

# Cause for concern?

London social services and child trafficking



**Carron Somerset**

## Acknowledgements

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## **Background to research**

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### **Introduction**

In January 2003, ECPAT UK started research to measure the level of awareness within London social services on the issue of child<sup>1</sup> trafficking. Although this may appear a simple aim, from anecdotal evidence there appeared to be a lack of knowledge within social services about the extent of child trafficking in the UK (United Kingdom), who these children are, why they are being trafficked, and who by. Whilst this research does not answer all these questions in detail, it does give a clearer picture of the way in which social services (the lead agency responsible for child care) within London is responding to trafficked victims. Furthermore, this research hopes to provide those working with children with more detailed information on the phenomenon of trafficking; ways to identify children in exploitive situations; and possible ways they can work to try and prevent children being trafficked.

### **Aim**

The research aim was to measure the level of awareness of child trafficking amongst London social services, to find out whether they had come across any cases of trafficking, and how they had dealt with the cases.

As the researcher aimed to complete the research within a year, it does not claim to reveal the whole picture of child trafficking in London social services, but provides an overview and snapshot of the situation.

ECPAT UK started this research project in early 2003 to ascertain whether social services were coming into contact with trafficked children. It was decided that the research would focus on London social services, due to previous research and press reports citing London as at least the first point of call for traffickers, if not the only point of call.

### **Methodology**

From January to December 2003, contact was made, via telephone, email and fax, with various teams within each borough's social services department. The team contacted depended on the way the borough's social services were set up. Contact was made with Unaccompanied Minor Teams, Asylum Teams, Referral/ Initial/ Duty and Assessment Teams, Under 16 Teams, Child Protection Teams and Children in Need Teams.

The number of times a social services was contacted depended on the amount of information they had. If there was information related to trafficking, then further enquiries were made with at least one other team within the borough. This

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the research the term 'child' is used as a simplification of children and young people. The author recognises that many of the 'children' trafficked are in the age range of 15- 17 and would not consider themselves as 'children'.

resulted in contact being made by the researcher with one or two teams within the individual social services, and different staff within those teams.

Additionally, in 15 cases, personal contact was made with the team or team managers at a later date. These meetings were generally held during a team meeting, and consisted of an informal talk, given by the researcher, on child trafficking, and then a question and answer session. During this session, extra information was taken from social workers, on individual cases. In one case, direct contact was made four times with one social services, but in the main contact was only made once, with follow up contact via the phone when necessary.

As a follow up to the phone call, copies of ECPAT UK's 2001 report, 'What the Professionals Know' were sent out to all respondents, to help with raising awareness, as were 'reporting of cases' forms. These forms were developed by ECPAT UK and Anti-Slavery International in 2002, and have been circulated to anyone who may come into contact with trafficked children. The form (see annex), is used to gather data about individual cases (no names are required on the forms), and gain a better understanding of the various complexities of trafficking.

## **Interviews**

Initial contact, and on some occasions the only contact, was made through telephone calls, which were conducted as informal semi-structured interviews. The same initial questions were asked, but the rest of the conversation and questions depended on the answers of the social workers<sup>2</sup>. The length of the interview depended entirely upon the response of the social worker.

## **Problems encountered**

The main problem in gathering information was making contact with the correct team and then the most appropriate person within the team. In a high number of instances the researcher was passed around various teams and individuals until the correct person was identified. Additionally, phone calls and emails were rarely returned, even when the researcher was asked to email with information about the project. However, the response from Unaccompanied Minor Teams and Asylum Teams in finding the correct person was generally better compared to the Children and Family Teams or Child Protection Teams.

In 2002, ECPAT UK devised 'reporting of cases' forms, to gather detailed and personal, information on individual trafficking cases. At the start of this research, it was envisaged that any completed forms would contribute to a better understanding of the situation in London. However, only a minimal number of forms were completed and returned by London social services, resulting in very little information from this data gathering exercise.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Social workers' is used throughout the report as a general term for those working in social services. The researcher is aware that there is a distinction between social workers and other workers, such as project officers.

## Who responded?

Information was gained from 68 individuals<sup>3</sup> or teams within 33 boroughs. In nearly all cases, it was the Child Asylum Teams that the researcher was referred to. Near the end of the research, more attention was placed on finding out about non-asylum seeking children, and Children in Need teams and Child Protection officers were contacted. However, in general, this produced very few results.

Team	Number responded
Unaccompanied Minor Teams/ Child Asylum Team	17
Asylum Teams (under 16, 16-18 and adult)	15
Referrals/ Initial/ Duty and Assessment/ Prevention Teams	11
Children in Need/ Looked After	7
Child Protection	10
Other (Community Services/ Children's and Families/ Kinship Care)	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>

## The disclosure of trafficking cases by social workers

One of the aims of this research was to find out whether London social services had cases of children who had been trafficked. Finding out about cases is not as straight forward as asking 'have you had cases of trafficking'. This question often elicited the response of 'no', yet as the interview progressed the cases discussed were cases of trafficking without the interviewee realising. This could be due to a number of reasons. The first may be that the social worker had not connected the framework of trafficking to individual cases. For example, one social worker stated that they had had no cases of children being trafficked, but they did have children who had been taken away from 'family' settings because they were being used as domestic workers and nannies, and were not allowed out. This was not seen as a 'trafficking' case, as the situation was very informal, rather than a more 'structured' setting of prostitution. This was also the situation in regards to the case of Roma children involved in street theft. Because of the nature of social work, individual assessments of children had not identified any major problems, yet when the larger picture was developed, it became apparent that many children were victims of a large organised crime network.

Another reason that trafficking cases were not identified could be that the social worker was not willing to talk about cases, as they did not know who the

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<sup>3</sup> In some cases the researcher spoke to individual social workers. However in 15 cases, the researcher met with whole teams, which consisted of between 10 – 15 individuals. This is considered as only one visit in the statistics. Therefore, far more than just 68 individuals took part in the research.

researcher was. In these instances, the researcher was asked to write to someone else within the same social service requesting permission for access to cases. In at least one case no response was given from the social services even though it had been affirmed that the social services had cases. Additionally, cases were not mentioned at the start of the conversation because the social worker had been caught off guard, and had not had the opportunity to look through individual cases. In these instances, there were often triggers in the conversation that reminded the social worker of particular cases, but this may mean that other cases were not mentioned. It must also be noted that on at least one occasion, information had to be withheld from the researcher because of ongoing investigations by the police.

Although the response from the individual boroughs was in general good, it is believed that there are many more cases that were not mentioned to the researcher. One reason for believing this is that in at least three cases, individual social workers stated that another borough they have contact with, or used to work in, had had a number of cases. Yet, when the borough mentioned was interviewed, the same results were not found. Although the research did not aim to document all cases of child trafficking in the London social services, it is difficult to compile statistics that genuinely reflect the size of the problem. What can be concluded, is that the number of cases is only a proportion of the reality.

## **What is child trafficking?**

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### **A worldwide phenomenon: a UK perspective**

The trafficking of human beings has become a worldwide phenomenon, with the US Department of State<sup>4</sup> estimating that between 800,000 and 900,000 people are trafficked across borders each year worldwide. At the UN Special Session on Children in 2002, the UN estimated that 1.2 million children are trafficked every year<sup>5</sup>. Although it is difficult to assess the size of the problem, there is enough evidence to indicate that children are being moved around the world for the purposes of exploitation, whether this is for prostitution, domestic servitude or other forms of labour exploitation. Children are sometimes sold by their poverty stricken parents, but the majority are sent away with the hope that they will receive a better life.

Within the context of the UK, the issue of child trafficking was first noticed in 1995 by social workers in West Sussex Social Services, after a child went missing. Soon a pattern emerged and it became known that the children, mainly Nigerian girls, were being taken to Europe to be prostituted. It is now nine years since the first known case of trafficking emerged in the UK, yet little is actually known about the real size of the problem, or how trafficking operates in the UK. ECPAT UK carried out research in 2001<sup>6</sup> and again in 2003<sup>7</sup> into the trafficking of children for sexual purposes. This research found that children, predominantly girls, were being brought from Africa and Eastern Europe to be prostituted in off-street prostitution.

In the case of Eastern European girls, the evidence from those rescued by the police, or in testimonies against their traffickers, reveals that the girls often come into the UK accompanied by the trafficker, or met the trafficker soon after arriving. Before arriving, a relationship was often started by the trafficker, with the girl believing that she is the girlfriend or fiancée of her soon to be pimp. He may have 'rescued' her from prostitution and promised her a better life, only to force her back into prostitution, and subsequently live off her earnings. These relationships were characterised by violence, rape and threats to the girl's family to ensure she does not leave. As in many trafficking cases, debt bondage was also used. This is where the trafficker will pay for the victim's expenses for travel, accommodation etc, and then demand this money back from the victim (which they pay for through their labour). However, the 'debt' is usually far higher than the actual costs, and may be impossible for the victim to pay back, no matter how hard they work.

African children, on the other hand, were found to enter the UK as unaccompanied minors, or with adults purporting to be relatives. When ECPAT

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<sup>4</sup> US Department of State (2003) 'Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act 2000: Trafficking in Persons Report'. Washington DC: Department of State.

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF UK (2003) 'Child Trafficking'. Information Sheet, UNICEF UK January 2003

<sup>6</sup> Somerset, C (2001) 'What the Professionals Know: The Trafficking Of Children into and through, the UK for Sexual Purposes'. ECPAT UK.

<sup>7</sup> Somerset, C (2004) 'Update on the Trafficking of Children into the UK for Sexual Purposes'. Unpublished.

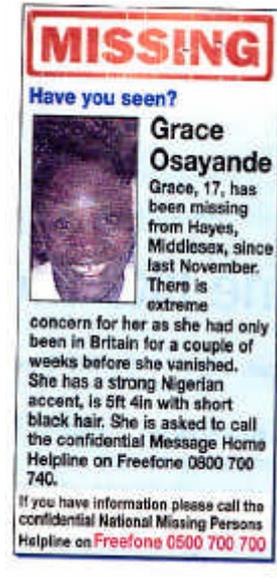
UK carried out research into child trafficking in 2001, the main group being trafficked were West African children (predominantly Nigerian girls) for prostitution. The pattern appeared to be that they arrived at Gatwick Airport, as unaccompanied minors, and claimed asylum at the airport. Due to their age, they were taken into care by the nearest social services, in this case, West Sussex Social Services. However, once in care, they followed pre-arranged plans to contact their trafficker, and would then go missing from one day, to six months, after they initially arrived. Evidence from two girls who were rescued, and from others who disclosed, indicated that they were destined to be prostituted in Europe, although some appeared to have been exploited in the UK. The girls were controlled by voodoo, and the fear that if they told anyone about who the traffickers were, or tried to escape, they and their families would die. The only way they could have the curse lifted was to pay back the £20 – 40,000 ‘debt’ that they owed the traffickers for bringing them here.

As well as unaccompanied minors, this research also revealed grave concerns about children coming in with adults purporting to be their relatives and disappearing into the unknown. This form of trafficking has become more evident over the last few years, and has revealed that children, particularly from Central Africa, are being brought into the UK to be exploited in domestic work and prostitution.

Although the above relates specifically to African and Eastern European children, children of various nationalities are trafficked and not just for prostitution or domestic work. Evidence has indicated that children are trafficked to deal drugs, or bring drugs and other contraband into the UK, and are also brought here so the trafficker can live off their benefits, often to the detriment of the child. Other children are trafficked to commit street crime or for work in restaurants. In all these cases, the children are exploited for their labour or services. They rarely receive any money and often work in appalling conditions. The majority of children appear to be girls, but this may be because the boys who are predominantly working in restaurants, or sweatshops, do not come to the attention of the authorities as the premises are not raided by the police, or complaints are not made by neighbours, for example. Evidence from those working with migrant children indicate that Chinese and Vietnamese boys in particular, are brought here for restaurant work.

Whilst there is still little data on the size of the problem in the UK, work has been carried out to measure the number of definite cases of child trafficking. In UNICEF UK’s report<sup>8</sup> it is estimated, that ‘at least 250 children have been trafficked into the UK in the last five years’. Although this may not appear a large

\*see footnote



<sup>8</sup> UNICEF UK (2003) ‘Stop the Traffic!’. End Child Exploitation Campaign

\* Taken from ‘Metro’ Newspaper. This clipping and the following clippings throughout the report, whilst not conclusively stating that the child has been trafficked, have been included as there are definite concerns that they are missing because they have been trafficked.

number, it must be remembered that due to the illegal nature of trafficking and the inability of victims to come forward, the vast majority of cases go unrecorded, this figure is therefore just the 'tip of the iceberg'.

## **Legislation and law enforcement**

### **What is trafficking?**

Whilst there are various international conventions that make human trafficking unlawful, there is one that clearly defines trafficking. This internationally accepted definition comes from the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime. This protocol came into force in December 2003 and states:

*“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 abductions, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of 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’.*

Article 3 (c) states that:

*‘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 subparagraph (a) of this article’.*

Under this protocol a child is considered to be anyone under the age of 18 years of age, as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989. This definition of a child will be used throughout this report.

In summary, trafficking of children is the movement of a child for the purposes of exploitation.

By comparison the internationally used definition for smuggling comes from the Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime. Article 3 (a): states that:

*“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’.*

## UK legislation

One major step forward in the UK since 2001 is the introduction of national legislation relating to trafficking. In November 2002, the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 was passed, which included in Section 145, an offence of 'Traffic in Prostitution'. This reads:

- (1) A person commits an offence if he arranges or facilitates the arrival in the United Kingdom of an individual (the "passenger") and –*
- (a) he intends to exercise control over prostitution by the passenger in the United Kingdom or elsewhere, or*
  - (b) he believes that another person is likely to exercise control over prostitution by the passenger in the United Kingdom or elsewhere*

The offence has another two parts that makes it an offence to arrange or facilitate travel within the UK, or departure from the UK. The offence in subsection 4 states that:

- (4) For the purposes of (1) to (3) a person exercises control over prostitution by another if for the purposes of gain he exercises control, direction or influence over the prostitute's movements in a way which shows that he is aiding, abetting or compelling the prostitution.*

A person found guilty of the offence could face a maximum sentence of 14 years.

Although the Act makes trafficking for prostitution a criminal offence, the law relates only to prostitution, and makes no distinction between the trafficking of a minor for prostitution and the trafficking of adults. Furthermore, the offences includes the phrase 'purposes of gain', which was identified in the 2001 research as an evidential requirement that made it harder to prove the offence. However, when the law was introduced it was stated that this would only be a temporary measure, until more substantial legislation could be introduced.

This substantial legislation was introduced in the Sex Offences Act 2003, which was granted royal assent in November 2003, and is due to come into force in May 2004. Offences relating to trafficking are included in Sections 58 – 60. Section 58, Trafficking into the UK for sexual exploitation states that:

- (1) A person (A) commits an offence if he intentionally arranges or facilitates the arrival in the United Kingdom of another person (B) and either –*
- (a) he intends to do anything to or in respect of B, after B's arrival but in any part of the world, which if done will involve the commission of a relevant offence, or*
  - (b) he intends to facilitate the doing of anything to or in respect of B, after B's arrival but in any part of the world, which if done as he intends it to be done or believes that it will be done will involve the commission of a relevant offence.*

Sections 59 and 60 make it an offence to traffic within the UK, and out of the UK. In each section it states *'the commission of a relevant offence'*. The relevant offence is any offence that is included in Part One of the Sex Offences Act 2003. Most relevant to children and trafficking are:

Section 49 – Paying for sexual services of a child

Section 50 – Causing or inciting child prostitution or pornography

Section 51 – Controlling a child prostitute or a child involved in pornography

Section 52 – Arranging or facilitating child prostitution or pornography

A person found guilty on summary conviction (in a magistrates court) could receive a term not exceeding six months or a fine, or both. If found guilty on conviction on indictment (in a crown court) a term of imprisonment can be granted, not exceeding 14 years.

The above offences clearly state that the prostitution of a minor is a criminal offence, and also carry higher sentences than the equivalent offences relating to adults. There are age differentiations within the section, for example the sentence is higher for someone paying for sex with a child below 16, than someone paying for sex with a child below 18 years. Overall the offences recognise a child as someone below the age of 18 years, and not 16 years as previously stated in the Sexual Offences Act 1956. Additionally, the maximum sentence has been raised to 14 years. Furthermore, whilst the earlier drafts of the Bill stated that 'If person (A) commits an offence, if *for or in the expectation of gain for himself or another*', after considerable lobbying by ECPAT UK and other organisations, this stipulation was removed.

Despite the lack of legislation, there have been significant developments in the law enforcement area as reflected in three cases. Due to the charges being made before any trafficking legislation came into force, in none of the cases were the defendants charged with trafficking. In the first case, an Albanian man, Mustapha Kadiu, was sentenced to ten years in prison for rape, sexual assault and living off immoral earnings, of a Romanian 15 year old girl. Kadiu had bought the girl 'Natasha' in Italy, after she had been trafficked through multiple countries and prostituted en route. Kadiu had promised Natasha that she would never have to work in prostitution again, but broke his promise as soon as they arrived in London.

In the second case, two Thai sisters and one of their husbands<sup>9</sup>, were found guilty of controlling prostitution at various addresses in London and the south east of England. They received sentences ranging from five to two years imprisonment. The police believe that the group, which also included three other people, had been trafficking large numbers of Thai women for years. After an investigation, the police searched the premises used by all those under surveillance, as well as 20 brothels that had been used by them<sup>10</sup>. The police found 30 Thai women, all of whom said they wanted to go home. However, only one of the women was willing to testify, and this was also the only minor found in

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<sup>9</sup> Bupha Savada (the principal organiser), Monporn Hughes (her sister) and Pathirange Ranasinghe.

<sup>10</sup> Based on briefing from CO14 (Clubs and Vice) on the investigation known as Operation Horsley

the group; a girl of 17 years of age. She returned to Thailand prior to the trial and was provided with shelter by an NGO. After testifying in the UK she returned to Thailand.

In the third case, December 2003 saw an Albanian man who was found guilty and sentenced to ten years for charges of kidnap, living off prostitution, procuring a girl for unlawful sex, incitement to rape and facilitating the illegal entry of immigrants. Seven women testified against Luan Plakici. The women, from Romania and Moldova, had been promised waitressing and barmaid jobs in London, but were forced into prostitution on their arrival. At least two of the girls were minors when they had been trafficked, and one of these, a 16 year old, had married Plakici.

Although not directly related to prostitution, the Government announced in November 2003 that they would be introducing legislation making trafficking for various forms of exploitation an offence. This would ensure that, coupled with the offences in the Sexual Offences Act, the trafficking of people for all forms of exploitation would become a criminal offence in the UK. Furthermore, the Home Office produced in 2003 a 'People Trafficking Crime Reduction Toolkit' that can be found at <http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits>.

## **Background to Social Services<sup>11</sup>**

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### **Who are the children in the care of social services?**

There are many children in the care of social services, those who are indigenous and those who are non-indigenous, but all are under 18 or were when they first started receiving support from social services. In relation to trafficking, the research centred on non-indigenous children<sup>12</sup>. These children are in two categories: asylum seeking and non-asylum seeking. Non-asylum seeking children are looked after or supported by mainstream social services teams, such as Children in Need teams, whilst asylum seeking children are often supported by specialised teams. Information gathered in this report about the latter group was far more detailed than the former, possibly due to the child often being unaccompanied and the social worker working very closely with the child.

Whilst there was information available on asylum seeking children, there was relatively little information on non-asylum seeking children. This may be due to the children often being within families<sup>13</sup> that they have either come into the country with, or have later joined. Many of these families are not the child's nuclear family, and the situation is often one of private fostering. However, although many children are being looked after by these families, they are not always registered with social services as privately fostered, and are sometimes not in contact with other authorities or schools. These children are therefore in the UK without the knowledge of anyone, and are potentially at risk of exploitation and abuse.

### **Where do these children come from?**

Although London has a diverse population, social services, in general, assist a more limited range of nationalities. The following include some of the nationalities that social services in London assist: Afghan, Albanian, Bangladeshi, Burundian, Cameroonian, Chinese, Congolese, Eritrean, Ethiopian, Iraqi, Ivorian, Kosovan, Nigerian, Romanian, Rwandan, Sierra Leonean, Somali, Ugandan and Vietnamese. Regarding sex, overall there appear to be more males than females in the care of social services, and more children in the higher age ranges of 16 – 18 years, than under 16.

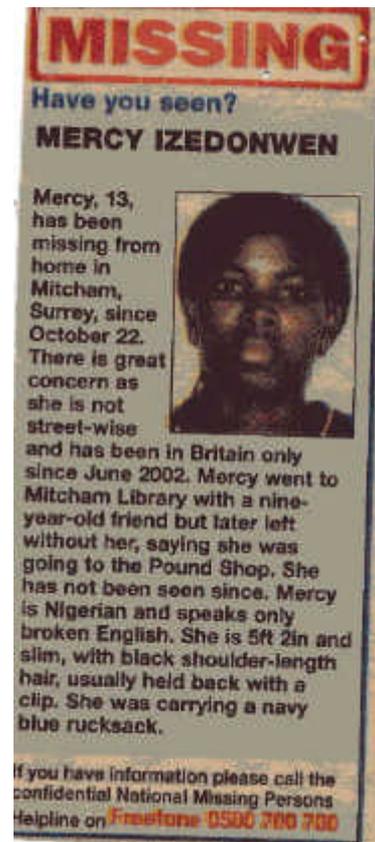
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<sup>11</sup> The following section provides a general background to how social services in London work and who they assist. This section does not relate directly to trafficking cases, but provides a background to where trafficking cases may be dealt with.

<sup>12</sup> Indigenous children can also be trafficked, both internally or externally, but no one referred to this throughout the research.

<sup>13</sup> "The term 'private fostering' is used to describe a situation when a child of up to 16 years of age (18 is disabled) is in the care of someone who is not his or her parent or relative for 28 days or more. A relative, under the Children Act 1989, is defined as grandparents, siblings, step-parents, aunts or uncles (i.e. brothers or sisters of the child's parents), or other persons with parental responsibility" (Philpot, T).

Throughout London, immigrant communities have been formed, and these in turn attract more people from the same community, including children. This results in pockets of children from the same nationalities in certain boroughs, whilst other boroughs will have a different mix of nationalities and different issues to deal with. For example, certain areas of London have large Asian populations, whilst others have large Vietnamese and Chinese communities or Kosovan and Albanian communities. However, the results found that this was not the case in relation to African immigrants<sup>14</sup>. Whilst a particular social services may assist a particular group, such as Chinese but not Albanian, it was found that all social services provide assistance to African children. It was stressed by those interviewed that the most recent group of young people coming into their care were African children. Of note is that up until last year, a significant proportion of the children supported or looked after by social services were Kosovan and Albanian boys. In some boroughs this made up at least 70% of their unaccompanied minors or asylum cases, but has dropped over the last 18 months and African children, although not in the same numbers, are filling this space.



Whilst the above describes recent changes, there has been a continual steady influx of Chinese and Vietnamese children, who continue to be 'absorbed' into their respective communities. Many social workers who had accommodated Chinese children talked of the difficulty in keeping them in any kind of accommodation, as they usually went missing and that the Chinese community was a closed community which did not generally ask for assistance from social services.

### **Which teams deal with these children?**

The majority of the information gathered for this research has come from teams that deal with asylum seeking children, whether they are unaccompanied or within families. Non-asylum seeking children are dealt with in mainstream teams. Below can be found four scenarios relating to way that individual social services may be structured.

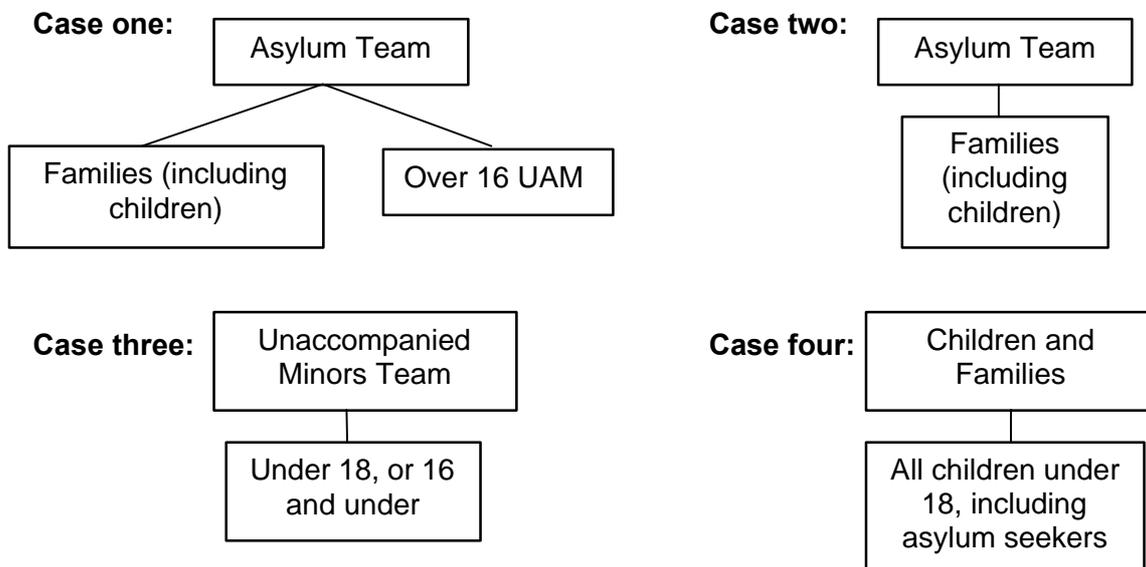
**Case one:** In the first case the Asylum Team may deal with children over 16, but unaccompanied, and children who are within families, whether they are their own family or not. Children under 16 may be receiving services from an Unaccompanied Minors Team, or Mainstream Services.

<sup>14</sup> It was noted that the one specific African community identified is the Somalian community.

**Case two:** In case two, the Asylum Team could deal with just asylum seeking families and their children. In this case, unaccompanied children are assisted by either an Unaccompanied Minor Team or Mainstream Services.

**Case three:** In the third case, the Unaccompanied Minors Team will deliver services to all children under 18, or children under 16. If they do not provide services to over 16s, then this service may be provided by an Asylum Team (case one).

**Case four:** In the final case, the Children and Families Team provide services to all indigenous children, and also to non-asylum, non-indigenous children. If there was a case of a non-asylum seeking child who was unaccompanied this would also be dealt with by this team, but based on the research this is unlikely, as most are with families.



The above clearly demonstrates the complexity in the way social services are run, and the differences between the various teams throughout the boroughs. It is sometimes complicated to understand which is the most appropriate team for a particular referral<sup>15</sup>, and where there is no specific team e.g. for an unaccompanied minor, the level of service delivered may be different to that delivered by a more specialist team. This split in teams also results in a lack of information sharing and in a number of instances those interviewed said that they worked very separately from the other social work teams in their borough, and did not share information. Although in one borough a book was used to log unusual cases, such as a trafficking case. In nearly all the interviews, the researcher asked the Unaccompanied Minors Team, for example, whether it was worth speaking to the Children in Need Team. In many cases, it was felt that they would know about such cases, and as they had not heard of any it would

<sup>15</sup> This is further complicated when contacting Children and Family Teams as there may be a number of areas offices within one borough.

not be useful contacting the other team. However, in some cases contact was made with the other team and it was found that they did have cases, but had not shared this information with other teams. This lack of information sharing concerned a number of those questioned, although it was stated that the heads of teams had a better picture about what was happening overall.

### **How do the children come to the attention of social services?**

It would appear that children come into contact with social services in six main ways<sup>16</sup>:

- Referral from a third party, such as Asylum Screening Unit, Refugee Council, police, school, doctors or neighbours
- Self referral
- Child brought in by an agent and then 'abandoned'
- Child brought into social services by a 'stranger' who found the child, has been accommodating them and now needs financial support
- Child brought into social services by a 'stranger'
- Child found to be in a unsuitable/questionable foster arrangement

How the social worker comes into contact with the child depends on the team they work in. In the case of Child Protection Officers, they are contacted by a team when a child has been identified and thought to be at risk of serious harm, or the team raises concerns regarding a child thought to be at risk. In the case of Children in Need teams, a child may come to their attention through a referral from a school or doctor, or the child him or herself.

However, as the predominance of cases were from Asylum Teams, this is where a larger amount of information was gained. Some routes into this team mirrored the way children come to the attention of other teams, so is not exclusive to Asylum Teams, but due to the issues around smuggling and trafficking, they appear more in Asylum Teams than other teams.

In one social services, two social workers had dealt with three Vietnamese children who had been 'found', and four Ugandan boys who had been 'found'. In the case of the Vietnamese children, although they were brought in separately, they all told the same story and the adult said they had found them on the street crying. In the second case, four Ugandan boys had presented themselves, two at a time, saying they were brothers. In this case, the carer was assessed and the boys were placed back into the foster arrangement. However, the placement broke down and the children had to be placed in emergency accommodation.

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<sup>16</sup> Although the above list is not exhaustive, this appears to be the main ways that children come to the attention of social services.

Of the 33 boroughs interviewed, 13 had supported children who had come into the borough and been abandoned. Additionally, 17 of the 33 stated that children were brought into their services by adults who stated that they had 'found' the child at the airport/ football pitch/ bus stop and had heard the child speaking their language and asked if the child needed help. In some cases, the 'stranger' informed social services that they had been looking after the child for the last few weeks, and now needed financial support. Across the boroughs the same stories were recounted.

In the cases of unsuitable or questionable foster arrangement, this was identified as a concern by social services due to the inability to find out the exact relationship between the child and the family they are placed within. All boroughs raised this concern, particularly in relation to African families where the placement of children with relatives or friends is an accepted cultural practice. In these cases, children are usually sent to better off family or friends, often from rural to urban areas in order that the child can gain an education, work or have a better life. Within some parts of Africa, there is a fluid movement of children between family and friends, and this is seen as a common and perfectly acceptable practice. Additionally, it is seen as acceptable that this child will carry out chores around the house, just like the employee's own children. However, this practice can become exploitative when the child is made to work excessively, is not afforded the same opportunities as the employees own children and is treated as inferior. When this practice is extended to the UK it is harder for the child to make contact with their parents if they are unhappy, and for the parents to ensure that their child is safe. It is within these households, in the UK, that there are concerns that children are being exploited. However, it must be noted that the placement of children into 'families' was not restricted to just African families, but was also found in other nationalities, but only in a few cases.

The way children come into contact with social services does not necessarily indicate that they have been trafficked, but questions regarding their safety should be asked. If a child has been brought here and abandoned, the abandonment may make them vulnerable to being exploited or abused before they are found by police. In other cases, where a child has been brought in and referred to social services only when the adults ask for financial support, questions must be asked about the adults motive for looking after the child. In these cases, it was noted by teams that they have started to take the child out of the accommodation, whilst assessments are being made of the adult carers/guardian. However, in many cases, after the initial assessment has been made, there is no further monitoring to ensure the safety of the children over a longer period. One social worker stated that ten years ago, social workers would carry out these longer term checks, but today only those in care or on the child protection register qualify for a long term social worker.

## **London social services and child trafficking**

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### **Awareness of trafficking**

Each team was asked whether they were aware of child trafficking and the response largely depended on who was asked. On initial contact with a team, there was often a confused response as to who would be the most appropriate point of contact. On many occasions, the researcher had to repeat the information and then was often put through to a manager. This confusion does not necessarily indicate that the person first contacted had no awareness of trafficking, but does suggest that the subject is seldom raised.

Once contact was made, all respondents were asked whether they were aware of the issue of trafficking, although at this point the definition of trafficking was not explained to them. This helped the researcher to gauge whether the social worker really knows what trafficking is, or is confusing the issue with smuggling. In the vast majority of responses, the latter was the case. When asked about particular cases, some referred to children that had come into their care after being abandoned, or that a stranger had brought in a child that they had 'found' wandering in a street and speaking the same language. Whilst neither scenarios rule out the possibility that the child had been trafficked, in the vast majority of such stories, there were no indications that the child had been.

However, when the researcher simply asked whether they had worked with any children because the child was being exploited, then this provoked a different response, with a number of social workers stating that they had supported trafficked children. It was found that some social workers are only aware of trafficking because they have had cases, but because individual case loads are not discussed openly, other social workers may not be aware that such a case has been dealt with in their team. In terms of research this means that if a researcher wished to find out all cases of child trafficking within social services in London they would have to speak to each individual social worker.

### **Concerns and suspicions that children are being trafficked**

Due to the nature of trafficking, and the fact that it is illegal and therefore underground, visible and obvious signs of trafficking are rare. What appears to be more common are various circumstances that raise the suspicions of social services. Of the 33 boroughs, 26 stated that they had concerns regarding individual cases, or were suspicious about the circumstances in which a child had been brought into the UK or was currently living in. Of the 33 boroughs, only one stated that they had no concerns at all regarding trafficking, whereas the remaining 32 borough's concerns varied from 'slight' in that they knew the issue of trafficking existed in general and could be in their borough, to verified concerns as they had actual cases of trafficking. One issue regarding this high level of concern is that there is no guidance informing social services about what trafficking is, or what they should do if they are suspicious.

## Unaccompanied children

In the cases where the child is unaccompanied, the concerns are often generated by there being 'adults' around the child, or the child appears to be in some kind of network. Additionally, they often have money, mobile phones and designer clothes, far beyond the support given by social services. Questions must therefore be asked as to where this money and other goods have come from if the child supposedly knows no one, or is unable to work. In some instances, social workers have been concerned that the child is involved in prostitution, or other forms of labour. It must be noted that unaccompanied minors may not be alone in the country as there may be family friends living here, or acquaintances of the child's parents. Questions should then be asked about the acquaintances, to ensure that the minor is happy with any contact made.

About two years ago, a group of six Angolan girls were being accommodated and supported by a social services, as they were unaccompanied minors. However, there were a number of older men hanging around the girls and sometimes appeared to be 'boyfriends'. One of the girls was assaulted by one of the men. These relationships caused concern amongst the social workers. In another example, a Vietnamese man kept contacting two Vietnamese girls in their semi-independent accommodation. This resulted in complaints from the other female occupants, as the man made them feel uncomfortable. The incident was reported to the police.

In a north London borough, it was reported that a 16 year old Romanian girl had been paying her subsistence to a male agent, who had brought her to the UK. Although he originally told her she owed £900, she had already paid back £980, and the debt subsequently increased to £1,500. The man would wait for the girl outside of her college, had her mobile number and threatened to kill her family back home. At the weekend he collected her and took her out of London. Although the girl lost weight and was terrified, she did not report any sexual abuse to the social workers, although she was clearly being exploited for her subsistence.\*

\* This same borough raised a concern regarding a girl who had reported that she had been raped, but it transpired that she was in prostitution and exchanging sex for £20.00. This case was mirrored by a number of others in the same borough. Whilst this may not indicate she has been trafficked, it should raise enough concerns to warrant further investigation.

## Accompanied Children

For many people, social workers included, the issue of child trafficking is often seen as related to unaccompanied children because many 'accompanied' children are not identified as potentially being at risk of harm. Many may not be in the care of direct relatives, even though the adult states that they are the child's mother etc, and because the child is in a family setting, it is often presumed that the situation is legitimate. In these cases children may never come to the attention of any team. According to the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering<sup>17</sup> there are between 8,000 and 10,000 privately fostered children in the UK, many of whom are West African. Under private fostering regulations, adults who are not the parents or relatives of the child or do not have parental responsibility and are caring for the child for more than 28 days must inform social services that they are caring for that child. Although this is a legal obligation, many guardians are unaware of this law, or choose to ignore it, as they do not want the authorities to know they are looking after a child.

In the instances where the child is within a family, the largest cause for concern is trying to prove the 'relatedness' between the child and the adults. In some cases, the adults purport to be the parents of the child, but cannot prove the relationship. In other cases, the adults claim to be aunts, cousins, uncles etc, and again proof of relationship cannot be found. It is also a common practice in many cultures that elders or distant relatives are referred to by these terms. For example, many African groups use the term 'Auntie', as a term of respect, but it may not reflect any familial relationship. Although very few children within such relationships are at risk of being trafficked, these relationships should be investigated, not just to ensure the person is who they say they are, but to make sure that the child is being cared for appropriately. In the case of Victoria

A 16 year old Congolese girl was found to be a domestic slave within a family. However, when an investigation was undertaken she was moved to the woman's sister in the north of the country, and the case was passed onto the nearest social services. The outcome of this case was unknown.

Another case featured a seven year old girl who had come in with her 16 year old 'aunt'. Due to their ages they were referred to social services. Soon after a 'father' turned up and said the child was only four years old. He agreed to DNA testing, which proved negative, but he continued to try and contact the child. The social workers responsible for the case asked for advice from the researcher as they thought the children were at risk of harm, but did not know what action to take.\*

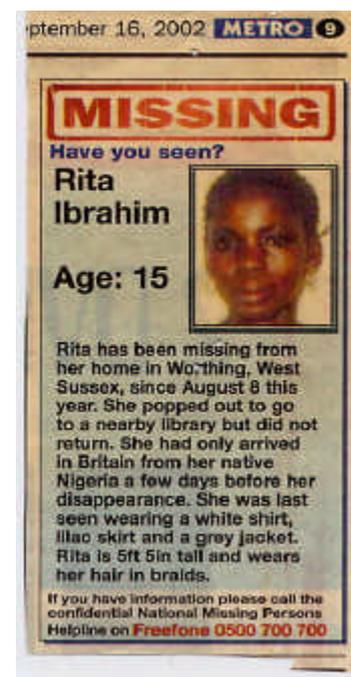
<sup>17</sup> Philpot, T (2001) 'A Very Private Practice: An Investigation into Private Fostering'. British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering.

\* Not all these cases denote trafficking, but they should all raise enough questions to prompt further investigation.

Climbie, her great aunt was looking after her, but this relationship was not enough to guarantee that the appropriate care was being delivered. Additionally, issues of relatedness should be investigated to find out why someone, for instance, should say they are a child's parent, when they are not.

Throughout the research, social workers referred to cases where investigations were carried out in relation to children within families, and it was noted that DNA testing is being used increasingly. In a number of the cases, this resulted in the children being removed from the situation. However, in one meeting with an Unaccompanied Minors Team, one senior social worker remarked that it was not their responsibility to investigate. This response is alarming as social services are the lead statutory body when there are concerns regarding a child's safety. It is also worth noting that one social worker stated that they did not know what checks the Immigration Service made when a child entered the country, and thought that immigration would carry out all the checks on sponsors and guardians, which they do not. Because they thought immigration carried out such checks, it was not considered necessary for social services to carry out the checks again. This further reflects a need for guidance and a better understanding of each authority's role and responsibilities in relation to children, whether unaccompanied or accompanied.

Another case that was highlighted by one social services after an intensive investigation revealed that Roma children were being brought into the UK to be groomed to work as thieves and pick pockets. The children lived within family, sometimes their own families, in other cases not. At first the situation appeared to be about truancy of individual children from school or their involvement with the police for offending. However, concerns started to be raised after one child informed a social worker that they had been stealing mobile phones because their father had given them a target of stealing £200 worth of phones a week. When the records of the children were checked the same names kept appearing and it was found that a number of families were intricately linked, and were spread over a number of boroughs. This investigation took over a year, but has now resulted in 22 children being placed on the child protection register as they are deemed to be at risk of significant harm.



## Nationalities

Although the appearance of, or rise in trafficking cases has been noticed over the last few years, there have been even more recent developments that have raised concerns. As noted above in regards to which nationalities social services accommodate or look after, there has been a decrease in Kosovan and Albanian males. This finding appeared in many of the boroughs, and in at least four boroughs, the person interviewed identified this as a significant change. In one case, the social services had predominantly dealt with Albanian and Kosovan

males, but over the last six to seven months had taken in Ugandan, Congolese, Angolan and Somalian, and noted that a high number of these were females. However, another borough, whose largest proportion had also been Albanian and Kosovan males (80% of the total), had recently received male Congolese minors and male and female Ethiopians, whilst another had recently taken in six to seven Ugandan girls, which was far more girls than they had had in the last four years. Additionally, it was reported that one borough had received 30 Ugandan girls since September 2003. These changes raise concerns about why so many girls, African girls in particular, are being brought in to the UK. In some cases, the girls have gone missing, but in many of the cases there are adults in the 'background'. This change in nationalities has been mirrored by other social services outside London. Over the past year three social services have noticed an increase in these nationalities and have linked cases of trafficking to such nationalities. In these cases, it is also girls that raise particular concerns<sup>18</sup>.

### **Age**

Another issue that proved problematic was the 'real' age of a child. Age dispute cases were found in nearly all the boroughs. Because of the imprecise way that a child's age can be assessed, there were many concerns that children were given ages by immigration that made them older than they were. This results in complications in the way that services are delivered and the type of services a child receives. Hillingdon and Kent Social Services have worked on an age assessment form, which aims to better assess the age of a child. The guidelines can be found in back of this report.

One borough stated that there were increasing numbers of children being age disputed by the Asylum Screening Unit (ASU) in Croydon. Although legally the ASU should refer any age disputes onto social services to carry out assessments, the young person was being referred onto the National Asylum Support Services (NASS). When the young person was dispersed by NASS they would appear at social services stating that they were under 18 and in need of support, again creating complications. In one borough the issue of missing children was raised and the social worker stated that they thought they had a number of missing children, but it was found that

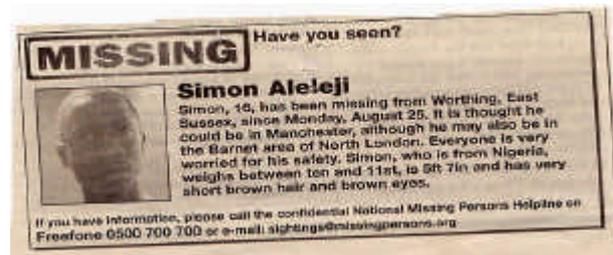
One social worker stated that a new 'scam' of enrolling children into judo competitions, was being used by Romanians to gain visas. In one case, a man presented himself to social services with three children. When checks were made it was found that he had previously brought in nine children and taken them to a judo competition. However, six were not allowed to take part, and their whereabouts are unknown.

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<sup>18</sup> How children enter the UK was not part of this study's remit, but it was noted by many that the documents children have are often fraudulent, incomplete, or non-existent. This makes it very hard for social services to know who they are dealing with. It was noted that the Home Office are increasingly disputing the stated nationality of asylum seekers as it is believed asylum seekers state that they are from a country that is more likely to gain them asylum status in the UK.

they had been deported. This had occurred between the time the Immigration Service had said the child was over 18, and the social services returning the forms stating that the person was a minor. Another issue raised were concerns regarding Section 55 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002, which states that asylum seekers must make their asylum claim at the first opportunity, otherwise they are ineligible for benefits. The concern of some social workers was that some children are smuggled or trafficked into the UK and do not claim asylum at the first opportunity. If they are then age disputed they are left without any support, which may not have been the case had the Home Office referred them for an age assessment.

As stated above, 26 of the boroughs stated they had concerns that 'something was happening', that they 'didn't look deep enough' when carrying out assessments or 'had missed cases in the past'.



Many were aware that there were questionable activities with a particular child, but did not have enough proof to remove the child from the situation. In many of the cases, social workers talked about the children being 'primed' before being talked to, and therefore recounting the story their 'family' had told them. Additionally, many children were known to lie from the start to cover up the real issues, and in other incidences children were referred to as 'being a clean slate' when first coming into contact with social workers because they had no documents to reveal who they really were. Over time, the real story was revealed, but that concerns were raised at the start when the child refused to reveal how they had come here, etc. In other instances, the fact that children arrived without any documents raised concerns, as the social worker would then have to find out who the child really was. All these various scenarios result in social services not getting the whole picture of a child's circumstance, raising concerns over what is being hidden. In the majority of the cases, the child has probably come into the country clandestinely or illegally, and is therefore not going to state how and why they have come here. However, it may be for more dubious reason that lies are told and the truth hidden. It is for this reason that it was felt by many social workers that investigations must be carried out and questions asked.

## **Documented cases of trafficking**

There were three forms of trafficking most commonly reflected in cases. These were children being trafficked for domestic servitude, prostitution and being exploited for claiming their benefits. There were also concerns that children were being exploited by begging, street crime and drug trafficking.

The information below summarises all the cases that were documented in 17 of the 33 London boroughs. Each bullet point represents one borough. A statistical breakdown of the cases can be found on page 28.

- Ugandan girl, domestic servitude; Congolese girl, 16 years old, domestic servitude.
- Liberian girl, living with a family in Mauritius where she was locked in and made to work (and possibly prostitution). She was told that if she came to the UK she would get an education, but in the UK she was locked up and forced into domestic servitude. She was sexually abused and managed to escape from a car, and from two men who were taking her to another man. She had been in the country for eight months before running away. She only disclosed the information after she had turned 18 years of age.
- Two Ugandan 14 and 15 year old girls who had been used as prostitutes by soldiers, were helped to flee by an 'agent'. He kept them captive in the UK and abused them. Other men also came and had sex with them. They managed to escape. One 16 year old Congolese girl used as domestic worker, beaten, sexually assaulted. One Angolan girl trafficked by white man and prostituted by him in the UK. States that these cases are the minimum number:
- One case of three Nigerian girls, aged between two and a half years and 11 years old, living in a house with three different parents. The children were being used as domestics, and social services were alerted after concerns from the school. Two other cases involving Nigerian and Somali children.
- Burundian, girl, 15 years old, working as domestic and withheld from school; West African girl, 17 years old, brought in as maid; Nigerian girl, started work as a domestic at the age of seven and brought to the UK when she was 13 years old. She carried out domestic work and was made to work elsewhere. Her abusers kept all her earnings.
- Child used as a domestic.
- 16 year old Kosovan girl found in a police raid of a brothel; 13 year old Vietnamese girl, brought into the UK and taken to a house used for prostitution, she managed to escape after breaking a window.
- Age disputed Chinese girl, placed in a house used for prostitution; 17 year old Congolese girl brought here for prostitution, but managed to escape. 16 year old Chinese boy, collected by social services from a police station, after he had been caught stealing. He disclosed he had been living and working in a restaurant to pay back the debt he owed; 16 year old Ugandan, prostituted in Uganda, before being brought here for prostitution; boy taken to social services by his 'brother', who claimed that he no longer wanted to look after him. It was found that they were not related and that the man had brought in other children, and was exploiting

them for their benefit; Ghanaian, ten year old girl, brought here to be used as a domestic. At the age of 18, she became pregnant and was thrown out of the house.

- Young girl found to have ingested heroine; another ten year old girl found with two suitcases full of cigarettes; 17 year old Ugandan girl prostituted.
- 16 year old Albanian girl, found in a brothel during a police raid, later went missing.
- 17 year old Eritrean girl, brought into the UK when she was 14 to work as a domestic. Managed to escape after three months.
- 16 year old Ugandan girl brought here for a 'better life', forced into prostitution
- A young Congolese boy being used by his 'father' for financial fraud. The boy was being placed into two different schools on alternate days; Pakistani boy brought in for the purposes of enabling the agent to receive his benefits; Ethiopian girl brought in by an Ethiopian woman claiming she had found her walking. Given money to privately foster the girl. The placement was terminated after it was discovered the girl was being used as a domestic servant.
- 17 year old Lithuanian girl forced into prostitution for approximately a year.
- Child used as a domestic worker.
- 16 year old Ugandan girl brought here for a 'better life', forced into prostitution.
- Ugandan girl referred by police, after she walked into a police station. She had been locked in a flat for approximately a year and continually sexually exploited.

<b>nationality</b>	<b>sex</b>	<b>age</b>	<b>prostitution</b>	<b>domestic servitude</b>	<b>prostitution &amp; domestic</b>	<b>exploited for benefits</b>	<b>restaurant work / contraband trafficking</b>
Albanian	F	17	1				
Angolan	F	16	1				
Burundian	F	15		1			
Chinese	F	age disputed	1				
Chinese	M	16					1
Congolese	F	16		1			
Congolese	F	17	1				
Congolese	M					1	
Congolese	F	16		1			
Eritrean	F	17		1			
Ethiopian	F	-		1			
Ghanaian	F	10		1			
Kosovan	F	16	1				
Liberian	F	-			1		
Lithuanian	F	17	1				
Nigerian	F	2 1/2		1			
Nigerian	F	under 11		1			
Nigerian	F	11		1			
Nigerian	F	13		1			
Pakistani	M	-				1	1
Ugandan	F	-		1			
Ugandan	F	14	1				
Ugandan	F	15	1				
Ugandan	F	16	2				
Ugandan	F	17	1				
Ugandan	F	-	1				
Vietnamese	F	-13	1				
West African	F	17		1			
West African	M	-				1	
-	-	-		2			
-	F						1
-	F	10					1
<b>Total</b>			<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

The above table includes cases that were provided in some detail, to the researcher from 17 boroughs. However, it does not include all the cases, as approximately another 15 were identified, but no detailed information could be provided. In some incidences, a social worker would state that they had had a 'handful of cases', whilst another stated that they had four definite cases, but felt that they had worked with more. One borough gave a mixed response as to how many cases they had. The team manager stated that they had had 12 cases of children who were missing, presumed trafficked, whilst another team member believed that there were about six or seven cases and did not mention missing children. This could be because of different perceptions of trafficking, although it must be noted that in some of the cases regarding the 12 missing, there were signs beforehand that indicated they may have been brought here for exploitative reasons. Finally, these statistics do not include the cases of the Roma children, as it was felt too hard to put a figure on this<sup>19</sup>.

As can be seen from the table, of the 16 nationalities from three regions, three are from Eastern Europe, four from Asia and the remaining 22 are African. In the case of the three Eastern European children, all were found in prostitution, whereas 57% of African cases were involved in domestic servitude. It is also interesting to note that out of the 22 cases where an age was given, 14 of these were 16 and over, and only nine below 16. This may help to indicate where the most at risk cases are, as less support and attention is afforded to those over 16 years of age. However, it must also be noted that in a number of cases the child's age indicates the age they were when they began to be exploited, and not necessarily the age they were when they were found by social services. It is also striking that only four of the cases are of male exploitation, and this is for benefit fraud or restaurant work, rather than domestic work or prostitution. Why so many girls are exploited rather than boys could be for at least two main reasons. The first is that boys are being trafficked, but into areas where they have yet to be found, such as agriculture, the building trade etc. The second reason is that girls are discriminated against from an early age in many societies, and so are often the first to be taken out of school, or sent away if the family has little money.

As a summary, it can be stated that the nationalities that appear most at risk are:

<b>African</b>	<b>Eastern European</b>	<b>Asian</b>
Angolan	Albanian	Chinese
Congolese	Kosovan	Vietnamese
Ugandan	Lithuanian	Pakistani
Nigerian		
Burundian		
Ethiopian/ Eritrean		
Liberian		

Whilst information on the traffickers was rare, it was generally found that they were of the same nationality, or ethnic origin, of the children who had been exploited. This did change in a number of cases where it was noted that African children had been brought in by white men. In these cases, the children had come into the country with the adult and

<sup>19</sup> Although not directly in relation to under 18s or included in the table above, one social worker stated that they believed that 20% of all single women they were in contact with or were accommodating, between the ages of 16 and 25 years, had been trafficked somewhere. After looking at total numbers accommodated, it was estimated that since 1997, 30 women a year who were victims of trafficking for prostitution had been accommodated by this particular social services.

passed through immigration together, with the adult talking on behalf of the child. This was concerning, as it was felt immigration should be carrying out checks on such cases.

## **How are trafficked children identified?**

### **Profiling**

The identification of trafficked children is extremely hard and apart from two or three social services who have developed, or attempted to develop, a 'profile' of a trafficked child, no guidance has been made available to help social workers identify trafficked children. West Sussex Social Services were able to develop a profile because the types of children arriving in their care were so similar, that an obvious 'type' could be identified. West Sussex Social Services were one of the first social services to take preventative measures to stop child trafficking. As a prevention mechanism, a profile of a trafficked child was developed and used by immigration to help early identification of victims. Aspects of this profile included:

- Male or female
- Aged 12 - 28
- May maintain to Immigration Service that they are older than they appear.
- Come from West Africa (Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Liberia) or from China.
- May have documentation which is not West African.
- Anxious/ distressed (particularly wanted to know where they are, use the phone etc).
- May have been drugged or held captive prior to flight.
- Girls may wear wigs.
- Girls often wear 'old style' clothes, but have modern, westernised, skimpy clothes in their luggage, often with British labels.
- Girls are submissive and cowed, uncommunicative and tense, and often fail to make eye contact, although it is recognised that this is a cultural norm for some.
- However, this may be the case even when the social worker and carers have known them for some time.
- Interest is shown by suspected perpetrators.
- On arrival a solicitor or legal representative has been informed by a third party of their arrival and attempts to make contact with Immigration or Social Services.
- Some of the young people who fit the profile are known to be accomplices of the perpetrators.

Work has also been carried out by Kent Social Services and Hillingdon Social Services, along with the various relevant authorities at the ports in developing profiles. However, the magnitude and diversity of passengers arriving at Heathrow and Kent is far more varied than Gatwick airport and developing a profile has proved difficult. Although profiling a 'trafficked victim' may help to guide social workers and immigration officers, this mechanism may result in children not being identified simply because they do not fit the profile.

In the majority of trafficking cases, the social workers have found out about a child that has been trafficked only after the exploitation has taken place. This is because children rarely know what their destiny is, or do not come into contact with anyone who may be able to help them before the abuse has taken place. The irony with prevention measures

is always that one may never really know for sure whether the child was being trafficked, as the exploitation may have been prevented. It should be noted that in the vast majority of cases, both in relation to prostitution and domestic servitude, the exploitation was taking place in an 'informal' setting. This was particularly so for African girls who had been sexually exploited. Their abusers appeared to come to the flats where they were being held, or they were driven to their next abuser. In the three cases of prostitution relating to Eastern European girls, their abuse took place in more 'formal' brothels.

### **Behavioural indications**

By following suspicions or 'hunches', social workers reported that they had taken children out of a situation that did not appear 'normal'. Examples of this are where a child was being looked after by a 'stranger' who found them on the street, or a private foster relationship. One social worker told of seeing a child with a man who stated that he was a close relation to the child. When the social worker saw them interacting, the child appeared withdrawn from the man, and there were no signs of such a relationship. However, one social worker stated that care must be taken to ensure that a child is not taken away from adults or is not reunited with family just because the social worker is aware following 'hunches', rather than basing this action on hard evidence and investigation.

### **Increase in 'wealth'**

Another indicator that rang alarm bells with social workers was a substantial increase in cash or consumer goods (mobile phones or designer clothes), which far exceeded the subsistence given to the child by social services. One borough reported that they had concerns regarding girls aged between 15 and 17 years old age, who after they had started to receive some support, looked much older, wore a lot of make up and were well dressed. This concern was reflected in other boroughs, and one noted that this was the case with Chinese girls, who were always expensively dressed. Another social worker raised concerns that children appeared to be hoarding their subsistence, as if they owed someone money, or went away for a few days and appeared to be working somewhere to earn more money. Furthermore, another borough noted that a number of unaccompanied children were involved in petty crime, yet the money they earned did not reflect 'income' from their crime, thus raising concerns regarding prostitution.

### **Possible indicators**

Developing a checklist of possible indicators that a child has been trafficked and exploited could help provide some guidance to social workers, these could include:

- Observe relationships and interaction between the child and adults they are with;
- If there are concerns, see the child on their own;
- Has the adult brought in other children?
- Poor self image, expressions of despair
- Has the child become withdrawn, appear scared?
- Are there signs of neglect<sup>20</sup>?
- If they are unaccompanied, be aware of any adults who may be having contact with the child and the kind of relationship they have with the child;
- Is the child having contact with unknown adults and/ or other sexually exploited/ exploited children?

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<sup>20</sup> The research found that there was a lack of confidence by social workers in determining whether a child had been trafficked or was 'simply' neglected by their carers. This issue appeared particularly apparent in cases of domestic servitude.

- Look out for obvious signs of 'wealth' - mobile phones, designer clothes, money;
- Is the child attending school?
- Does the child appear to be sexually active/ overt sexualised dress/ attire?
- Are there episodes of running away/ going missing from their placement?
- Are they truanting from school?
- Is the child keeping money back? If so, what for?
- Do they have any signs of physical abuse

Developing a checklist amongst individual social services could be a way for colleagues to learn from those who have dealt with, or been able to identify, a child at risk. Although a generic checklist should be developed for guidance, each social services deal with specific nationalities and communities, each of which may have their own methods of trafficking.

Although the checklist above may appear simple, this research has shown that it is sometimes the simplest questions that can reveal what is happening to the child. Additionally, it was found that by social workers asking the right questions, or letting the child know that they will be believed, children may disclose what has happened to them or what they believe is going to happen. In West Sussex Social Services, social workers told children who fitted the trafficked profile what they believed was going to happen to them. Because of the trust and secure environment that had been built up between the child and social worker, it appeared that this was a trigger for the children to disclose all that they knew, as they felt they would be believed by the social worker.

### **What support is provided by social services ?**

The support provided by social services to trafficked children depends on their age. Those under 16 years of age are accommodated under Section 20 (S20) of The Children's Act and are termed 'looked after', whilst those over 16 years are supported under Section 17. Children who are over 16 but have been assessed as being vulnerable, will often be accommodated under Section 20. In relation to accommodation, those under 16 are placed into foster care, or residential care homes. Over 16s are placed in accommodation according to their needs and how independent they are. This type of accommodation is often semi-independent in shared houses, hostels or bed and breakfast. In the case of over 16s (or sometimes over 15s in shared housing), most boroughs assign a social worker to every child to provide support for registering with education and health services etc, and can contact the social worker at any time. One social worker stated that some boroughs do not provide support to unaccompanied minors once they have received an asylum decision, whereas they provided help right up until they are 18 years old whether they had received a decision or not.

However, new guidance issued in May 2003 states that children who are in the UK should be looked after under S20 regardless of their age if:

- 'a/ there being no person who has parental responsibility for him;
- b/ his being lost or abandoned;
- c/ the person who has been caring for him being prevented (whether or not permanently, and for whatever reason from providing him with suitable accommodation and or care'.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Department of Health (May 2003) 'Guidance on Accommodating Children in Need and Their Families'. Local Authority Guidance.

In all cases, the local authority should carry out an assessment in accordance with the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families. If an assessment is carried out, and on the child's wishes, the social services judges that the child is competent to look after themselves, then the child can be supported under S17, which includes help with accommodation, but the child would not be considered a 'looked after' child.

The above guidance will result in the vast number of unaccompanied minors being supported as 'looked after' children. This ruling was seen as favourable by all those interviewed, yet they were concerned that no further resources would be put into the extra staff time and accommodation costs required

for the change in status of these children from S17 to 'looked after' children. In the case of trafficked children aged 16 and 17 years of age, this ruling will prevent unaccompanied minors being placed, for example, in bed and breakfast accommodation, at least until they are assessed. Until assessed they will be treated as 'looked after' children, and this may prevent children being picked up by their traffickers, or going 'missing' in the first few days after their arrival. Additionally, Section 20 children are also eligible for 'leaving care' provision, resulting in the child receiving support into the early 20s, and ensuring the longer-term safety of children.

## Police

Whilst not directly related to the support provided by social services, the response of the police to the issue is of importance, as they are also involved in the issue of child protection. It was stated by a number of social services that they had a poor response from the police when they raised issues of concern regarding a child's safety. In one case, a Ugandan girl had been brought into the UK by a British man and sexually exploited over a period of time. She managed to escape and was accommodated by social services. The girl's social worker was able to collect detailed information about the man, yet it appears that nothing was done with the information by the police. If action had been taken, there was no feedback to the social worker. Another borough noted the lack of response in relation to a girl who had gone missing from foster care and was known to be with an older boyfriend. Her younger brother remained in the care of the foster parents and has not heard from his sister since her disappearance. This caused concern amongst the social workers yet did not prompt an 'adequate' response from the police. The same borough

In earlier research three cases of girls from Africa who were 16 and 17 years old were found who had previously been prostituted, raped and seen their families murdered. As they were 16 years old, the girls were referred to social services in the borough where they were found. The three girls, all arriving independently, were assigned a social worker, but placed under S17 and only provided with bed and breakfast accommodation. Luckily for the girls, the social worker referred the girls to a voluntary organisation working nearby providing support to local young people abused in prostitution. In relation to these cases, the social worker was aware of the high level of need for the girls, but was unable to provide such support within social services and apologised for the fact. During this research, no mention was made of these cases by the borough.

See Martha case study in appendix

noted that they have cases where a young person is brought into the country by an adult agent and made to have sex with the adult. When the social services have told the police regarding the offences the 'police don't want to know'. It was generally felt by those who had concerns regarding the police response that the police saw the children as only asylum seekers, particularly if they were over 16 years of age, and not child protection cases.

Another issue raised in a number of boroughs was in relation to 'hot addresses'. These are addresses that appear a numerous times in relation to different children. In some incidences, social workers noted that they had passed on the addresses to the police but nothing had been done. One borough noted that this was where the police should be looking when there are concerns regarding a 'stranger' bringing in children, but felt that the response 'wasn't good enough'.

### **Safe accommodation**

A clear finding from this research is that the majority of social workers felt that there was a lack of appropriate accommodation. In some incidences children were placed in accommodation that was not suitable for the child's needs, either because they were unaware of the child's needs or because there was not any appropriate accommodation available. In the cases where the child was under 16, it was generally felt that trafficked victims should be placed in foster care, and with foster carers who have been trained to deal with vulnerable children. However, it was noted that they had not been trained to care for children who had been trafficked. In relation to over 16 year olds, it was found that more safe and appropriate accommodation was needed than was available. In one case, relating to a trafficked girl found in prostitution, the social worker related her concern to the researcher that the only accommodation available to her was in a residential home. She felt it was unsuitable because the staff had not been trained to deal with the specific issues around trafficking and the girl was being accommodated with children younger than her who would not understand her situation.

However, there were a number of cases where the accommodation chosen for trafficked children reflected their vulnerability. Under 16 year olds, were sometimes placed in carefully selected foster homes. Two cases involving 16 year old girls who had been trafficked for prostitution showed how they were accommodated according to their need. In one case, the girl was placed in a hotel used by the social services to accommodate vulnerable girls. The hotel has CCTV outside that enables monitoring. In the other case, the girl was placed in a hostel with women only. However, in the latter case, the social worker stated that the girl had been their first case of trafficking and that they had been running around like 'headless chickens', trying to find out what they should do for the girl, indicating the difficulty in finding appropriate accommodation easily.

Not all those questioned however agreed that there was a need for safe houses, i.e. a house just for trafficked children with specific security features. However, for those who had dealt with cases where they were concerned about child's safety, or felt that the child needed to be in a more safe environment, it was stated that a safe house was needed. In some cases, the lack of designated accommodation has meant that the social workers had spent a disproportionate amount of time trying to find appropriate accommodation. In one case a social worker stated how hard it was to find appropriate accommodation, particularly as all residential children's homes in the borough had been closed.

In relation to other support services, it was generally felt that the children are given a high level of care. Trafficked children have received counselling, health care and have sometimes been referred to the Medical Foundation for Victims of Torture. However, it was noted that children who were being looked after or supported by Unaccompanied Minor Teams were more likely to receive such services, than children who were not asylum seekers, and were being looked after or supported by Mainstream Children's Services. This was because of the specialism of asylum teams and their understanding of the difficult situations the children originally came from in their home country i.e. girls who had been raped by rebel soldiers in countries of origin, or had been child soldiers. In a few of the cases where Children in Need teams were questioned, it was noted that these teams would often seek advice from Unaccompanied Minor Teams. In one case, a social worker from an Asylum Team stated that when trying to refer non-asylum seeking children or families to mainstream services they are sometimes told that mainstream services do not deal with this group of people. Whilst it is positive that teams are developing specialisms, it was felt that some of this knowledge needs to be fed back into mainstream services, so that non-indigenous children who are not asylum seekers can get the level of care required.

In general, and as illustrated by the earlier case study of the three African girls, there are trafficked children being dealt with by social services that are not registered as being in need of special attention. Trafficked children have been abused and are traumatised, terrified and uncertain of what will happen to them. They require a high level of support to enable them to develop into 'stable' adults, yet in a number of cases, this level of support is not being delivered.

Although the girl was over 16, she had been referred to the Unaccompanied Minor Team dealing with under 16s, as it was felt she needed more support than was available from the Over 16s Team. The main concern of the social worker was that the staff in the residential centre were not trained on the issues of trafficking, and became 'caught up' in the drama of the situation. They were not able to help the girl in the ways she required, and in some cases went against her wishes, such as telling her mother in Albania that her daughter was in England. In this case, the girl had said she did not want her mother to know where she was, in case the traffickers asked her mother questions. Additionally, the girl had expressed the need to be with other girls who had been in the same position. Because of the social workers concern that if the girl was not properly looked after she would leave, she contacted the Eaves Housing pilot project, which provides support and accommodation for trafficked adult women. Eaves were unable to take the girl because she was under 18 years old, but did offer to provide outreach support. Sadly, the girl went back to her trafficker some days later.

## Conclusion

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In summary, London social services are aware of the issue of child trafficking, but are not always clear on the facts or how to approach the issue. In a number of cases, social workers have dealt with children where it is clear that they have been brought here to be exploited, i.e. trafficked. However, the vast majority of social workers interviewed had only suspicions and concerns that they were working with children who had been trafficked. The majority of social workers interviewed felt that there was a need for more information, and that they may have missed cases of trafficking in the past because they were not aware of the issue.

One initial problem regarding the lack of guidance on trafficking and information on trafficking, is the confusion between trafficking and smuggling. A clearer distinction needs to be made between children who have been smuggled and those that have been trafficked. This research found that this distinction is not often made, and whilst it is hard to draw a line between the two, investigations must be undertaken to ensure that the correct response is applied to the situation, as a child who has been trafficked has different needs to one that has been smuggled. For some social workers the issue of child trafficking may never be an issue in their working environment, but for all social workers the problem of child trafficking must be thought of when presented with a case that raises concerns. It is not to assume that all children who are brought here have been trafficked, but to consider this a possibility.

Based on this and other research, it is evident that children are being trafficked into the UK. Whilst it is recognised that the issue of trafficking can only be dealt with from a multi-agency approach, incorporating the police, immigration, social services and voluntary organisation, it is the responsibility of those who come into contact with such children to identify them and for social services to provide the care that is needed. One major step forward is for social services to start to discuss, within teams, across teams and across boroughs, the issue of child trafficking. Cross borough exchanges of information will aid in the awareness raising of the problem, ensure a more co-ordinated approach and assist in the setting up of systems to help prevent the trafficking of children. It is critical that social services are provided with the tools to undertake such work, as without such tools e.g. guidance, practice manuals, and safe accommodation, the protection of children and the prevention of trafficking will continue to be hindered.

It is positive to note that there are plans in some boroughs for Child Asylum Teams to become part of mainstream children's services. By ensuring that the issue of child trafficking becomes part of mainstream social services, more social workers will become aware of the problem, and help in the identification of trafficked children. However, the increase in awareness about trafficking and the increase in identification of children can only take place with a more co-ordinated approach, adequate training and on a multi-agency level. Earlier in the report it was stated that because of the specialism within the Asylum Teams, asylum seeking children's specific needs were addressed. It is hoped that this level of knowledge is transferred to the mainstream services, along with training on child trafficking. Whether or not this restructuring of services takes place, it is imperative that trafficked children be provided with a level of support that will ensure that the child is afforded, once again, their basic human rights and that the issue is seen as a child protection one, and not an asylum problem.

## Recommendations

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**Guidance and practice manual:** Based on the findings of the research, there is a distinct need for the issuing of guidance and a practice manual to social services on dealing with trafficked children. Whilst it is welcoming to see the issuing of guidance through the child protection route in London, there is a need for this to be rolled out nationally and not just for child protection officers, but all social workers who may come into contact with trafficked children. Additionally, whilst 'safeguarding' guidance will state the social services statutory responsibility, there is also a need for clear guidelines on how to deliver appropriate care and support in the form of a practice manual/ good practice.

There is also a need for the issuing of information and guidance to those outside of social services who may come into contact with trafficked children. As found in the research, teachers, health professionals and police also refer children to the social services, and more awareness amongst these authorities will ensure that trafficked children are identified and referred.

**Safe accommodation:** Measures need to be put in place that can be used by social services when they require safe and secure accommodation for trafficked victims. West Sussex Social Services ran a safe house, and although it was not evaluated, it was deemed a success as approximately 50% of the girls placed in the safe house did not go missing. One of the reasons that the safe house closed down was that the social services were no longer receiving a high number of girls that needed to be placed in the safe house, and the safe house was an expensive resource to keep if there were empty beds. However, if an independent service provider, or a voluntary organisation ran a safe house, children from anywhere in the country could be placed there, rather than just children in the care of the local authority. This would ensure that all children would receive a high level of support, no matter where they were found in the country, and there would never be empty beds.

**Training:** The need for training of social workers, and support staff, was evident throughout the research. There was a lack of knowledge regarding the issue of trafficking, and one response when the researcher asked who they could speak to about child trafficking in one social services was 'what is that?'. General awareness raising amongst staff and specialist training for those who may come into direct contact with trafficked children is required. This may be the training of child protection officers, although not all child protection officers were aware that they had had situations of child trafficking in their borough. In some cases this is due to the social worker taking the child out of the situation that put them at 'significant harm', and as a result not referring the case to child protection. It is for this reason that all those working with children in social services should be made aware of the issue. Additionally, training would be required when guidance is distributed on dealing with child trafficking.

There is also a need for training of immigration regarding the issue of trafficking, and the importance of treating the situation as one of child protection.

**Improved communication:** In the Government's Green Paper 'Every Child Matters' the issue of improved communication was noted as a vital requirement of effective

working. This was also made evident throughout this research. In the majority of boroughs it was noted that there was little contact between different teams, and that the level of communication was poor. One worker, when asked whether she thought other teams in the borough had cases of child trafficking replied that 'sadly, they all work in isolation from the Leaving Care Team, Children in Need and Referrals and Assessments. They do have a scrap book for concerns, but she has never seen anything regarding trafficking'. Although, this is the response from only one individual, the overall concern was mirrored by many others.

Although 'improved communication' is a recommendation, it is acknowledged that it is easier said than done. Through the introduction of guidance and possibly addressing the issue within a child protection framework, more communication will develop over the issue. Additionally, with the introduction of the recommendations from 'Every Child Matters', the issue will start to be addressed.

**Hot addresses:** One concern that was raised a number of times was the use of the same addresses in a borough by different children. These addresses are called 'hot addresses'. In some boroughs no checks are made to see whether addresses being used by asylum seeking children are being used in multiple cases. Systems should be put in place to ensure that this information is cross checked.

**Reporting of cases to Department of Education and Skills:** Information on child trafficking is hard to find, and no Government department has yet to carry out research into the scale of the problem in the UK. One means of gathering information should be for the DfES, as the lead agency for social services, to ask social services to submit information on cases of child trafficking. This would ensure that the information on who these children are would be systematically collected, and aid in the setting up of appropriate services. Currently, there is no systematic collection of such data, and therefore, no overview of the situation in the UK.

Furthermore, whilst this information would be collected by DfES it also needs to be made available to those working on, or with, trafficked children. Therefore, the setting up of a website, with limited access, could aid the exchange of information on child trafficking, and help with its prevention and aid the rehabilitation of trafficked children.

**Specific contact with the police:** The issue of information is also critical to the police, yet it was stated a number of times that information on children had been passed onto the police and no action appeared to have been taken. It is recommended that a point of contact is made within the police, preferably child protection, that deals with all information relating to trafficked children, and acts upon this information. It was highlighted in this study, and noted in earlier research, that asylum seeking children who go missing are often thought of as 'absconders' rather than children at risk. This attitude towards asylum seeking children appears to be mirrored in the way police react in general to concerns over asylum seeking children, including those at risk of being exploited. Therefore, more training and priority needs to be placed on the issue of child trafficking.

## **Good Practice and Guidance**

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**Kent Social Services Department**  
**July 2002**

### **INTERAGENCY PROTOCOL VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARRIVING AT DOVER**

#### **Introduction**

*This protocol has been agreed between Kent Social Services, Immigration Service, Kent Police and Migrant Helpline.*

It has been developed to address concerns about accompanied and unaccompanied children, including asylum seekers, arriving within Kent for whom there are concerns about safety. This might be because they have arrived with false documentation, because there are concerns about those arriving to meet them or because they fit the agreed profiles for children who may be at risk of trafficking/exploitation.

It should also be applied whenever concerns about trafficking/exploitation are raised for children who have come from abroad but who have not been identified at the port of entry.

#### **Purpose**

- a) To provide a framework for joint working between Immigration, Police and Social Services to identify and protect children and young people arriving in Britain via Kent who may be at risk of significant harm including trafficking and exploitation.
- b) To prevent the disappearance from 'care' of vulnerable children from abroad by disrupting any organised activity to exploit children.
- c) To share information with a view to tracing children from abroad who have disappeared from 'care'.

#### **Protocol**

1. Immigration Officers and other professionals who have contact with children and young people on arrival in Kent will alert Social Services whenever, following their assessment, they have concerns about the future safety of children or a young person under the age of 18 years arriving in Kent. This may be for the following reasons:
  - the person designated to collect the child or young person is neither a relative nor friend of the child or their parents;
  - the child has false papers;
  - the child meets the agreed risk profile.
2. Immigration will arrange for colour photographs of the child to be taken and finger prints, where appropriate.

3. The Social Services department will determine on the basis of information supplied from Immigration and their own assessment of the needs of the child from available information whether or not there are grounds to look after the child.
4. The Social Services department will need to assess whether there are grounds to accommodate the child under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 i.e. the child is lost or abandoned; that there is no person with parental responsibility for the child; or that the person who has been caring for the child is prevented from providing suitable accommodation or care.
5. If Section 20 of the Children Act is not satisfied then there must be reasonable cause to believe that the child is suffering or likely to suffer from significant harm and an Emergency Protection Order sought so that the child's welfare can be safeguarded. Consideration should also be given to Police Powers of Protection in emergency situations.
6. Where there are no grounds to look after the child but concerns remain about the child's future welfare, the Social Services department will ensure that written contact is made with the Social Services department where the child is intending to reside so that they can undertake any further enquiries that they deem necessary. Kent's Child Protection Team will also be informed by the County Asylum Seekers & Refugee Service Unit and they will make contact with the Child Protection Team responsible for the same area.
7. Whenever a child is looked after because of concerns for their future well being, the Child Protection Team must be informed of the child's arrival into accommodation and all available information passed on to the Police for checking.
8. Every effort will be made to place the child within one of Kent's residential establishments or foster homes.
9. The location of the child will not be divulged to any enquirers until they have been interviewed by a Social Worker and their identity and relationship/connection with the child established.
10. Where appropriate and possible, steps will be taken to make contact with the child's parents in the country of origin (Immigration may be able to assist with this) to find out what plans they have made for their child and to seek their views. It will be important to take steps to verify the relationship between the child and those thought to be their parent.
11. An assessment of the child's needs will begin immediately, undertaken jointly by the care/residential worker and the Social Worker.
12. This will include establishing relevant information from the child about their background and their understanding of the reasons for coming to this country. This should be carried out in a sympathetic manner and is intended to contribute to an assessment of need and not a determination of rights to enter the country. Interpreters must be engaged where needed.

13. It should be recognised by the Social Worker that emotional pressure and or threats may have been placed upon the child not to talk to the authorities. Any telephone numbers or addresses in the child's possession should be passed to the Police for checking.
14. The child will be appropriately supervised whilst in the placement and as far as possible, their telephone calls monitored for their own protection. It is permissible to take reasonable steps to safeguard the welfare of the child related to their age and vulnerability and any assessment that indicates that the child may be at risk of harm, including abduction, from an unidentified person.
15. Residential establishments and foster carers will remain vigilant about anything unusual e.g. cars waiting outside of the premises, telephone enquiries. All such information will be passed to the field Social Worker who will ensure that the Police Child Protection Team is informed. The residential establishment/foster carer will complete an assessment of vulnerability according to the missing person schedule supplied by the police as soon as is practical.
16. The Child Protection procedures will be followed and a strategy meeting convened within 72 hours of the Child Protection referral being received.
17. The purpose of the strategy meeting is to share information with the Child Protection team, the Immigration Service, the County Asylum Seekers & Refugee Service Unit and any other relevant professionals.
18. To develop a strategy for making enquiries into the child's circumstances. This will include consideration to undertaking a memorandum interview with the child.
19. To develop a plan for the child's immediate protection. This plan will include supervision and monitoring arrangements and will form part of the child's care plan. It will be reviewed at regular intervals. The strategy meeting will decide what information can be given about the child to any person who enquires and how the child should be supported.
20. Any carer or relative contacting the department should not be provided with information until they have been interviewed by a Social Worker.
21. If the young person goes missing, the carers will immediately inform EDT and the divisional Police who will inform Special Branch. The Social Worker will inform Immigration and the Child Protection Team.
22. Where concerns are identified by any agency about a child or young person who has entered the country and is living outside the Kent County Council and not looked after by Kent, a referral must be made to the local authority Social Services area in which the child is living.

## **Draft Protocol for Asylum Seeker Children Who Have Come to Join Family Members**

Sheffield Asylum Team

In view of the issues raised in the Green Paper, in response to the Victoria Climbié incident, we need to closely monitor all cases when children come to join relatives in the UK.

At the present time we are following the following protocols:

- Home Visit to carry out Initial Assessment at home, with the child seen in all instances within 7 days of arrival, CIN Planning Meeting to be held within the family home, again child to be seen at home within 7 working days.
- Appointment made with Asylum Seekers Primary Health Team. Worker to check that this has been attended.
- Referral to EMAS for education.
- Home Visits to take place every 6 weeks, with child seen within the home on all occasions.
- Telephone call to allocated school to check attendance and any concerns that the school might wish to raise, every 6 weeks, to be noted on file.
- Review CIN meeting to be held with child present after 12 weeks. Decision to be made at this meeting re: future support/ monitoring of child's care even if family/ carers now in receipt of Income Support for child\*.
- Where child is of school attendance age, a decision will be made as to whether home visits continue at a 6 weekly or 12 weekly interval for a further 9 months. A Review CIN meeting at the child's home will be convened 12 months after the case was first brought to the notice of Social Services. A decision will be made at this meeting as to whether the case needs to be monitored further or can be closed.

\* Where a young person is of school leaving age a decision will be made as to whether the case can now be closed.

## Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children: Collecting Information from Relatives

Sheffield Asylum Team

Where an adult is claiming to be a relative of an unaccompanied child it is important to establish the adult's identity. There are several checks to be undertaken with the adult before any decision is made about returning the child to their care, especially if they are not immediate family i.e. parents or siblings.

1. After initial contact with the relative arrange for an interpreter to be available at the first meeting with the relative.
2. It may be preferable for two workers to be involved in the interviewing of the relative.
3. Relatives will need to understand that you are not able to return the child to their care immediately. This is because you need to safeguard the child's well being and ensure they will be safe in their care.
4. Explain that you need to determine who they are as part of the assessment process for the child possibly returning to them. Make clear to them that you must safeguard the child.
5. Find out about the relative and how they are related to the child:
  - Ask their name
  - Date of birth
  - Address in the UK
  - Details of their immigration status
  - Ask for identity documents which you can photocopy
  - Ask how they are related to the child
  - Do they know the child's full name and age/ date of birth
  - Ask the name of the child's mother and father
  - Ask where the child and his/ her family lived in their home country, which town/village and region
  - Ask about their contact with the child in their home country
  - Ask when they last saw the child and whether they visited the child at the family home
  - Ask how many siblings were in the child's birth family.
6. This is not a comprehensive list of questions. You may pick up on something the relative is saying which will prove useful in making a decision. Similarly there may be follow up questions you may feel need answering by the relative.
7. Write down all the information they give you and ask the relative to help you draw a family tree which would show his/ her relationship to the child.
8. **Where the relative is being considered as a carer for the child, the child cannot be returned to their care until a fostering assessment on the relative has been completed and approved.**

## **Asking the child about his/ her family beforehand**

1. It is important to speak to the child about his family and this should be done with the help of an interpreter and as part of the assessment process.
2. It is acceptable to ask the child about their daily life with his/ her family in their home country. Record this information in the case file for future reference, should any relative contact the department then we can easily access the information the child has given.
3. Having collected information from the relative you will need to explore with the child how he or she sees their relationship with the presenting relative. This may mean asking the child the same questions as the adult.
4. You could also ask them when they last saw this particular relative and to describe the relative:
  - Ask how the relative is related to them
  - Where and when did you last see them
  - How old they are
  - What do they look like etc.

A decision can only be made when all the information has been gathered and evaluated.

The child should only be released into the care of the relative when the situation has been appraised. It will be necessary, in most situations, to ask the relative to return for further discussion on where they are going to take the child and to which address.

Again there should be evidence and confirmation of the address where they are taking the child. Contact the landlord to provide proof that the address actually exists.

Where the relative is offering to look after the child/ children for payments from Social Services then it is important to follow procedures for children who are looked after and placed with a family carer.

## **The Home Office has responsibility for the care of all asylum seekers.**

1. The Home Office perspective on unaccompanied asylum seeker children is that when a relative comes forward to claim a child, that child is no longer to be considered as an unaccompanied child.
2. The Home Office has recommended that financial support to the relative is dependant on the relative's immigration status:
  - Relatives who are asylum seekers can claim for support for the child from NASS
  - Relatives who have ELR (Exceptional Leave to Remain) and are receiving social security benefits can make an additional claim for the child
  - Relatives who have ELR and are in employment are able to claim family tax credit to support the child.

**It is important to take into consideration the Home Office's view when unaccompanied children are to be returned to relatives.**

3. When children/ young people are being returned to relatives that information must be given to:
  - The local Immigration Office
  - The Home Office/ NASS
  - The finance officer at Brunswick House (who has responsibility for claiming Home Office funding and data matching UASC).

**Continuing support to the child and his relative**

Where a relative is prepared to take care of a child it is important to check where the relative is going to live with the child. If the relative has accommodation problems it may be possible to offer them accommodation in Hull. For advice and assistance contact the Gateway to Housing worker at the Asylum and Refugee Team (*number given*) for advice on getting accommodation for relatives/ families in this situation.

## **Private Foster Placements**

Sheffield Asylum Team

In view of concerns about the possible association of trafficking with children and young people from abroad, placed with strangers/ family friends/ distant relatives, in what has been assessed by us as a private fostering arrangement, the following protocol will be adopted:

- Initial assessment carried out, with child/ young person seen at home. Child to be regarded as a CIN.
- CIN Planning Meeting to be carried out with Team Manager, or Senior Practitioner, within the home.
- Child/ young person to attend medical at Asylum Primary Health Care Team, (*address given*).
- Child/ young person to be referred to EMAS for education if of school age.
- Where young person has already reached school leaving age, the case can be closed if there are no apparent concerns after the second Review CIN Meeting held 6 months after case has been brought to the notice of the Asylum Team.
- Where a child/ young person is of school age, home visits should continue 6 weekly intervals in the first year. Prior to each home visit a telephone call will be held every 12 weeks. In subsequent years home visits will take place every 3 months, with CIN Meetings to be held every 6 months, until that young person reaches school leaving age, at which time, if there are no concerns the case can be closed.

## **Trafficking**

Sheffield Asylum Team have also developed notes for staff working in the Asylum Team on trafficking. The notes indicate issues/ incidents to look out for, based on previous experience with cases. The notes not only include advice to social workers, such as trying to persuade the young person not to use their mobile phone, but also include individual cases, with the nationality of the child, to alert social workers to other possible cases. For example:

- 14 year old Yemeni boy brought in and placed with Arab carer approved by Social Workers. After a racist incident the child was moved and disappeared within 48 hours – prostitution in London and possibly return to Yemen.
- Vietnamese, 5 children in 2 households. One boy found when fire occurred in cannabis factory caused by hydroponic lighting.

For further details on the notes, please contact Sheffield Asylum Team directly.

## Checklist for Health and Education Workers Who Have Concerns About Children Who May Have Been Trafficked

Name of Child/ Young Person:

Address:

	Yes	No
<b>1. Mobile Phone</b>		
A/ Pre Payment		
B/ No sign of UASC paying for upkeep		
C/ Changes in behaviour following Tel calls		
D/ Trips to London? Other visits on a regular basis		
<b>2. No financial problems paying fares</b>		
A/ Signs of saving for fares		
<b>3. Evidence of new clothes, even when not covered by clothing allowance</b>		
<b>4. Evidence of expensive equipment i.e. Hi-Fi/ jewellery</b>		
<b>5. Girls with succession of different men and / or older women</b>		
<b>6. Disappearance at regular times of day. Illegal work?</b>		
A/ Signs of extra money		
B/ No sign of extra money		
<b>7. Interpreters for young person. Prior know to the young person?</b>		
<b>8. Does the interpreter apparently interpret accurately?</b>		

Name of Referrer:

Date:

Signature:

Return to: (*Name*), Social Work Team Manager, Asylum Team

## **PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR AGE ASSESSMENT OF YOUNG UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKERS**

Assessment of age is a complex task, which is a process and not an exact science. This is further complicated by many of the young people attempting to portray a different age from their true age. In completing the assessment, please be mindful that clients have the right to legally challenge the conclusion.

UNICEF publishes the figure of 50 million children who are currently not registered at birth, depriving them of nationality, a legal name and proof of when they were born. Many societies calculate age in a different way from the method used in the UK; internationally millions of young people do not know their age. The Royal College of Paediatricians (1999) states that “in practice, age determination is extremely difficult to do with certainty. More over, for young people aged 15 to 18 it is even less possible to be certain about age”.

Young unaccompanied asylum seekers both at the ports of entry, and as in country applicants, sometimes give a stated age that is disputed by the immigration authorities. The Home Office will often, based purely on appearance, judge the young person to be an adult and refer directly to NASS. A proportion of young people are referred to the local social services department for an assessment of age. Additionally young asylum seekers self refer to social services and an assessment of their age becomes necessary.

A young person’s age is a key part of the information needed when making an assessment of need and subsequently for the appropriate provision of service. The Local Authority has a responsibility under the Children Act 1989 to assess whether a young person is in need and to provide services to safeguard and promote welfare.

It is important to explain to the young person that an assessment must be undertaken in order to identify what services may be provided . An assessment of age concluding that the asylum seeker is a minor will become an important component of the initial assessment.

The task of the assessing worker is to assess from a holistic perspective, and in the light of the available information, to be able to make an informed judgement that the person is probably within a certain age parameter. It is a process of professional judgment.

Age assessments are sometimes undertaken at the port of entry and the asylum screening unit where a decision is required in a short period of time, or sometimes at a later stage. In circumstances of age uncertainty, the benefit of doubt should always be the standard practice. When practical, two assessing workers is beneficial. Age assessments are also undertaken following the acceptance of a referral to social services to ascertain if the person is entitled to a service as a child. However, in some Local Authorities age assessments are undertaken on presentation when the stated age is disputed. Here the assessment can sometimes be undertaken over a period of time, and involve other professionals, for example residential social work staff, foster carers, doctors, panel advisors, teachers and other young people.

It is very important to ensure that the young person understands the role of the assessing worker, and comprehends the interpreter. Attention should also be paid to the level of tiredness, trauma, bewilderment and anxiety that may be present for the young person.

The ethnicity, culture, and customs of the person being assessed must be a key focus throughout the assessment.

It is also important to be mindful of the “coaching” that the asylum seeker may have had prior to arrival, in how to behave and what to say. Having clarified the role of the social services, it is important to engage with the person and establish as much rapport as the circumstances will allow. This process is sometimes known as “joining”. The assessing worker needs to acknowledge with the young person that they will have had to already answer many questions, and that it may be difficult and distressing to answer some of the questions.

In utilising the assessment framework, the practitioner should ask open-ended, non-leading questions. It is not expected that the form should be completed by systematically going through each component, but rather by formulating the interview in a semi structured discussion gathering information at different stages. The use of circular questioning is a useful method, as it is less obvious to the person being assessed that the questions relate directly to age, and hence may reveal a clear picture of age-related issues.

It is essential to feed back to the young person the conclusion of this assessment and a written form is included for this purpose. It is essential to feed back to the young person, the conclusion of this assessment, and a detachable form is included for this purpose.

# DOCUMENT FOR PILOT ON AGE ASSESSMENT

Name of UASC:

DOB UASC is claiming:

Name of Assessing Worker:

Date of Assessment:

## **1) Physical Appearance, Demeanour**

All assessments begin with initial impressions, made from visual presentation.

*An initial hypothesis of age range is formed based on height, facial features (facial hair, skin lines/folds, etc), voice tone, and general impression.*

*It is important to consider racial differences here e.g. It is normal in some cultures for boys to have facial hair at an early age and for girls to develop at different ages.*

*Life experiences and trauma may impact on the ageing process, bear this in mind.*

*Demeanour, it is essential to take account of how the person presents, style, attitude and authority and relate this to the culture of the country of origin and events preceding the interview, journey experiences etc.*

*It is useful to establish the length of time that the person has taken to arrive in the UK from the time they left their country of origin and include this into the age calculation.*

*It is important to note both the verbal and non-verbal (body language) behaviour of the person. The practitioner conducting the assessment should be observing factors such as the manner in which the person copes with the assessment, does he or she appear confident or overwhelmed, does the person appear to take a "one down" position or not.*

*Take account of differing cultural terms, e.g. some people may believe it impolite to make direct eye contact.*

*But remember to be aware of cultural variations in attitudes to elders.*

*Does the person appear to be uncomfortable with speaking to an adult?*

*Keep in mind that your position will be seen as one of power, which may influence the way the person interacts with you, your role needs to be clarified and the differences in the roles of social services and the Home Office.*

*A social history.*

*Do indicate to the young person that you are aware that talking about their family may be very painful and difficult for them; for some, it may be too painful to open up at this time. This must be understood and respected.*

*It is important to clarify the nature of their parent and sibling relationships as some cultures for example, call a half-brother their brother, or stepmother their mother.*

*Additionally ask if either parent had more than one wife / husband.*

## **2) Interaction of Person During Assessment**

The manner in which the person interacts with the assessing worker conducting the assessment will provide an indication of whether or not the person is responding in an age appropriate manner.



## **3) Social History and Family Composition**

Establishing as detailed as possible, a family tree will help the assessing worker to identify the likely age of the person compared with the stated age. Ages of parents, siblings and extended family should be established. In the case of deceased family members, the year and age at the time of death should be recorded. Drawing a graphic family tree is useful where names of family members and ages can be included, which may help the person to be more accurate whilst also allowing the person to feel involved. The information gained may indicate discrepancies or impossibilities, which need to be clarified.



*Remember to use open-ended questions, as this will allow for the person to disclose information without prompting.*

*Cultural considerations need to be taken into account as in some cultures it could be normal for a young teenager to be working full-time. A person may appear to answer a question about alcohol in a shy manner because their religion does not allow for this.*

*“Tell me what you did in your spare time” is the sort of question that can give an idea of the age appropriate interests and activities. Remember to relate answers to what would be appropriate in the young persons country of origin and culture.*

*Ask about peer relationships at school / work / neighbourhood*

*Questions about age related rituals should be asked; including forced marriage, and any sexual relationships.*

*Does what the person is describing seem age appropriate?*

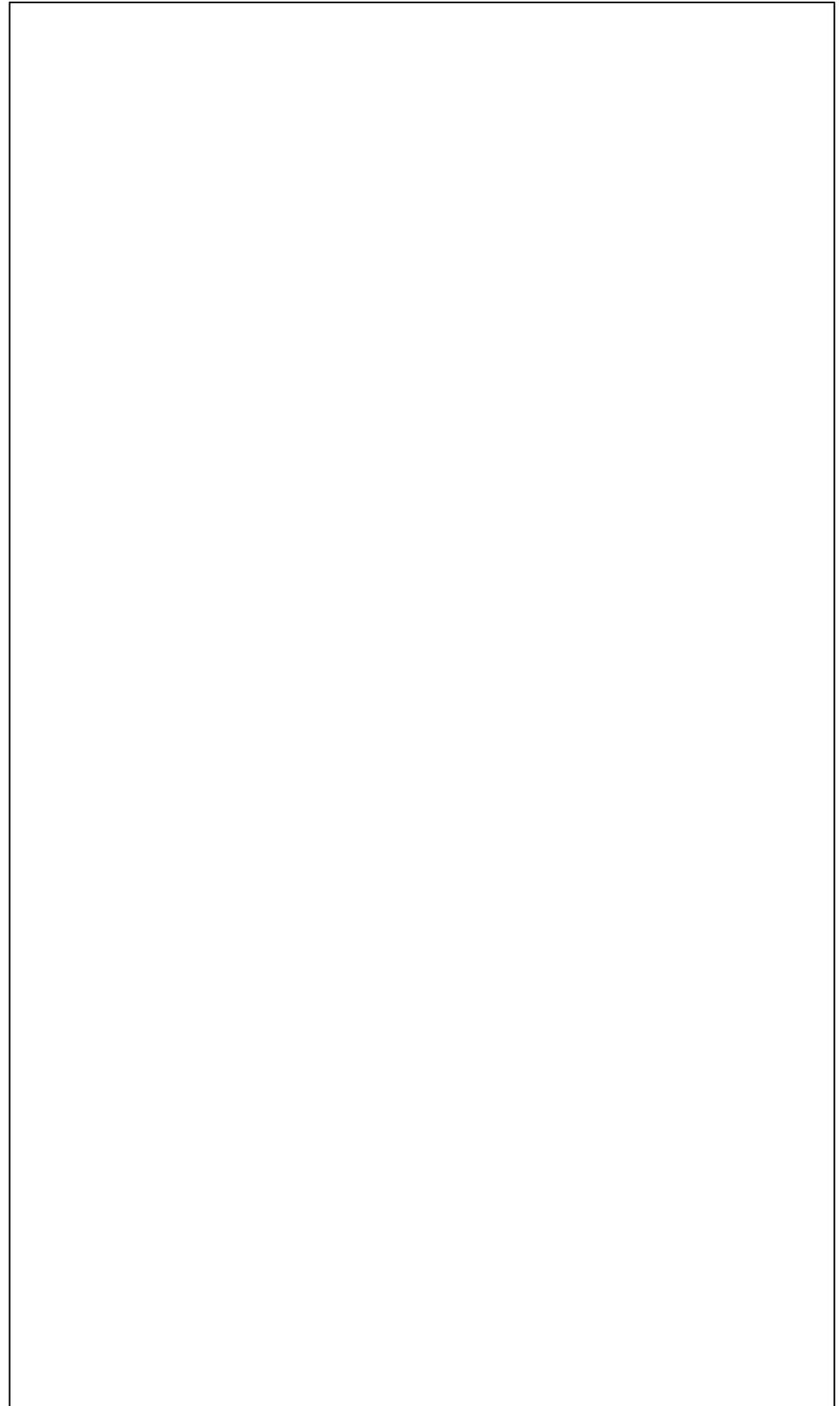
*Remember that some young people may possibly have been involved in armed conflict, have been child soldiers, involved in sexual exploitation and may have experienced a number of traumatic situations.*

*Answering questions related to many of the above may be too difficult and painful until a relationship of trust has been established.*

*Arranging for a person to be involved in social situations with other young people of the age stated, and observing how this person interacts and is accepted, can be useful.*

#### **4) Developmental Considerations**

Questions about the types of activities and roles that the person was involved in prior to arriving in the UK can often give an indication of age.



## **5) Education**

Obtaining a detailed account of the person's educational history is a valuable source in the age assessment process.

*Listed below are important facts that need to be gained:*

*Age at which school was started*

*Number of completed years spent in any school.*

*Establish if there were any gaps in education and if so, how long was the gap/s and why.*

*Adding the number of years of school attendance to the age school was started at, including possible disruptions in schooling should equate to the stated age.*

*Names and addresses of schools attended.*

*Subjects studied.*

*Gaining knowledge or consulting with experts educated in different countries, is useful to validate the authenticity of the information provided.*

*It may be possible to contact schools in some countries of origin.*

*e.g., it may be of use to know that it is the norm to have six years of junior and six years of senior school in some countries.*

*Has the person lived at home or have they lived on their own/in an independent setting?*

*Is there a clear impression that the person has never lived away from home and has been cared for by adults?*

*Does the person have experience in managing money, paying bills, arranging appointments, buying food and other supplies etc?*

*Is the person able to cook more than just a basic meal?*

*It is essential to take account of the local situation from which the person has come from – e.g. war, famine etc; and of cultural norms, for example it may not be expected that men should have any domestic skills in some countries.*

*Has the person stated a preference during the assessment of how they wish to live in the UK?*

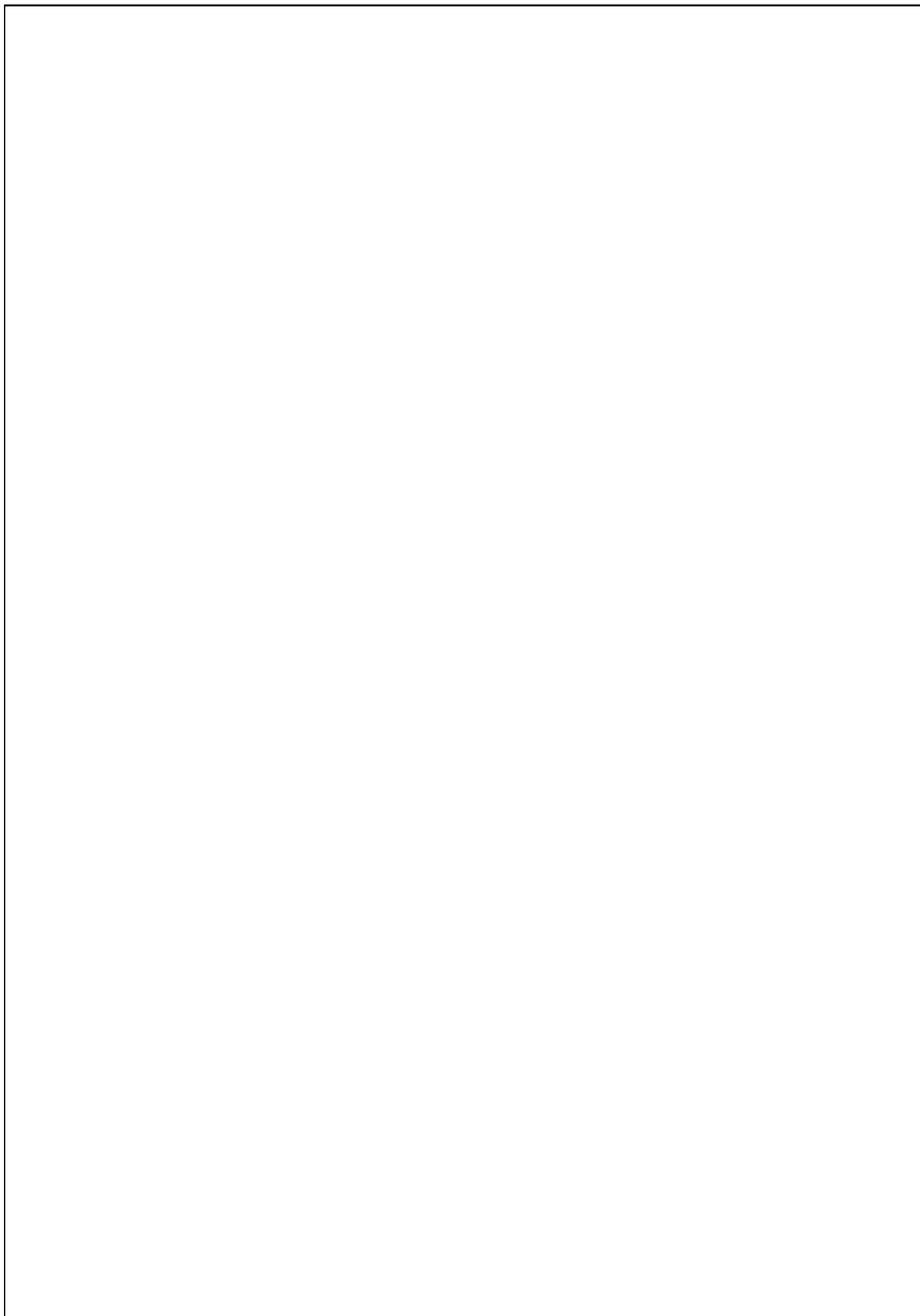
*Would this person be at risk living independently? Give reasons for this.*

*The assessing worker, may wish to pose a scenario to the person at this point or at the end of the assessment; that if the person is believed to be under 16 he or she will be placed in foster care where certain house rules will have to be followed, and be expected to be home at a certain times etc. The reaction to this may provide valuable information.*

## **6) Independent/ Self-Care Skills**

Understanding the level of ability, experience and confidence that a person has in being able to care for themselves can be an indicator of age.

The assessing worker may wish to ask the person directly how they feel about living in an independent setting and observe their reaction.



## **7. Health and Medical Assessment**

A medical opinion and view on age will always be helpful

*Questions about the person's health history can be informative in assessing age, both from the information given and the reactions to specific questions.*

*The Royal College of Paediatricians advised in November 1999 that there can be a five-year error in age assessment, invasive methods and medically unnecessary examinations of course should never be used. However, opinions and views on age from a paediatrician, GP, dentist and optician can be very helpful in assisting in the process.*

*Other sources may include foster carers, residential workers, school teachers, panel advisors, doctors, solicitors, interpreters and other young people.*

*Observations of how the person interacts in different social situations can provide useful age indicators.*

## **8) Information from documentation and Other Sources**

Documentation when available should always be carefully checked; authenticating documents however, is a specialist task.

If the assessment is an ongoing process, it is important to obtain the views of other significant figures involved with the young person.

## **9) Analysis of information gained**

### Conclusion of the assessment

*Key indicators of the conclusion.*

*The assessing worker should draw together the information obtained, and present his/her views and judgement on the age of the person being assessed, giving clear reasons for the conclusion. If this differs from the stated age, clear reasons for this disagreement should be given.*

*Please remember this process is not an exact science and that conclusions should always give the benefit of doubt.*

## **10) Conclusion**

**BASED ON THE ASSESSMENT, THE CLIENTS AGE IS:**

.....

**DOB IS ESTIMATED TO BE:**

.....

**Form to be handed to the person assessed.**

**ASSESSMENT OF AGE UNDERTAKEN ON**

NAME.....

NATIONALITY.....PORT REF.  
NUMBER.....

STATED AGE/DOB.....

**NAME AND ADDRESS OF LOCAL AUTHORITY UNDERTAKING ASSESSMENT:**

NAME OF ASSESSING WORKER/S

DATE OF ASSESSMENT:.....

**CONCLUSION**

PERSON IS ASSESSED TO BE OVER 18

PERSON IS ASSESSED TO BE A CHILD AGED:.....

ASSESSMENT IS INCONCLUSIVE AND FURTHER WORK IS  
NECESSARY

## Case Studies<sup>22</sup>

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*All names have been changed to protect the identity of the young people.*

### **Martha**

Martha is from Central Africa, and witnessed the murder of her mother, father and three siblings. They were political killings. Martha was able to escape with her younger brother and they met a friend of her father's called 'John' who took her to a camp, where many other political refugees were living. They lived there for three months, but the camp was discovered by the Government and the inhabitants fled. Martha was dressed as a boy by John and told she would be taken to England. They wouldn't let her brother go with her.

John took her to the capital for a few days and then they flew to London. John had all the documents and answered all the questions. He took her to a house in north London. Two other men who knew John were already there. After two weeks John disappeared, and Martha stayed for another two weeks. During this time other men would come to the house and repeatedly tried to have sex with Martha. She had to continually fight them off. Finally, after a man tried to rape her and Martha fought back hard, they threw her out and said she wasn't any good to anyone.

Martha then hung around the West End. She begged for food for three months, and had to exchange sex for money and food. A man advised her to go to an 'asylum place'. She went to this place and was referred to a social services. She was placed in a B & B, as she was 16 years old. There were racist issues regarding the B & B, and it was very dirty. After a worker from a voluntary organisation made a complaint, Martha was moved closer to their project. The voluntary organisation has had to provide a lot of support to Martha, as she is very traumatised, and the allocated social worker felt she was unable to provide the level of support needed.

Martha now has a child, but doesn't know who the father is. She had previously been sexually assaulted in her home country when she was 14, and she lost the baby. She really wanted to keep this baby. She is educated and has now started counselling. She mistrusts everyone, particularly men.

### **Lydia**

Lydia is a 16 year old Albanian girl. She came into the UK in a lorry, but her social worker thinks she has been here longer than she says. She chose to come here to get away from a pimp in Albania and an abusive brother and father. Her pimp had been her boyfriend for a few years, but he had locked her in a flat and made her have sex with his friends. He said that if she went with him to Italy she wouldn't have to sell sex anymore, but she did.

Lydia ended up in the UK thinking that she had got away from her boyfriend, but evidence suggests he has either followed her here, or another man has. She says she met an Albanian woman in north London, who said she would help her, but instead got her a job in a massage parlour. Lydia says she had only worked there a day when the police raided the premises, yet she also says at other times, that she had to visit clients in their homes.

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<sup>22</sup> Not all the case studies have come from social services, but from various organisations.

Lydia maintains that she left her documents at the client's house, but her social worker thinks that the trafficker took them. When she went missing from the social services she left papers and letters from her to her boyfriend saying how she loves him.

Lydia was housed in a children's residential home and received a general medical examination. She had agreed to be videoed for child protection proceedings, but ran away before this took place. She had asked to be housed somewhere with people who understood her situation, and the Poppy Project agreed to provide outreach services.

## **Lucy**

Lucy is a 16 year old Congolese girl. She was brought here by a man who was a friend of her deceased father. Her father died one and a half years ago, and her mother when she was seven years old. Lucy thought she was coming here for an education and to be cared for. Instead she was held against her will in the agent's house. She was told to sleep in the bathroom, the man beat her and tried to have sex with her. She was made to do domestic work.

Lucy was able to escape after a female friend of the agent took her to social services. She is now being looked after and is receiving counselling. She is much better now, as at first she wouldn't eat, but she still has nightmares.

## **Yusuf<sup>23</sup>**

Yusuf, from the Horn of Africa, was seven years old when he was adopted. His new father was a teacher and his mother a housewife. At first things were good and Yusuf went to school. But soon he fell behind doing all the chores his mother wanted him to do and she accused him of stealing from her and told her husband that Yusuf had to go. He was ten years old and for sometime slept on their veranda hoping they would take him back.

From then on Yusuf became a street child and earned some money running errands. When he was 13 he met a man who said he would help him and send him to school. He said he would have to go away for a short time but would come back. Before he left he took photos of Yusuf, naked from the waist up.

When the man returned, he took Yusuf to the capital and told him that he had found a family abroad to adopt him. Yusuf agreed and had a haircut and new clothes bought for him. They flew to Heathrow and were met at the airport by a middle aged white man. The two men knew each other and the boy was taken to the white man's house. The trafficker said that the white man would become Yusuf's father.

Yusuf stayed in the house for more than a month. The man asked Yusuf to sleep with him, and thinking he was being affectionate, Yusuf shared his bed. Gradually, the man started to abuse Yusuf. The abuse continued for the whole time Yusuf was there. They would go for walks together with the man's dog, so Yusuf vaguely knew the area. One day Yusuf ran away and found himself at a train station. He spoke very little English and spent all day looking for someone who might understand him. Finally a man asked him if something was wrong and Yusuf was able to communicate that he needed help. The man took Yusuf to an organisation that could help him and is now being looked after by social services and has been granted leave to remain.

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<sup>23</sup> This case study first appeared in summary in the UNICEF UK (2003) 'Stop the Traffic'.

The case has since been investigated by the police, but is made difficult by the fact that Yusuf didn't know where the flat was.

## **Mary**

Mary is a 16 year old Togolese girl. She was trafficked from Togo to Nigeria when she was five years old, to enable her to work to earn money for her sick mother. Her mother died and she stayed there until she was 14 years old. In Nigeria she worked for a family, and the mother sent her to work for her daughter in the UK. The family was rich and she saw them as her family. She called the mother 'mother'. Although she had to work hard, she was treated well.

When she arrived in the UK, she had to work hard for the daughter, look after the children, and work in their shop. But when the children no longer needed her help, she was thrown out. She found this hard to accept, as they were the only family she had ever known. She had no education and didn't know where to go. She lived on the streets, begging for about three months and at night would travel around on buses and the tube to stay safe.

She was eventually helped by a member of the public and referred to a refugee organisation. After many problems with social services, she was housed in independent accommodation, as she was streetwise. She is now studying, but it has taken her some time to come to terms with the trauma.

## Reporting of trafficking cases<sup>24</sup> (adults or children)

(please fill out as much of the form as possible, if you can't answer a question, no problems. You do not need to give a name if it may put the victim at risk)

**Name:** 'Sarah Jane'

**Age:** 16

**Nationality:** Angolan

**Sex:** Female

### **How did they get into the UK, and when did they arrive?**

She arrived in the UK at a London airport, via an agent. She arrived in March 2002, and came into social services in mid 2003

### **Did they choose to come? (kidnapped, deceived, willing)**

She was given a false story – deceived.

### **What did they think they were going to do? (waitressing, nanny, prostitution?)**

Education

### **What was the reality? (prostitution, forced to work)**

She was prostituted

### **What happened when they arrived?**

She was taken to the home of a friend of the man ('Paul') who had picked her up in Angola. Paul sorted out the finances, transport etc, but didn't get involved in the actual movement.

### **How did the traffickers retain control over them? (retention of documents, threats to their family, physical violence?)**

The social worker thinks he kept her documents.

### **Who were the traffickers?**

The trafficker was a white male. He had met her in Angola – he told the social worker that he preferred black girls/ women and that his other girlfriends had been black. He paid for her to come here and she stayed at his friend's house. 'Paul' and his friends had sex with her.

### **What has happened to the traffickers?**

Don't know. The social worker found the girl's mobile phone of and rang his number. She got the impression he had done this before. He talked about regularly travelling to West Africa and his liking of black women. He said he used to date her best friend. The social worker asked lots of questions – did he know that she was 16 etc. He was quite open about it until he found out she was a social worker.

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<sup>24</sup> The following reporting of case forms were completed by social workers. Various information has been omitted to protect the child.

**How did they get away from the traffickers?**

She was able to run away and came to south London – the man's house was in south London. Her patterns of behaviour began to change and she tried to commit suicide. When she was in hospital she wanted her phone with her. This was when the social worker was able to check it and also saw photos of him and other men. Mentioned the paying back of debts.

**What assistance has been provided to the victim?**

S20 of the Children's Act– social worker, foster care but now in semi-independent care. Counselling. Social worker thought foster care was better than a safe house in this case, as the girl needed one-to-one attention and in a family environment – otherwise it was felt she would leave. The social worker felt that the foster carer and social services were good as they were experienced and sensitive to the issue. Checked she attended school etc. The social worker believes efficient working it is down to effective communication and supportive strategy.

**What other support do they need?****Have the police been informed and if so, what action have they taken?**

The police were passed his name, phone number etc, but she doesn't know if they did anything.

**Have the victim's family been informed? Are they able to help?**

She said her family had all died.

**Have they accessed the asylum system?**

Yes

**If so, what is the status of the application?**

ELR (Exceptional Leave to Remain) – until 18.

**Additional Information:**

She disclosed about the prostitution only at a later date, and after the social worker had been working with her for sometime.

**Who took the report? How did they come in contact with this person?**

Social Worker

**Date:** December 2003

Please return to: Carron Somerset, ECPAT UK, Thomas Clarkson House, The Stableyard, Broomgrove Road, London SW9 9TL tel: 020 7501 8927

## **Reporting of trafficking cases (adults or children)**

(please fill out as much of the form as possible, if you can't answer a question, no problems. You do not need to give a name if it may put the victim at risk)

**Name:** 'Lydia'

**Age:** 16

**Nationality:** Albanian

**Sex:** Female

### **How did they get into the UK, and when did they arrive?**

She came in by a lorry, but doesn't know where. She said she arrived in September, but social workers think she has been here longer.

### **Did they choose to come? (kidnapped, deceived, willing)**

She chose to come to get away from her 'boyfriend' pimp in Albania. They got together when she was 14, but he locked her in a flat and she had sex with his friends. Unsure as to whether she saw this as prostitution or not. He said she could stop if they went to Italy, and it is thought she was prostituted in Italy. She speaks Italian, and also speaks Greek. Says she went on a family holiday to Greece.

### **What did they think they were going to do? (waitressing, nanny, prostitution?)**

She didn't know what she was going to do, thought she was running away from her boyfriend. Evidence indicates that he is in the UK, or some other man is, and could have brought her here.

### **What was the reality? (prostitution, forced to work)**

She went to a park in London, where she says she was found crying by an Albanian woman who said she would help her. The woman found her a job in a sauna and she gave 'massages'. Says she was only working there a day when the police raided. In her bag was a 'sexy nurses' uniform, with a Velcro top half. The girl also say at other times that she visited clients at their homes.

### **What happened when they arrived?**

### **How did the traffickers retain control over them? (retention of documents, threats to their family, physical violence?)**

The trafficker took her documents, she maintains she left the documents at a client's house.

### **What is their status within the UK?**

UASC (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker) – S20

### **Who were the traffickers?**

Don't know – she said she had come here to escape her boyfriend and abusive brother and father. The brother is in prison for prostitution in Albania.

**What has happened to the traffickers?**

When Lydia left she left some papers in the home that had a man's name, mobile number and letters saying how she loved him. These have been passed these onto the police.

**How did they get away from the traffickers?**

She was picked up by the police in a raid on the sauna she was working in. However, it transpired that she had gone to the adult asylum team previously, but as an 18 years old.

**What assistance has been provided to the victim?**

She was housed in a children's residential home, received general medical examination. She went to emergency a number of times – she was vomiting blood and had a chest infection. Conflicting reports on why she had a bad back – said to social workers it was recent but told doctors she had it since she was ten. She saw a dentist and optician. Got new clothes. She was due for a gynaecological examination but ran away before the examination took place.

**What other support do they need?**

She was referred to a voluntary organisation for outreach work and she was open to seeing them. They couldn't find a safe place for her that would also have staff. The social worker found the whole process frustrating. The staff in the residential home were not trained in the issues and got caught up in trying to help her rather than providing the adequate support.

**Have the police been informed and if so, what action have they taken?**

The police knew her from the start. The child protection officer was notified. She agreed to be interviewed by the police on video for child protection proceeding, but she ran away before the interview, so this did not take place. The child protection officer is starting to work closer with police at Heathrow Airport.

**Have the victim's family been informed? Are they able to help?**

When she was at the children's home, she gave them her mother's number and an Albanian speaker rang the mother. The girl had asked them not to say where she was as the trafficker was in contact with the mother, but they revealed she was in England. Lydia spoke with her mother and said they hadn't spoken for a long time. However, on the Thursday before she ran away she came back to the home with a video of her with her family, dated July 2003.

**Have they accessed the asylum system?**

Yes. The solicitor said she had a very strong case. She had cigarette scars all over her body and small nicks on her ears, nose etc, where a knife had been used to threaten her. Based on this it was felt she would be granted asylum.

**If so, what is the status of the application?**

On going

**Additional Information:**

Lydia started making phonecalls before she went missing. There was an agreement that she could go out alone, after she made it clear she would leave if she didn't have any freedom. She went out alone on the Thursday before she left for a few hours and came back with some money. On Friday she went out with a social worker and ran off. They drove around looking for her and saw her approach a man and talk to him. The social

worker stopped and asked if she wanted to come back, and it was obvious she was high on drugs. There had been no previous issues regarding drugs.

She accessed social services mid October and in mid November. The social worker was surprised she stayed so long.

She has been reported missing to the police.

A voluntary organisation working on the issue of commercial sexual exploitation have said they would pass the information on to the women they work with in case they see her.

She didn't come across as someone who had only been in prostitution for a few days. She started seeing the boyfriend when she was 14 years old.

She was very affectionate and when they asked her what she wanted she said that no one had ever given her choices.

**Who took the report? How did they come in contact with this person?**

Social Worker

**Date:** November 2003

Please return to: Carron Somerset, ECPAT UK, Thomas Clarkson House, The Stableyard, Broomgrove Road, London SW9 9TL tel: 020 7501 8927

## **Reporting of trafficking cases (adults or children)**

(please fill out as much of the form as possible, if you can't answer a question, no problems. You do not need to give a name if it may put the victim at risk)

**Name:** 'Lucy'

**Age:** 16

**Nationality:** Congolese

**Sex:** Female

**How did they get into the UK, and when did they arrive?**

October 2003, via agent who was a family friend of her deceased father.

**Did they choose to come? (kidnapped, deceived, willing)**

Yes, but deceived.

**What did they think they were going to do? (waitressing, nanny, prostitution?)**

Would be cared for and educated.

**What was the reality? (prostitution, forced to work)**

She was held against her will in the agent's house for one month. She was told she had to sleep in the bathroom, she was beaten by the husband, and he tried to have sex with her. She was made to do domestic work. As the case is still very new they don't know if there were other children in the house, but there was a woman (the wife).

**What happened when they arrived?**

He already lived here and took her to his house.

**How did the traffickers retain control over them? (retention of documents, threats to their family, physical violence?)**

Locked her in, false passport.

**What is their status within the UK?**

**Who were the traffickers?**

Congolese man

**What has happened to the traffickers?**

Doesn't know – recent case.

**How did they get away from the traffickers?**

She was helped to escape by a female friend of the agent. She took her to social services.

**What assistance has been provided to the victim?**

S20 of the Children's Act, foster care, counselling.

**What other support do they need?**

**Have the police been informed and if so, what action have they taken?**

Not as yet, the social worker wants to be able to find out whether there are other children in the house as there may be child protection issues.

**Have the victim's family been informed? Are they able to help?**

Her mother died when she was seven years old and her father died one and a half years ago.

**Have they accessed the asylum system?**

Yes

**If so, what is the status of the application?**

Waiting.

**Additional Information:**

She is much better than she was when she came into their care. She wouldn't eat, but will now eat. She still has nightmares – which many of the cases do.

**Who took the report? How did they come in contact with this person?**

Social Worker

**Date:** November 2003

Please return to: Carron Somerset, ECPAT UK, Thomas Clarkson House, The Stableyard, Broomgrove Road, London SW9 9TL tel: 020 7501 8927

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*The Children's Act, 1989*

*Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.*



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