

INTRODUCTION

The trafficking of children is a worldwide problem. It is estimated that 1.2 million children are trafficked every year throughout the world. The international organisation End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes (ECPAT) (2004) report that the United Kingdom is a significant transit and destination country for children who are trafficked, and that the majority of the children trafficked into the UK are from China, Vietnam or Africa.

The literature on the subject of trafficking admits the difficulty of assessing the true nature and extent of child trafficking into the UK, partly because of the clandestine nature of the activity, and partly because of the deficits in the data collection mechanisms, an issue I shall come back to later.

UNICEF's report (2003) *Stop the Traffic!* also noted that the trafficking of children has become a global issue and estimated that at least 250 children had been trafficked into the UK in the previous five years. Equally, the report by ECPAT – *Missing Out* (2007), a summary of research into the nature and extent of child trafficking in the North West, the North East of England and West Midlands, identified 80 known or suspected child victims of trafficking in small-scale study in Manchester, Newcastle, and the West Midlands conurbation. 48 of these children had gone missing from the care of the local authority.

ECPAT's *Cause for Concern* (ECPAT 2004) research report, based on interviews on child trafficking within London Social Services teams, concluded that child trafficking existed for purposes beyond sexual exploitation, and included the exploitation of children in domestic servitude, restaurant and catering labour, building site labour, begging, drug trafficking and benefit fraud.

Child Exploitation Online Protection (CEOP) in a (2007) scoping exercise carried out over 18 months, estimated that over 330 children had been trafficked in that period, and that about 183 of these had gone missing from Social Services.

Definitions

There has been a historical difficulty in distinguishing the difference between 'human smuggling' and 'human trafficking', the two most common types of illegal movement of people for financial gain, and the distinction has only recently been clarified. The main difference between smuggling and trafficking is that *human trafficking* is engaged in with the intention, among others, of exploitation of the trafficked persons for financial gain *after* arrival in the country of destination. Trafficked victims may be coerced or tricked by the person arranging their relocation, such that on arrival at the destination country, the trafficked individual is denied their human rights and forced into exploitation by the trafficker or person into whose control they are delivered or sold.

In contrast, in *human smuggling*, immigrants and asylum seekers may pay people to help them enter the country illegally, after which there is generally no longer a relationship (London Child Protection Committee 2006).

The United Nations (2000) defines human smuggling as follows:

... 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 permanent resident. One person can pay another to be smuggled abroad, often involving an illegal entry or false documents...

And the Palermo Protocol (United Nations, 2000), which was ratified by the UK in February 2006, provides a legal definition of trafficking, and more specifically child trafficking, as:

a. ... the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat of or use of force or other forms of coercion, or abduction, of fraud or 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 sub-paragraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in sub-paragraph (a) have been used.*
- c. The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in person” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in sub-paragraph (a) of this article.*
- d. “child” shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.*

Thus ‘trafficking’ may be seen as the movement of persons, with their consent obtained either by deception or by force, for the purposes of exploitation. In child trafficking, the question of consent or otherwise is irrelevant. Any movement of a child for the purposes of exploitation is considered to be child trafficking.

The reports by ECPAT and CEOP clearly do more than just draw attention to the scope of the problem of child trafficking; they point to serious inadequacies in identification and the protection and care of children who have been trafficked.

UK responses to trafficking

The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) was established by the UK government in 2006 to protect children from sexual exploitation from the internet. The centre is charged with assessing annually the nature and scale of child trafficking, and it has a dedicated child trafficking unit that works closely with the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), The Scottish Crime and Drug Enforcement Agency (SCDEA), the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) and other relevant statutory and non-statutory stake holders on all issues relating to child trafficking across the UK. It completed a scoping

project on Child Trafficking in the UK in 2007, which provided a startling insight into the nature and scope of child trafficking in this country, and formed the basis upon which government and local authorities can begin to understand the complexities of the problem and to prepare better programmes for adequately safeguarding trafficked children's welfare.

In October 2007, the Home Office, in partnership with NSPCC, ECPAT UK, CEOP and Comic Relief, launched the NSPCC Child Trafficking Advice Line. It offers assistance in the form of advice to professionals in statutory and non-statutory services as to how to meet the needs children who show signs of having been trafficked.

Human trafficking is an international crime, and many countries in the world are affected either as a source, transit or destination country. The UK has made major strides in supporting international efforts to combat trafficking and developing appropriate legislation of its own. In 2000 trafficking became enshrined in international law for the first time through the Palermo Protocol, a United Nations initiative to

.....prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Palermo Protocol, Article 3 (UN 2000)

The Palermo Protocol was the first international instrument to define and address the trafficking problem, but in addition, the UK evaluated a number of mechanisms which are also of relevance to the issue, such as the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights; the UN Slavery Convention; the International Labour Organisation Convention 29 and 105 on Forced Labour, and the International Labour Organisation Convention 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour.

The UK action plan for tackling the issue of human trafficking (2007) focuses on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. It re-asserts the importance of joined-up thinking and working by the different agencies in the identification and treatment of children who are trafficked and covers areas of prevention, investigation, law enforcement and prosecution and the provision of protection and assistance to victims. To this end, the National Register for

Unaccompanied Children came to force in 2004, with the aim of providing information on unaccompanied children on one database to which numerous agencies will have access. The Asylum Seeking Units are designed to enable workers identify children who are trafficked.

Overall, children arriving in the UK, unaccompanied by their parents/carers and seeking asylum, have become separated from their parents/carers for a number of reasons: some leave because of economic hardships, others are trafficked for sexual exploitation and possibly other dubious activities and a number may be escaping from abusive families. It is almost inevitable, then, that the vast majority of these young people would experience some form of trauma.

ROLE OF SPECIFIC AGENCIES

Department for Children, Schools and families Document 'working together to safeguard children' (2006) and 'what to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (2006) call for all agencies to work closely together to protect children. For children who may be trafficked, ports of entry, the BIA are crucial in identifying and safeguarding the welfare of such children.

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

Kent County Council has developed procedures in line with national procedures for safeguarding the welfare of children who may be trafficked, thus safeguarding the welfare of those children within the child protection framework. It is estimated that in 2006 about 2,850 unaccompanied children/young people applied for asylum nationally (Thomas Coram Research Unit, July 2008). It is however unclear how many of these children would have been trafficked. However, given that CEOP (2007) estimate that about 330 children may have been trafficked over the course of a year. It could be estimated that about 15-20% of these children/young people, approximately 40-60, who may have been trafficked could come to Kent County Council.

WORK IN PROGRESS

- The nomination of a named senior officer to take lead role on the issue of child trafficking.
- Finalising the procedures and policies to enable better working together with other agencies to strengthen protection of the welfare of children who may have been trafficked.
- Training of social workers in identifying, assessing and protecting children who may have been trafficked.

MY RESEARCH

I chose to conduct research in the area of child trafficking because I am primarily interested in understanding the psychological needs of such children and what makes them vulnerable to being trafficked. The research will focus on how Children's Social Services meet the needs of children who are trafficked. As stated in *Working together to Safeguard Children who may have been Trafficked* (London Child Protection Committee 2006), the issue of child trafficking is a challenge to child care social workers and departments as a whole. Everyone working, or in contact, with children and young people has a responsibility to take steps to make sure their welfare is safeguarded and protected from harm.

Teresa Gallagher - Team Manager, West Transitions Team