

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT A CHILD

- 1 Follow your child protection procedures. For further information on this and for government guidance visit [nspcc.org.uk/childtrafficking](https://nspcc.org.uk/childtrafficking)
- 2 Don't raise your trafficking concerns directly with an accompanying adult.
- 3 Try to find out more about the child and speak with them on their own, with an interpreter if required.
- 4 It's likely that trafficked children and young people will find it hard to trust interpreters. It's good practice to avoid the interpreter being from the same area in the country of origin as the victim. This reduces any perceived link the child may make between the interpreter and known people in their country of origin.
- 5 If age-appropriate, explain to the child or young person who you are and what your role is. Children come into contact with many professionals and can be confused by the different roles.
- 6 Ensure the police have followed relevant Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and Department for Education guidance relating to children who may have been trafficked.
- 7 Ensure that the Crown Prosecution Service guidance on prosecuting child victims of trafficking has been considered. Where there is a credible suspicion that a child may have committed criminal acts as a result of their trafficking experience, Modern Slavery legislation and guidance states that there is a 'strong public interest to stop the prosecution'.
- 8 If convicted, ensure the child is subject to a thorough pre-sentence report taking into account their vulnerability, pre-migratory life experiences, mental health and the degree to which the child was groomed or coerced into committing the offences.
- 9 A criminal conviction doesn't necessarily mean the child was not trafficked. Continue to ensure that the child is supported and protected in line with the child care legislation.
- 10 If the child is bailed or released into local authority care, safeguards should be put in place to address the risk of the child going missing or being trafficked again. If the child goes missing, ensure they are initially circulated by police as either high or medium risk missing. Guidance is clear that no child under the age of 18 should

be circulated as low risk. Avoid using terminology like "absconder" as it's possible the child may have been coerced into leaving, or may even have been abducted

- 11 If repatriation is being considered for the child, ensure assessments are completed both in the UK and in the child's country of origin (by the Local Authority liaising with social services/police in the relevant country). Consider the likelihood of the child being moved back to the UK (or elsewhere) if repatriated, and the safeguards and plans that can be put in place to prevent this. This is particularly important for EU children who have freedom of movement within the European Union.
- 12 Ensure that the child's immigration status is regularised (if the child is not a European Union national). You may need to support them to seek advice from an immigration solicitor.
- 13 For support, information or advice, call the Child Trafficking Advice Centre on 0808 800 5000, email [ctac@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:ctac@nspcc.org.uk) or visit [nspcc.org.uk/ctac](https://nspcc.org.uk/ctac)

# NSPCC

## GET IN TOUCH

Trafficking and slavery need a child protection response, and it's vital to consult with all relevant agencies to assess the situation.

The NSPCC's Child Trafficking Advice Centre is here for you to talk through any concerns you may have for a child. We can also deliver free awareness-raising presentations to professionals.

For more information, call **0808 800 5000** and ask for the Child Trafficking Advice Centre, email [ctac@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:ctac@nspcc.org.uk) or go to [nspcc.org.uk/ctac](https://nspcc.org.uk/ctac)

# Stop child trafficking and slavery in its tracks

The NSPCC's Child Trafficking Advice Centre  
**0808 800 5000**

ADVICE FOR YOUTH JUSTICE PRACTITIONERS



Since September 2007, the Child Trafficking Advice Centre has worked on **more than 1,300 cases<sup>†</sup>**, which had either clear trafficking or safeguarding concerns.

<sup>†</sup> Figure correct to September 2015

**The NSPCC's Child Trafficking Advice Centre (CTAC) is a specialist service. It provides free guidance and support to professionals with safeguarding concerns for children being moved across international borders, either to or from the UK.**

**The service is staffed by experienced social workers and a National Crime Agency police liaison officer. It provides free training and awareness-raising presentations, attends network and child protection meetings and produces child trafficking reports for courts.**

## WHAT IS CHILD TRAFFICKING?

Child trafficking is the movement of a child or children for the purpose of exploitation. It is a criminal offence under Modern Slavery legislation. A child is any person under the age of 18, and children cannot consent to being exploited.

Children can be trafficked into and out of the UK, and within the UK itself. They can be trafficked by parents, extended family members, known adults from a child's community or by strangers. Trafficking often involves organised international networks of criminal gangs.

**Child trafficking is child abuse.** It requires a child protection response and multi-agency working, irrespective of the child's immigration status or whether they have engaged in criminal activity.

Children can be exploited through:

- \* **sexual exploitation**
- \* **criminal activity (eg cannabis cultivation, street crime, moving drugs, benefit fraud, immigration fraud)**
- \* **domestic servitude**
- \* **labour exploitation (eg restaurants, nail bars, agricultural work, factories)**
- \* **illegal adoption**
- \* **forced marriage**
- \* **unreported private fostering arrangements (for any of the above exploitative purposes).**

This is not an exhaustive list and children are often exploited in more than one way.

## WORKING WITH TRAFFICKED CHILDREN

Child trafficking and modern slavery are not terms that most children will understand. All trafficked children have different experiences and responses to what they have been through. Some children know they are being abused but others may not realise until they are out of the exploitative situation.

Building trust is crucial. Children and young people are more likely to engage with you when they feel safe and feel that they can trust you. Explain to the child that you have to share information with professionals to make sure they're safe.

Children can be prevented from disclosing abuse in a number of ways. Children may be afraid of their traffickers, which could prevent them from opening up. Some children and young people may be influenced by religious, spiritual and cultural beliefs used negatively by the trafficker(s), or they may be afraid of UK authorities.

Some children may view the police and social workers with suspicion, rather than as professionals who can help. Even if children are in a situation where they feel safe they still may not be able to give clear details of their experiences.

Some children and young people may run away from safe situations back to their traffickers. This can be confusing, as the child appears to be deliberately returning to an abusive environment. This behaviour should be seen in the context of grooming and professionals should work with the child to help them feel safe.



**“To reduce trafficking, they should focus on the adults who abuse young people – the traffickers who bring the children to this country.”**

**Sara<sup>†</sup>, trafficked to the UK from Burundi**

<sup>†</sup> name changed to protect identity

## IDENTIFYING TRAFFICKED CHILDREN

Police might not always recognise trafficking indicators at the point of arrest. Therefore, it's important that all professionals working in the youth justice system, such as youth offending practitioners, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), solicitors, magistrates and judges are alert to the signs.

Trafficked children might come into contact with the youth justice system after being coerced into committing criminal acts. These could include cannabis cultivation in cannabis factories, entering the country with false documentation, pick pocketing, drug smuggling, drug dealing, producing or selling counterfeit goods, or as victims of fraudulent or forced marriages.

Some children exploited through criminal activity believe that they owe large sums of money to their traffickers – this is known as debt bondage. Other children may be coerced or 'groomed' into committing offences. For some children their offending behaviour may be indicative of wider safeguarding concerns.

Even if a child has already been charged or convicted it's important that any trafficking suspicions are fully investigated. This will help make sure that the appropriate safeguards can be put in place to prevent the exploitation from happening again.

**If there is credible evidence that a child may have been trafficked, Modern Slavery legislation and case law dictate that this should be taken into account when considering any prosecution against the child.**

## RISK INDICATORS – QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER<sup>†</sup>

- 1 Does the child have a valid passport, ID card or visa? Has the child been given a false or fraudulently obtained ID?**
- 2 Establish if the accompanying adults are the child's parents or legal guardians. Do they have authority or consent to care for the child?**
- 3 Do you have concerns about the relationship between the adult and the child (eg can the adult prove that they are related? Does the adult insist on interpreting for the child or refuse to allow professionals to see the child alone?)**

- 4 Has the child been found in a brothel or sauna? Do they have symptoms such as sexually transmitted infections, signs of a sexual or physical assault, or are they pregnant?**
- 5 Has the child previously been reported missing? Children can go missing from care – often within 24-48 hours of being placed – for fear of retribution against their family, or concerns about debt bondage or having been coerced into leaving by adults and subsequently re-trafficked or abducted.**
- 6 Has the child been arrested for illegal entry, use of false documents, begging, pickpocketing, or working in a cannabis factory? Have offences been committed across the UK without apparent means to travel?**
- 7 Does the child understand that what they have done is illegal? Often children in cannabis factories are told they are growing vegetables or herbal medicine. Some children may have been groomed to believe that they are not committing an offence**
- 8 Is the child relieved to be picked up by police as they mistakenly think the police have come to rescue them, when in fact the police are responding to a report of crime?**
- 9 Does the child indicate fear and concern for their family back home when removed from their position of exploitation?**
- 10 Have the accompanying adults kept the child away from universal services (eg education, health) until they came to your attention?**
- 11 Does the child possess money or goods and is unable to explain how they came to have them?**
- 12 If the child is living with unrelated adults or extended family, has the Local Authority been informed so a private fostering assessment can be completed? Any adults caring for a child under 16 (or 18 if they have a disability) who is not a close relative for more than 28 days have to inform the Local Authority. A private fostering assessment can then be undertaken to ensure the living arrangement is safe and appropriate for the child. This applies to all children irrespective of their immigration status. Many children who are trafficked to the UK live in unsafe situations because the living arrangement is not reported to the Local Authority.**

<sup>†</sup> These indicators are based both on CTAC's experience in working on over 1,300 cases, as well as the UK government's guidance, *Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked*, 2011.