



HL Consultancy
Media and Communications
Email: Lou.bloomfield@googlemail.com
Mobile: 07792 285009

2 July 2008

Internal Trafficking - What is it?

In addition to children being trafficked into the UK from abroad, British national children or young people can also be victims of trafficking within the UK. This is often identified in situations where the victims are moved from one location to another irrespective of distance. This may be actually within a town or between towns and cities in the UK, very often for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

These young victims are passed between groups of men for the purpose of being sexually assaulted and raped by them and others in their network. This is a serious, organised crime.

What makes it a crime?

Section 58 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 specifies that internal trafficking within the UK is an offence punishable by up to 14 years imprisonment.

A child is any person under 18 years. The trafficking of children and young people can be defined as the movement of children for the purpose of exploitation. This movement can be either into, within, or out of the UK. It is irrelevant whether a child has consented to their transportation or not.

Children can be trafficked for various reasons including sexual exploitation, forced labour, domestic servitude, criminal activities, benefit fraud, organ harvesting or illegal adoption.

Victims

Internal trafficking is not an issue exclusive to girls and young women, young boys and men can also be victims of this crime. There is however, far less known about the nature and extent of internal trafficking and sexual exploitation of boys and young men.

The Grooming Process

The perpetrators of this crime employ a grooming process to draw their young victims away from their homes. The first step is often the beginning of a relationship with an older man, who the victim will regard as their 'boyfriend' and is usually more than 5 years older. He will entice the child, who is often female, into an 'exciting' experience by inviting them back to his flat, house or other location. Whilst there, the victim will then be offered enticements such as jewellery, clothes, alcohol and will be encouraged to stay out late, this will lead to

eventually not returning home at all. More often than not there will be a sexual relationship with the boyfriend.

At a later stage the victim will be encouraged to go missing from home. At some point they will be subjected to violence and abuse which then gives the 'boyfriend' total dominance and control over them. The victim will then be taken to other cities or towns within the UK and introduced to other groups of men. The boyfriend will ask the victim to provide sexual favours to these men, because they are his friends. By this time the victim is in no position to refuse the 'boyfriend' and will at this stage be very frightened and compliant. They will be in a strange town or city and their family will not know where he/she is. The victim may know the area they are in but not the name of the town or city so even if they did call the police or their family they would be unable to give them a location. This element of control, exercised by the boyfriend and other men, makes the victim vulnerable and they become dependent on them.

Some victims have described being subjected to extreme physical and sexual violence, including rape. In addition to being sexually abused and trafficked to different cities within the UK, other victims have described being used to transport and deal illegal drugs.

Indicators of risk

At the start of the grooming process young people often exhibit behaviour that can alert family, friends and professionals that they may be at risk of being sexually exploited.

These behaviours include:

- Going missing from home
- Associating with older people especially older men
- Sexual activity with older men
- Breaking away from family and former friends
- Involvement in drug/alcohol use
- Stop going to school
- Possession of gifts and/or money
- Drug and/or alcohol abuse
- Secrecy about where they are going and who they are associating with

The Extent of Internal Trafficking

The true extent of this type of crime has been made difficult to identify because victims are often too afraid to make a formal complaint against the perpetrators. The UKHTC has been made aware of anecdotal evidence that this type of crime is happening across the UK and it involves organised gangs.

By being alert to the indicators of risk and by taking positive action however, we can start to gain a better understanding of this type of trafficking and ultimately work to prevent it.

What needs to happen?

Police officers and investigators need to be aware of internal trafficking, the grooming process, the triggers and indicators of risk.

All too often in the past, the victims of these horrendous crimes have been called 'child prostitutes'. This term is totally unacceptable; no child can ever consent to being abused in this manner. They are victims of crime and the terminology used by all agencies needs to reflect this.

In circumstances where young people are displaying the indicators of risk for this type of crime, police officers should notify the relevant Children's Service as soon as possible. By working in partnership with services that support children, information can be shared and a practical approach taken towards investigating the crime.

It is of paramount importance that the victims of this crime are made safe and that their welfare is considered at all times.

What is happening?

The Internal Trafficking Working Group

The UKHTC has set up a strategic group to look at how to tackle this type of trafficking. The group was created as a result of Operation Glover in 2006, which identified this type of trafficking through joint agency working between the UKHTC, Sheffield Sexual Exploitation Service and South Yorkshire Police.

The working group is acknowledged in the UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking for its work in seeking to define the extent and nature of this type of trafficking.

Detective Chief Superintendent Steve Cotterill from Derbyshire Police chairs the group. A sub-group has also been set up to look at issues such as disseminating information to law enforcement agencies, and creating PNC markers to enable the police service to have an early warning capability. In addition to this the group wishes to raise awareness of this type of crime throughout the UK.

The group will work closely with CEOP, who are the ACPO lead for child trafficking.

Steve Cotterill, Chair of the group said:

"In my view, internal trafficking of children is taking place in every Force Area in the UK. All too often, the victims of these offences are not readily identified, complaints are rarely forthcoming and victims can be uncooperative as they are frightened of the consequences of their actions from Police, parents and Social Care agencies. Offending is conducted in a very secretive manner.

"Police officers, Health, Education, Social Care professionals and the excellent support projects working with young people have a key role in looking for the indicators of child trafficking and abuse. We all have a part to play in ensuring that victims are identified at a very early stage and the necessary protection and support measures can be put in place to care for them. The overriding consideration must be for the welfare and safety of the children. Working

together and exchanging information to target the perpetrators will greatly assist in this regard."

Film for schools

The UK Human Trafficking Centre and other organisations have sponsored the production of a short film about the recently identified problem of "internal trafficking".

The UKHTC is one of six agencies involved in the film, which include CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection), the Home Office, the NSPCC, Street Reach Doncaster and Sheffield Children's Services.

The film depicts a young girl who is being looked after by her boyfriend. As the film progresses Jade is asked to be 'nice' to his friends and at this point she realises all isn't quite as it seems with her boyfriend.

When completed, the film will be available as an education pack to be used in schools nationwide. It is hoped to teach young people not just how to avoid being drawn into this abuse, but also what to do to help others already victimised.

A case study

Karla had just reached her 13th birthday when she met a young woman aged 18 years old. This young woman introduced Karla to her older boyfriend. Karla then began to go missing from home and stopped attending school.

Until this time there had been no problems with Karla, either at home or school. She began to go missing more regularly and for longer periods of time, on one occasion she was gone for three weeks. Her parents were distraught. Karla eventually told her mum that she had had sex with an older male, aged 28 years, who she thought of as her boyfriend. She also disclosed that she had been taken to other cities in the UK when she was missing from home. She knew the name of the other cities but had no idea of the location within the cities of the houses she had been taken to. There were other men at these addresses. Karla was abducted, raped and held prisoner in a flat for two days before she managed to escape. She told the police what had happened but the male who raped her could not be identified.

Karla and her family were offered support through a sexual exploitation service, social workers and the police, but she still continued to go missing, such was the control that the men had over her. Eventually she was placed in secure accommodation for her own safety.

When she was in the secure placement Karla disclosed a catalogue of abuse carried out by these men, including sexual assault, rape, physical abuse, use of drugs, being plied with alcohol and other substances, being imprisoned and being used to carry drugs to other cities. It was also clear that in addition to this, the men who had abused her, had threatened her with further violence to herself and her parents if she told anyone what was happening.

Karla was not alone in being abused in this way as other girls, some who were friends of Karla, were also being sexually exploited and trafficked by these groups of men.

