

Monthly paediatric update newsletter for all health professionals working with children – put together by Dr Julia Thomson, Paediatric Consultant at Homerton University Hospital, London, UK. Housed at www.paediatricpearls.co.uk where comments and requests are welcome!

Child Trafficking – What you need to know

- For the first time, *children have overtaken adults as the main victims of trafficking* with 4,550 referrals made for children in 2019 under the NRM (national referral mechanism).
- Child trafficking is defined by the United Nations as the “**recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt**” of a child (person under 18 years) for the purpose of exploitation and recognises that a child cannot consent to his or her own exploitation, regardless of whether he or she seemingly agrees to any element or genuinely understands the situation.
- Children do not have to move across countries to be trafficked and **50% of all trafficking of children in the U.K. is happening to British national children within the U.K. itself.**

Where do children get trafficked from?

After trafficking from within the U.K. itself, the most common places children get trafficked from, in descending order, are: 1. Vietnam, 2. Eritrea, 3. Albania, 4. Sudan, 5. Romania, 6. Afghanistan, 7. Nigeria, 8. Iran, 9. Ethiopia

This short animation outlines one boy's precarious journey from Vietnam into criminal exploitation
<https://www.ecpat.org.uk/the-secret-gardeners>

What are the main forms of trafficking in the U.K.?

- 50.2% criminal exploitation (including recruitment into 'county lines')
- 26.3% labour exploitation
- 16% sexual exploitation
- 3.9% domestic servitude
- 0.6% organ harvesting - While numbers are very small, children trafficked through North Africa and the southern Mediterranean are more likely to be subjected to organ harvesting on their journey than if they arrive by another route
- **Sexual exploitation often coexists with other forms of exploitation as a means of control**

What can you do about it?

- Whoever identifies the child victim is responsible for notifying the local authority (duty social worker). Children are most often identified by police, the home office or border staff but can be identified by healthcare or education professionals.
- Victims often encounter disbelief about their age and story. There is now a presumption of truth about age.
- **There are better outcomes for victims if the professionals they interact with are informed and alert to current trafficking context and the challenges these persons may be facing**

Above information from ECPAT'S: Child Trafficking in the UK 2020: A snapshot <https://www.ecpat.org.uk/child-trafficking-in-the-uk-2020-snapshot>

A new safeguarding website aimed at increasing Prevent referrals from friends and family, www.actearly.uk, was launched this month. Families can share concerns that a loved one might be at risk of becoming radicalised, there are tips on how to spot the signs and FAQs on the new national Prevent advice line. Watch a 40 second video at <https://www.counterterrorism.police.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/ACT-Early-Social-Media-video-subtitled.mp4> **Prevent advice line 0800 011 3764**

A focus on [The Modern Slavery Act 2015](#)

The Modern Slavery Act is one key piece of legislation that makes provisions for protection of child victims of trafficking.

- It enshrines a statutory defence for young people that are coerced into criminal activity because of their exploitation
- It gives a presumption of truth about age of child victims of trafficking
- It includes the statutory duty to notify to the National Referral Mechanism (duty undertaken by the local authority (social workers) typically, not by medical professionals)
- It allows for independent child trafficking guardians ([ICTGs](#)) who coordinate between agencies and act on the best interest of the child. There are plans to expand the numbers of ICTGs from Jan 21.

[Every Child Protected Against Trafficking](#) (ECPAT) is a leading children's rights organisation working to protect children from child trafficking and transnational child exploitation. They run a number of training courses for professionals and staff: <https://www.ecpat.org.uk/Pages/Events/Category/training>.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/child-trafficking/> has easy to follow information on child trafficking.

If you are worried about a child:

- ◆ Contact the police on 999
- ◆ Contact your local child protection services. Find their contact details on the website for the local authority the child lives in.
- ◆ Contact the Modern Slavery Helpline to get help, report a suspicion or for advice. Call 0800 012 1700 or fill in their [online form](#).

Understanding 'County Lines'

County lines is a form of criminal exploitation, in which criminals groom and manipulate children and vulnerable adults into drug dealing, often in towns outside their home county. Its name comes from the mobile phone 'lines' that are used to control where the young person delivers the drugs. Grooming into this activity often involves coercion, violence (incl. sexual violence) and weapons.

- It's a nationwide issue with 90% of police forces reporting 'county lines' activity.
- 4,000 London teenagers alone are likely to be involved.
- 15 - 17 year olds are most vulnerable but there are case reports of children as young as 6yrs being targeted.
- During covid, some young people were made to masquerade as key workers, Deliveroo workers etc. to facilitate drug distribution.
- **There is no one kind of child that is likely to be exploited** and children from stable backgrounds can be recruited easily through exploitation of difficulties in peer and/or parental relationships.
- Young people are targeted face to face and over social media.

See The National Crime Agency's 2018 report for more context: <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/who-we-are/publications/257-county-lines-drug-supply-vulnerability-and-harm-2018/file>

There are many resources to learn further about this issue and we would recommend the children's society #lookcloser campaign:

<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/Look-Closer-Leaflet.pdf>

Spread the word and please display this poster in your workplace or include the topic in upcoming teaching.

NCA-CEOP is part of the National Crime Agency. NCA-CEOP works with child protection partners across the UK and overseas to identify the main threats to children, and coordinates activity against these threats to bring offenders to account. Click [here](#) for parent information on county lines.