family members have been involved in the trafficking of the child.

Potential indicators based around what the child or young person says:

The child or young person:

- discusses “trusting”, and being betrayed by “agents”, “uncles”, “aunts”
- talks about a person who knows her background well and is helping her
- talks about being “kidnapped”, “escaping”, being “moved from house to house”, “kept in rooms”, “sold”, “brought over”, “abandoned” or “sold on”
- says they are feeling “guilty” or “ashamed” of something.

Potential indicators based around the health of the child or young person:

The child or young person:

- has untreated medical conditions
- has an excessive fear of approaching a GP or health advisor
- has nightmares, flashbacks, difficulties sleeping, headaches
- talks about suicidal thoughts and already has specific ideas around method of doing this
- goes to A&E with symptoms that could be self treated and/or are exaggerated (to gain attention)
- needs the removal of contraceptive implants.

## Other potential indicators:

- the relatives of the child or young person change their date of birth and other identifying details in GPs surgeries or on documentation of other service providers
- the child or young person runs away from an “aunt”, “uncle”, “cousin” or other members listed as extended family
- adults of the same nationality as the child are seen “hanging around” in the streets outside the homes where the child is placed (foster carers or residential homes)
- the body language of the child is defensive or strained when in the presence of an “aunt” or “uncle”
- the child does not know their entitlements to educational or health services
- the child is seen getting into cars with blacked out windows
- the child is moved to different houses to stay with different families over short period of time
- the child has calloused hands for inexplicable reasons
- the child often misses appointments
- the child talks about going on holiday for extended periods.

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### Appendix 3 Focus group questions

1. What do focus group members understand “trafficking” to be? How would they define a trafficked child or young person?
  - Internal versus external. Self-definition of child: do they define themselves as trafficked?
  - Terminology differences: Professional’s/child’s understanding. Confusion between unaccompanied minors and trafficked children and young people?
  
2. How do different agencies’ understandings and definitions of trafficking impact on service responses to the child/young person?
  - How do agencies definitions impact upon the scope and limitations in terms of service provision?
  - Can agencies provide appropriately for the young people?
  - Is intervention law enforcement or are they safeguarding focussed? What are the conflicts between these two different demands?
  
3. How are children or young people identified by the service providers? What are the obstacles for identifying trafficked children or young people?
  - How is contact made with the child or young person? Referral basis – who makes the referral?
  - What are the criteria for identifying a child as trafficked?
  - How many services has the child been through?
  - At what point are they referred?
  
4. What are the immediate and long-term needs of the child/young person?
  - Housing
  - Healthcare
  - Education
  - Immigration
  - Mental and sexual
  - Health

5. What are the practitioners and their agencies able to offer the young person?
  - Do the trafficked children have a keyworker and at what point are they given a keyworker?
  - What was the practitioner (not the agency) able to offer?
  - What do practitioners feel able to offer the young people?
  
6. If agencies could have anything, what could they best use to help the trafficked child?

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## Appendix 4 Interview questions

1. Pre-interview icebreaker if necessary: how did you come to be involved in this area of work?

### **Definition: questions 2–4**

2. We use the UN definition of a trafficked child. Is this the definition you work to? Who devised the definition you use? Do you have access to a protocol for working with trafficked young people?
3. What are the advantages/disadvantages in using this definition? What are the tensions regarding the gender dynamics of a focus on sexual exploitation?
4. Self-definition of the child – how does the child or young person see themselves?

### **Going missing: questions 5 and 6**

5. In your experience, is there a problem of trafficked children and young people going missing? Are they abducted or are they running away on their own accord? Have you had access to a place of safety and if so, has this made a difference?
6. Are there problems or differences with interpreting the status of a trafficked young person who goes missing from other missing young people? How did you overcome these issues related to young people going missing – what resources did you/do you need?

### **Multi-agency work: question 7**

7. Are there particular problems with the “working together” agenda for delivering a good service to trafficked young people? Can we explore what these are and how they might be remedied? Who do you work with most and why?

### **Assessment and responses: questions 8 and 9**

8. What are the needs of the trafficked child or young person and how are they assessed: health (physical, sexual, mental health), educational needs, housing and accommodation needs.
9. What lessons have you learned in your work with trafficked young people?

### **Themes: question 10**

10. Are there any particular important questions or considerations that we have missed? Is there anything else that you think we should discuss that has not been mentioned so far? Check this against the list of themes from the focus groups.

## Glossary

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ASUs	Asylum screening units
BAAF	British Association of Adoption and Fostering
CAMHS	Child and adolescent mental health services
CEOP	Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre
C of E	Council of Europe
CTAIL	National Child Trafficking Advice and Information Line
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
DAT	Drug action team
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
ECPAT UK	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children UK
HO	Home Office
ILPA	Immigration Law Practitioners' Association
LAC	Looked-after children
LSCB	Local safeguarding children board
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
NWG	National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People
PPU	Public protection units
UASC	Unaccompanied asylum-seeking child(ren)
UKBA	United Kingdom Border Agency
UKHTC	United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDCP	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
YOT	Youth offending team

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