

Human Trafficking

Driver – Political

Related Drivers – Equality, Diversity & Human Rights, Fraud, Neighbourhood Policing, Organised Crime, Violent Crime – Gun and Gang Violence, Violent Crime – Sexual Violence, Violent Crime – Domestic Violence, Asset Recovery, Collaborative Working Between Police Forces, Border Security & Immigration, Criminal Legislation, Prostitution, Safeguarding Children, Data Mining, Advances in Technology, Information Sharing, 2012 Olympics

Background

Between 100,000 and 800,000 people are trafficked into the EU each year. At a conservative estimate, there are at least 5,000 trafficking victims in the UK. An increasing number of people, the majority of them women and children, fall victim to trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation or forced labour, both within and over borders.⁶

In response to the rise in human trafficking the Council of Europe drafted *The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No. 197)*.¹ The Convention was opened for signature 16 May 2005 and on 24 October 2007 it received its tenth ratification thereby triggering the process whereby it entered into force on 1 February 2008. The Home Secretary signed the convention on 23 March 2007.

The treaty focuses mainly on the protection of victims of trafficking and the safeguard of their rights. It also aims to prevent trafficking and to prosecute traffickers. In addition, the Convention provides for the setting up of an effective and independent monitoring mechanism capable of controlling the implementation of the obligations contained in the Convention.

In response to the convention, the Government introduced the UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking and formed the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC). Key measures of the Plan include:

- Introduction of Child Trafficking Telephone Advice Line to assist and advice social workers, police and immigration staff.
- The creation of a national referral mechanism to help with formal identification of victims
- Provision of a single point of contact for the referral of victims onto support service
- Establishing specialist teams at ports of entry.²

The United Kingdom has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United States to improve international cooperation to combat human trafficking. The MoU expands the ability of the US and UK law enforcement agencies to share information, intelligence, and leads about criminal organisations involved in trafficking.³

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights inquiry into human trafficking showed that there is no reliable estimate of the total number of adults and children trafficked in the UK.⁴ The report's main conclusion is that a more victim centred approach to dealing with human trafficking is necessary in order to meet the UK's human rights obligations.

The Home Office and the Department for Children, Schools and Families guidance document, '*Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked*', states that under section 46 of the Children Act 1989, when the police are concerned that unless they take action the child is likely to suffer significant harm, they may use their powers to either remove a child to a safe place or prevent the child's removal from a safe place, for example a hospital.⁵

There are specialist teams in police services across the UK have expertise in dealing with trafficking cases. There are also joint intelligence teams in key locations across the country comprising immigration, police and other agencies which help to identify child protection concerns. Additionally the guidance document states,

'...police services should take all necessary steps to ensure that children at risk of being trafficked do not fall through the gap between operational teams'.⁵

According to the guidance,

*'...it is important that officers investigating offences committed by children who may have been trafficked are able to recognise and identify such cases. The child's welfare needs and safety should be taken into account and appropriate safeguarding processes should be followed.'*⁵

The Home Affairs Select Committee conducted an inquiry into human trafficking in the UK which was published in 2009. The Committee reported the following findings and recommendations:

- The UKHTC main task is data collection to ascertain the scale of trafficking in the UK to raise public awareness but reasonable estimates of the problem are not available. Although the nature of trafficking – hidden crime where victims cannot or dare not make themselves known to authorities for fear of retaliation, or they do not realise they are victims. The Committee recommends the UKHTC is properly resourced for the work of data collection and should be given a high priority.
- There is a clear need for greater awareness training in police forces so that officers realise that domestic workers, too, may be victims of trafficking and are not merely possible illegal immigrants. This training should cover signs such as deliberate confiscation and retention of identity documents and reports by employers that domestic workers have absconded from their homes.
- There was concern about the continuing tendency to view trafficking as an immigration crime, coupling it with facilitation or people smuggling, which is completely different. This increases the risk that victims will be treated only as those whose immigration status needs to be determined, it also poses the threat that those whose immigration status is not in doubt—UK nationals or those from the EEA, or

migrant domestic workers with the correct visas, for example—will be ignored altogether.

- The Committee recommends that the Home Office continue to provide funding at its original level for the specialist Human Trafficking unit of the Metropolitan Police beyond 2010, until it can be proved that sufficient expertise on identifying victims of trafficking and dealing with the perpetrators has been spread through police forces throughout the UK.⁶

During the evidence collection stage of the inquiry, members of the Metropolitan Police's specialist human trafficking unit, stated most of the intelligence on which they based their operations came from the local level, the borough commands, who knew where brothels were located, or who were approached by victims or by local residents concerned about some activity, or who were tipped off by, for example, cards in telephone kiosks advertising 'Girls Newly Arrived'. The unit also received intelligence via Crimestoppers or from NGOs assisting possible victims. However, they believed that, when dealing with the organised criminal gangs,

"You do not take out such people by routine policing": it requires officers with experience in the way in which such trafficking gangs operate and of how to put together information from a variety of sources, national and international, to make a complex case.

Similar evidence was given by the Poppy Project, funded by the Office of Criminal Justice Reform who provides accommodation and support to women who have been trafficked into prostitution, argued:

"What we do not have is on the street officers, apart from the Met Human Trafficking Team, specialist officers who are out there identifying and bringing cases to court and I think that that has to be a priority. We have to date 75 cases of trafficking or trafficking associated cases that have gone to court. It is dreadful that, since we started the project in 2004, there have only been that many cases. That is what makes the UK a haven for traffickers because there are not the police out there who are doing that work."

Potential Skills Needs

Case building skills – bringing together information from a variety of sources and build a case, in the instance against instance of human trafficking

Communication skills – with potential victims trafficking both adults and children

Collaborative working skills – working effectively with colleagues within other forces and other law enforcement agencies to stop trafficking and protect those who have been trafficked

Community policing skills – to work with local communities to identify cases of human trafficking

Covert internet investigations – investigate cases of child sexual abuse online and stay ahead of shifting trends in online child exploitation

Information sharing skills – to provide effective information to partner agencies

Intelligence analysis skills – make the links between information / intelligence gathered

Intelligence gathering skills – to scan multiple data sources and follow leads

Intelligence information sharing skills between police forces, other intelligence and security agencies, communities and local partners

Inter-agency working skills – to work effectively with two or more governmental agencies

Observation skills – to recognise and identify signs of trafficking

Multi-agency working skills – to work with other agencies to stop trafficking

Partnership working skills – to work effectively with other agencies to a common goal and standards

Victim and witness care skills - to treat victims and witnesses appropriately and sensitively

¹ [Council of Europe \(2008\) 'Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings \(CETS No. 197\)'](#).

² [Home Office & Scottish Executive \(2007\) UK Action Plan on Human Trafficking. London: The Stationery Office.](#)

³ NPIA (July 2007) *NPIA Digest*. London: NPIA p 40.

⁴ [House of Lords and House of Commons Joint Committee on Human Rights \(2007\) Human Trafficking: Update. HC 1056, London: The Stationery Office Ltd.](#)

⁵ [HM Government \(2008\) Safeguarding Children Who May Have Been Trafficked. Nottingham: Department for Children, Schools and Families.](#)

⁶ [House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee \(2009\) The Trade in Human Beings: Human Trafficking in the UK. Sixth Report of the 2008-09 Session. HC 23-I, London: The Stationery Office Ltd.](#)