

Child Slavery



What is Child Slavery?

Many children and young people are encouraged to help around the house or get a job to earn pocket money. But for children who are victims of Modern Slavery in the UK, their 'job' means working for long hours,

often in dangerous or illegal conditions, for little to no pay.

Children – those under 18 - are particularly vulnerable to Modern Slavery. The kinds of slavery they might fall victim to are forced labour, forced criminality, domestic servitude or sexual exploitation. While these things occur all over the world, sadly there are many children facing this reality within the UK. Sometimes they are immigrants, some legal, some illegal. Many come to the UK to work to pay off a family debt, while others come to be fostered by relatives or family friends only to be exploited by their carers. But foreign nationals are not the only children at risk. British children, especially those in care, are also vulnerable to being exploited. Perpetrators often groom them with attention and gifts to be sexually exploited and trafficked throughout the country. Others may simply end up in exploitative work conditions, being forced into illegal activities like drug production or theft.

How many children are affected?

It is difficult to know how many children are trafficked for exploitation in the UK, as so many are 'invisible'— working in private homes and out of the public eye, often falling through the gaps of social and immigration services. Children that are fostered privately are not subject to visits from child services, and are often vulnerable to being forced into domestic servitude or used for benefits fraud. Many don't know who to talk to, and are afraid to go to the police because of their immigration status or threats of violence from perpetrators. Children who are being used for forced labour in order to pay off debts may feel responsible for their situation, and not want to put family members back home at risk by going to the authorities. But we do have some statistics:

UK Statistics

- 602 children were believed to have been victims of human trafficking in the UK in 2013; 40% were trafficked for sexual exploitation (NCA, 2014). However, the government believes this is only the tip of the iceberg.
- As many as 60% of child exploitation victims go missing from services, and are likely return to their abusive work situations, often through fear of reprisals on them or their families (EPCAT, 2007)
- 14% of all cases of child trafficking referred through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in 2012 were for sexual exploitation (SOCA, 2012). Children as young as 3 have been trafficked into the UK for sexual exploitation (EPCAT, 2009).
- A quarter of all cases of domestic servitude in the UK involve children.

What are the signs?

- *Begging, pickpocketing*: children doing this are often forced into it by adults who profit from their actions.
- *Debt*: children who have money for food or housing deducted from their wages may be victims of exploitation – similarly those who work but seem to have no money of their own.
- *Drugs or Substance Abuse*: children are often plied with alcohol and drugs as part of the grooming process for sexual exploitation
- *Dangerous Work*: both the UN and the UK restrict children under the age of 16 from participating in hazardous work or employment in dangerous conditions.
- *No Documents*: Traffickers and perpetrators often take away the passports or other legal documents of children brought to here for exploitation.
- *Vulnerability*: Children who have a great fear of the authorities or the police, and who seem vulnerable or neglected, are possible victims of trafficking.

Useful Resources

- "The Nature and Scale of Human Trafficking in 2013" (2014) NCA
- "Missing Out" (2007) EPCAT
- "Understanding Trafficking for Cannabis Cultivation" (2011) EPCAT
- "2015 World Report on Child Labour Executive Summary" (2015) ILO

Who to contact?

EPCAT UK: www.ecpat.org.uk
 Barnados: www.barnados.org.uk
 Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP): ceop.police.uk
 Children's Society www.childrenssociety.org.uk
 NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk
 AFRUCA www.afruca.org