

Trafficking and Modern Slavery

Child trafficking is when children are recruited, moved, or transported for the purposes of exploitation, slavery, or abuse. Children can be trafficked as part of sexual exploitation, criminal activity such as the selling of drugs, forced marriage, forced labour and benefit fraud. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 establishes that a person commits an offence if the person arranges or facilitates the travel of another with a view to being exploited. Wherever a child has been recruited, transported, or transferred for the purpose of exploitation, they should be considered to be a victim of trafficking. This includes whether or not they have been forced, deceived or the child/young person believes that they are traveling willingly from one location to another, for example, where a child takes a bus or walks from one location to another for the purpose of exploitation.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 is an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. It is designed to tackle slavery in the UK and consolidates previous offences relating to trafficking and slavery. Modern slavery often includes slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking. The impact can be devastating for the victims.

Victims have been found in brothels or saunas, farms, in factories, nail bars, car washes, hotels and restaurants, farms and commonly are exploited in cannabis cultivation. Criminal exploitation can involve young people as drug carriers, begging and pickpocketing. Debt bondage (forced to work to pay off debts that realistically they will never be able to), organ harvesting, and benefit fraud are other types of modern slavery.

Children who are trafficked will experience some, a combination, or all forms of abuse: physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Children are groomed and then threatened, coerced, or intimidated. Children who are victims of trafficking will suffer significant trauma, and this can have a long-lasting detrimental impact on their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Signs and indicators

Possible signs of trafficking include a child who:

- spends a lot of time doing household chores.
- rarely leaves their house, has no freedom of movement and no time for playing.
- is orphaned or living apart from their family, often in unregulated private foster care.
- lives in substandard accommodation.
- is not sure which country, city, or town they are in.
- is unable or reluctant to give details of accommodation or personal details.
- might not be registered with a school or a GP practice.
- has no documents or has falsified documents.
- has no access to their parents or guardians.
- is seen in inappropriate places such as brothels or factories.
- possesses unaccounted for money or goods
- is permanently deprived of a large part of their earnings, required to earn a minimum amount of money every day or pay off an exorbitant debt
- has injuries from workplace accidents
- gives a prepared story which is very similar to stories given by other children.

If there are any concerns regarding trafficking these must be reported to the senior on duty and follow the child protection and safeguarding procedure.

Further information and Guidance

Embrace Fostering

Protecting children from criminal exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery (GOV.UK) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-inspections-of-child-sexual-exploitation-and-missing-children> thematic report from Joint Inspections on the risk of child criminal exploitation.

Children and Young People Trafficked for the Purpose of Criminal Exploitation in Relation to County Lines a Toolkit For Professionals - (The Children's Society in partnership with Victim Support and the National Police Chiefs' Council) - a number of resources that may be useful for professionals when working with children and young people, their families, and communities at risk of abuse and exploitation.

<https://www.csepoliceandprevention.org.uk/toolkits>

Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines (GOV.UK) - Guidance for frontline professionals on dealing with county lines, part of the government's approach to ending gang violence and exploitation. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criminal-exploitation-of-children-and-vulnerable-adults-county-lines>

Child exploitation disruption toolkit (The Home Office) - Disruption tactics for those working to safeguard children and young people under the age of 18 from sexual and criminal exploitation. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-exploitation-disruption-toolkit>

County Lines after COVID - a new threat? (2020) - Crest Advisory Report examining the changing picture of county lines activity. <https://www.crestadvisory.com/post/county-lines-after-covid-a-new-threat>

Resources to help raise awareness, better spot the signs and increase confidence in reporting modern slavery when potential cases are encountered.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-slavery-training-resource-page>