

Child Trafficking

the exploitation of children
from overseas



Camden Safeguarding
Children Board

C A M D E N S C B

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About child trafficking

Child trafficking is the movement of children into and within a country in order to exploit them. It is a largely hidden problem and is often described as a form of modern-day slavery.

Often the children will have been tricked into coming to the UK with the trafficker because they have been told they will have the chance of a better life. Some may even be unaware that they have been trafficked.

Traffickers use various methods to gain control over the child such as physical force, threats against the child and their family, taking the child's passport or other documents and making sure the child has no opportunity to tell anyone about their situation.

Why children are trafficked

Children may be brought to the UK for:

- **sexual exploitation**
- **forced domestic work**
- **forced labour**
- **benefit fraud**
- **street crime such as begging and credit card fraud**
- **drug related crime and drug mules**

How children are trafficked

Children may be brought to the UK...

...by someone claiming to be their parent or relative or may seem to arrive unaccompanied by any adult and will be given the status of unaccompanied minor. Often they will be travelling on forged documents to hide their real identity.

Many of the children will be in the UK illegally and will be too scared to tell anyone in authority because of what the traffickers may do to them or their family or because they are worried they may be deported. Some may be unaware that they are being trafficked, having been told they are going to a better life in the UK.

Traffickers will go to great lengths to avoid coming into contact with the UK authorities and the child may 'disappear' once they have arrived in the UK and could become invisible to agencies.

Signs that a child may have been trafficked

The following are indicators that a child may have been trafficked. This is not a full list, and not all of them will apply to every child, but professionals can use the list to identify evidence of trafficking.

The child...

- is being cared for by an adult who is not their parent and the quality of the relationship suggests that it is not well-established
- lives at an address with several unrelated children
- has a history of going missing from local authority care or home, or has unexplained moves or gaps in their history
- is not registered with a GP or enrolled at school
- appears neglected or malnourished
- has restricted freedom of movement, rarely leaves the home and is always seen by agencies with their carer present
- seems withdrawn and unwilling to talk or has a prepared story similar to that of other trafficked children
- seems mature or self-confident beyond their years
- has money or goods that are not accounted for
- has no money but has a mobile phone
- is required to earn a certain amount of money each day or has to pay off a large debt, and their earnings are taken from them
- is known to beg for money
- has to carry out excessive household chores
- receives unexplained/unidentified phone calls
- shows signs of sexual exploitation such as sexually transmitted infections or pregnancy

How trafficking affects children

Children who have been trafficked...

...and are being exploited will suffer some form of harm because of their situation and because the hidden nature of trafficking means they are completely controlled by their exploiters and have little or no contact with professionals.

They will feel disorientated in their new surroundings, will miss their family and may worry about them, particularly if traffickers have threatened their family. The care they receive is likely to be poor and they are unlikely to have any kind of significant relationship with a caring adult.

How child trafficking causes significant harm

Significant harm is a legal term...

...used in child protection to describe the threshold at which agencies must intervene to protect a child. Trafficked children are particularly vulnerable to abuse and neglect because:

- Physical abuse may be used by traffickers and exploiters to control the child's movements and injuries may not be treated.
- The child may be subject to sexual abuse as many trafficked children are exploited in the sex industry or domestic servitude.
- All trafficked children will experience emotional abuse because of their isolation, lack of a proper caring relationship, and their fears for their safety and possibly their family as well. This is likely to result in extreme distress, lack of self-esteem, and lack of trust in adults.
- Trafficked children are likely to suffer neglect because of the quality of care they may receive and because the adults who control them will keep them away from basic services such as health and education.

Trafficking within the UK

Children brought to the UK for exploitation may be moved within the UK...

...either because they move on to another exploiter or because traffickers want to avoid contact with agencies. That is why it is important that where professionals have concerns, they need to act in a timely manner before the child is moved.

There is also evidence that children born in the UK are being trafficked within the UK, normally to be sexually exploited. The children may be deliberately targeted because they are particularly vulnerable, and their exploiters gain increasing control over them until they lose contact with family and friends.

Private fostering

Many children who come to the UK without their parents...

...are coming here to live with family or friends in order to attend school. Their parents will have an agreement with the carer in the UK to look after the child while they live here, and this is called a private fostering agreement.

However, professionals need to be aware that some children who appear to be living with private foster carers may have been trafficked and it is important that professionals are able to distinguish between this and genuine care arrangements made by the child's parents and the carer.

Professionals should refer to Camden's 'Private fostering: information for professionals' information leaflet for more details on what to do if a child they work with is privately fostered.

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

It can be difficult to identify trafficked children as they are often kept away from agencies. If a professional believes that a child they are in contact with may have been trafficked, they should contact the duty and assessment team at Safeguarding and Social Care on the following numbers:

Hampstead, Highgate, Gospel Oak, West Hampstead, Swiss Cottage or Kilburn...

Safeguarding and Social Care North

156 West End Lane, London NW6 1SD

Tel: **020 7974 6600**

Kentish Town, Chalk Farm, Camden Town, Regents Park, Somers Town or Holborn...

Safeguarding and Social Care South

Crowndale Centre, 218 Eversholt Street, London NW1 1BD

Tel: **020 7974 4094**

Camden Safeguarding Children Board

Unit 6/7, Crowndale Centre
218 Eversholt Street
London
NW1 1BD

Tel: **020 7974 6639**

Fax: **020 7974 6708**

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