



# CHILD TRAFFICKING IN GLASGOW

**REPORT OF A SOCIAL WORK CASE FILE ANALYSIS OF  
UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN**

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The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Glasgow Child Protection Committee or partner agencies.

Thanks to the social work asylum team in Glasgow for their support in identifying cases and providing additional statistics.

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February 2009

## **1. SUMMARY**

This research is the first phase of work in Glasgow to explore the prevalence of child trafficking in the city and to establish a knowledge base about children who may have been trafficked. A sample group of 75 unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) known to the social work asylum assessment team in 2007 was identified and data gathered via a two stage retrospective case file analysis. To address any immediate practical, ethical and child protection issues a multi-agency steering group guided the research. The sample consisted of 38 females and 37 males, aged between 12 and 17 on their first contact with social work services in Glasgow.

Indirect indicators were used to identify those children with potential concerns about trafficking and a data collection form was developed to gather additional background and journey details. Following the two-stage process of data collection and analysis the presence of indirect indicators in social work records suggests that 28% of UASC children have probably been trafficked, with a further 15% presenting with 'suspicions' suggesting a possibility of trafficking.

Due to the understandable reluctance of victims to speak about their experiences and methodological challenges, not least utilising records of one agency, details about the children's backgrounds and journey details are partial. Despite the limited information available it was apparent that children had a variety of background circumstances and had experienced multiple exploitative situations on their journeys, indicating that attempts to categorise children by background or type of exploitation will be problematic.

The children with the highest concerns regarding trafficking are from a variety of countries, with West Africa and East Asia being the largest source regions. A number of children had been in the UK for considerable periods before becoming known to the authorities, with accompanying concerns about where they had been and what may have happened to them.

Following referral to social work services in Glasgow the children received practical help and support in relation to various issues including education, health, accommodation and asylum applications. Psychological support and input to specifically address trafficking issues was limited, partly due to the reluctance of children to engage with counselling and also the absence of agencies dealing specifically with child trafficking. Few children were identified in practice as possible trafficking victims and child protection procedures were commenced in only two cases. This probably reflects the absence of national or local guidance and limited awareness of trafficking indicators amongst practitioners at the time of the research.

Once identified as UASCs, children under the age of 16 were all, except one, initially accommodated in social work care. Those over 16 years of age were accommodated elsewhere with social work support, although this has potential implications for monitoring and safeguarding practice if they have been trafficked.

This exploratory case file analysis is the first study in Scotland to systematically investigate child trafficking and while there are limitations due to inherent methodological challenges of trafficking research, it has provided baseline data to inform local and national policy and practice. While the actual numbers of UASCs presenting in Glasgow is small, when compared to other areas of the UK the evidence indicates the proportion of UASCs who may have been trafficked is higher than previously identified.

Further research and practice initiatives focusing on multi-agency working and training should ensure the development of a broader understanding about child trafficking in Glasgow and link into the wider national and international agenda. Future investigation will encounter methodological challenges, requiring imaginative and multiple methods of enquiry, and while it is anticipated further research with other at risk groups will identify further cases, it is likely that any identified victims will represent only a fraction of the total due to the largely hidden nature of the trade.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking is a global business, profitable for the traffickers and damaging for the victims. It is not a new phenomenon (Rafferty 2007), although it has only come to the close attention of policy makers in the last ten to fifteen years (Lazcko 2002), with interest in trafficking and smuggling in the UK government and media only developing more recently (McGrath 2008). This interest has grown despite anxiety about the lack of reliable data and knowledge of the issues, and globally the lack of theoretical understanding and factual evidence regarding the depth, breadth and scope of trafficking has resulted in efforts to combat the trade being uncoordinated and inefficient (Salt 2000). Traffickers in many parts of the world are thought to be operating with impunity; to such an extent that trafficking has been described as a phenomenon that shames us all (UNODC 2006).

While the UK is viewed as a destination country there are also increasing concerns about the internal trafficking of people, not least children, who across the world are the most numerous victims (UNODC 2006). In early 2007 Glasgow Child Protection Committee became increasingly concerned about anecdotal evidence in relation to child trafficking in the city and a subgroup was tasked with gathering information about its prevalence.

This report details the findings of an exploratory study which sought to identify the extent of child trafficking amongst a population of unaccompanied asylum seeking children, a distinct population that has been previously identified as being at high risk (Tyldrum and Brunovskis 2005). The study was designed as the first phase of the city's attempt to increase understanding of child trafficking in the local area, while locating it in the wider international context. The work was undertaken as part of the child protection research programme, recognising that trafficking is a fundamental violation of the rights of the child (Rafferty 2007; Omelaniuk 2005) and a child protection issue, not one of immigration.

A retrospective case file analysis, identifying proxy indicators of trafficking, provided baseline information about the potential prevalence of child trafficking amongst UASCs in Glasgow and developed a basic understanding of the backgrounds and journeys of these children. The findings are discussed in the wider national and international context and recognise the continuing need for local practice and research to further develop understanding of all aspects of working with children who may have been trafficked.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Note – the term 'children' is used in this report to reflect the internationally accepted definition of a child as any person under the age of 18 years.

### 3. HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The illegal trading of people is a global problem, thought to be the third largest illegal trade after drugs and weapons trafficking (AFRUCA 2007). Globalisation has contributed to the growth of trafficking and due to the fact humans can be re-sold it is comparatively low risk with high rewards, making it a profitable activity for traffickers (Rafferty 2007; Omelaniuk 2005; Scarpa 2005).

Due to its illegal nature, the lack of anti-trafficking legislation in many countries, the lack of convictions of traffickers, the reluctance of victims to speak out, the low priority given by governments to research and systematic data collection, and inconsistent definitions and identification processes the numbers of trafficked people remains largely unknown and based on estimates (IOM 2001; Laczko 2005; Scarpa 2005; UNODC 2006). Globally, human trafficking is viewed as being “*under-reported, under-recorded and under-legislated*” (Omelaniuk 2005:1), making any investigation difficult.

The US Dept of State (2008) estimates that 800,000 people are trafficked across national borders annually, nearly 50% of these being children. This figure is considered to be a minimum, with some estimates ranging up to two million people (Bump et al 2005). These varying estimates and the lack of empirical data and theoretical work to understand the antecedents and consequences of trafficking are hampering efforts to combat the trade (Omelaniuk 2005). As a result policies are being developed in an information vacuum, with research following a political agenda (Koser 2000), amid concerns that trafficking is being sensationalized, misrepresented and politicized (Brennan 2005:36).<sup>2</sup>

#### Child trafficking

*Children who are victims of trafficking shall be identified as such. Their best interests shall be considered paramount at all time. Child victims of trafficking shall be provided with appropriate assistance and protection. Full account shall be taken of their special vulnerabilities and needs* (UNHCHR 2002, principle 10)

As with human trafficking there are no clear estimates about the numbers of children trafficked around the world; the ILO (2002) estimate 1.2 million children are trafficked annually and UNICEF (2005) describe the numbers as enormous. While in Western Europe women are the most numerous victims, globally children constitute the largest numbers (UNODC 2006), on whom it has the greatest impact and is especially traumatic (Scarpa 2005).

Throughout the world children are trafficked for numerous purposes within and between countries and continents. The main forms of exploitation relate to child labour, debt bondage, domestic work, begging, drug trafficking, military conscription, illegal adoptions, marriage, organ donations and sport,

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<sup>2</sup> Witness the widespread media interest and official media releases following the release of Pentameter 2 information (Williams 2008; Kinsella 2008; BBC 2/7/08).

with sexual abuse, of girls especially, likely to be the most widespread type of exploitation (Scarpa 2005; UNICEF 2005). While exploitation varies between different parts of the world children trafficked for one type of labour are often sold into another making simple categorisation problematic (Rafferty 2007).

While precise numbers of child trafficking victims are difficult to establish, emerging patterns and estimates across the world have occasionally been quantified. While only estimates the following figures indicate the trade is in thousands, rather than tens or hundreds. Approximately 100,000 children under the age of 16 have been identified as being internally trafficked for the purposes of begging, labour, sex industry and child soldiers in Sri Lanka (IOM 2001). An estimated 10-20,000 children have been trafficked annually internally in China for sexual and labour exploitation (humantrafficking.org 2008). Nearly 3,500 child trafficking victims have been identified from Bangladesh, 1,683 being boys mostly under the age of 10 trafficked to the Gulf States for camel jockeying (IOM 2001). 120,000 women and girls may be trafficked into, and within, Europe each year (European Commission 2001), with movement tending to be East to West to meet the demands of the sex industry and cheap labour (UNODC 2006). Other child trafficking patterns identified include farm labour and domestic work in sub-Saharan Africa (Adepoju 2005), with 200,000 West and Central African children believed to be trafficked annually both internally and across borders. Southeast Asian countries are associated with child sexual exploitation as source and destination countries, (UNODC 2006; Rafferty 2007).

Just as the prevalence of child trafficking is difficult to quantify, numerous antecedents have been highlighted as factors contributing to the causes of the trade. These include poverty, inequality of women and girls, low school enrolment, children without carers, lack of birth registers, humanitarian and armed conflict, demand for exploitative sex and cheap labour and traditional culture and values (UNICEF 2005). However, similar to methodological challenges impeding increased knowledge of the numbers involved, there is also insufficient understanding about the causes of trafficking to clearly identify who is vulnerable and why (Omelaniuk 2005). Potential antecedents are often cited with no guiding theoretical framework attempting to understand the inter-relationship of the complex social, economic and cultural factors that contribute to the trade in trafficked children (Rafferty 2007; Van Impe 2000).

While it is unlikely that accurate information about the numbers of children who have been victims of trafficking will be known this should not preclude rigorous research and inquiry in an attempt to improve on the quality of present data. Without increased understanding, and more accurate figures, the responses to combat the trade are likely to remain limited and ineffective.

## Policy and legislation

In the last ten years the international response to child trafficking has been supported by ratification in many countries of the UN Palermo Protocol (2000). The definition contained within the Protocol has been increasingly adopted by agencies working across the trafficking spectrum, defining human trafficking as:

*The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to obtain the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs (article 3a)*

The protocol defines children as any person under the age of 18 and article 3(c) states that:

*The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article*

Article 6(4) focuses on the support provided to victims of trafficking stating that:

*Each state party shall take into account, in applying the provisions of this article, the age, gender and special needs of victims of trafficking in persons, in particular the special needs of children, including appropriate housing, education and care.*

Standard definitions are important in the identification of trafficked children and the adoption of the Palermo Protocol, despite criticism, has been welcomed as an important step in the collection of more reliable data, with most agencies now working to the same definition (CEOP 2007; Laczko 2002). Despite being an internationally accepted definition the protocol has been criticised for focussing on cross border and organised crime and for not containing an obligation for state parties to protect the human rights of victims (Scarpa 2005). A more straightforward description of child trafficking is provided by AFRUCA (2007) who state *“The trafficking of children shall simply mean the movement of children for the purpose of exploitation and abuse.”*

The 2005 Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking is Europe’s implementation of the UN protocol and seeks to address trafficking through prevention, prosecution and protection. It was signed by the UK government in March 2007 and ratified at the end of 2008.



The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the UN in 1990 and now ratified by all countries except Somalia and the United States, contains various articles that focus on trafficking and define a child as anybody under the age of 18. In article 11 State Parties are instructed to take measures to combat the illicit transfer and non-return of children abroad, and articles 32, 33, 34 and 36 detail obligations on states to protect children from all forms of exploitation and abuse, while there is a clear obligation in article 35 for all State Parties to:

*Take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or traffic in children for any purpose or in any form.*

Numerous other legislative and policy instruments contain sections relevant to an understanding of the international response to human and child trafficking. Scarpa (2005) provides an international overview of relevant legislation although, as previously noted, these international instruments do not always translate to specific trafficking legislation in individual countries, hampering efforts to combat the trade globally. Specific UK and Scottish legislation is detailed by Home Office (2007a), Scottish Government (2008) and Save the Children (2006). The 2004 Asylum and Immigration Act criminalises trafficking into, within and out of the country for any type of exploitation, and is probably the most widespread legal instrument in the UK, although prosecutions remain few and in Scotland there have been none (Amnesty International 2008).

### **Child trafficking in the UK**

The United Kingdom is considered a high risk destination country for victims of human trafficking by UNODC (2006) and a number of case studies and data collection exercises have documented the existence of child trafficking into and out of the country (CEOP 2007; Somerset 2004; Save the Children 2006; ECPAT 2007). These studies cannot provide confirmed numbers of trafficked or at risk children, but they do begin to quantify the problem. CEOP (2007),<sup>3</sup> the most comprehensive study, identified 330 children as fitting the trafficking profile over an 18 month period in the UK, although the Director of ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children) believes thousands of children are probably trafficked, with the situation deteriorating (Triggle 2007).

The limited research that has been commissioned in the UK has reached some consensus that trafficking is a growing phenomena requiring a co-ordinated response, involving in the first instance research, intelligence, awareness raising and training on a multi-agency level (Somerset 2004; CEOP 2007; Save the Children 2006). This reflects the international position regarding the need for a multidisciplinary approach to the problem (Van Impe 2000). These studies concur that only after the prevalence and incidence of trafficking and the characteristics of those involved are known can a co-

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<sup>3</sup> No children from Scotland were included in this report.

ordinated response be attempted. It is clear that in the UK research and understanding of child trafficking issues are at an early stage, especially so in Scotland.

### **Child trafficking in Scotland**

Despite specific Scottish initiatives (CoSLA Child Trafficking Seminar 2006; Save the Children 2006), and the Scottish Government (2008) publishing a consultation, the extent and nature of child trafficking in Scotland is unknown. There are no published estimates regarding the extent of child trafficking in Scotland (Amnesty International 2008), which reflects the absence of research into all forms of human trafficking in the country. It is clear that Scottish research is required to assess not only prevalence rates, but also if trafficking patterns are similar (or different) north and south of the border and to contribute to the growing international knowledge base.

Within this knowledge vacuum Glasgow held a multi-agency child trafficking / exploitation meeting in January 2007 following concerns raised by the Child Protection Committee about the possibility of child trafficking in the city. While Glasgow is not the only place in Scotland likely to be experiencing issues regarding children who have been trafficked it is in a unique position. It is the largest metropolitan area in Scotland and the only Scottish asylum dispersal centre, with networks of services already established for asylum seekers. While there had been anecdotal evidence of trafficked children being identified in the city, a more rigorous approach was necessary to clearly scope its prevalence and to begin the process of characterising and understanding the problem in a Scottish context. The Child Protection Committee commissioned the city council child protection team to undertake a study investigating child trafficking in the city.

#### 4. METHODS

As mentioned previously any attempt to quantify the extent of trafficking in general, and more so child trafficking, is difficult and usually relies on estimations and limited information regarding routes and forms of exploitation (Scarpa 2005). Additionally, there are methodological complications in gathering statistical data due to the exploratory nature of the research and the hidden nature of the problem (CEOP 2007; Tyldum and Brunovskis 2005). Most trafficking research has been funded / commissioned to directly inform policy developments and therefore has short time lines, requiring conclusions and recommendations directly relevant to policy (Kelly 2005). While the present research is policy oriented, commissioned to inform local practice in Glasgow, it is planned as the first phase of ongoing multi-agency work to further understand child trafficking in the city.

A population of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASCs), where it is known that trafficking victims make up a subpopulation (Tyldum and Brunovskis 2005), was identified for the research. Koser (2000) has suggested that an increasing number of asylum seekers are being trafficked in Europe and Jones (2008), indicated an overlap between asylum seekers and trafficking. With the exception of Hopkins and Hill (2006), there has been little research investigating the experiences of UASCs in Scotland and none of the children in their study divulged whether they had been trafficked.

*An unaccompanied asylum seeking child is defined as a person who at the time of making an asylum application is under 18, or who, in the absence of documentary evidence establishing age, appears to be under that age; is applying for asylum in his or her own right and; is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so (Home Office 2007b).*

The designation of 'unaccompanied' is important because asylum-seeking children with 'family' connections are supported through the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) and social work services would not necessarily have any contact, unless other child welfare concerns were present. If identified by the UK Borders Agency as unaccompanied children they should receive support by the local authority under the relevant legislation contained in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. The immigration process and legal responsibilities of the social work department ensured that children could be relatively easily identified for inclusion in the research. In addition to being a readily identifiable population, the decision to focus on this group was also made because it has been suggested that all separated or unaccompanied children in the UK should be treated as potential trafficking victims until known otherwise (CEOP 2007; Somerset 2004).

Due to time limitations and the exploratory nature of the research the major method of data collection was a retrospective case file analysis of social work records. While its usefulness for a comprehensive analysis of trafficking is limited, case derived data can highlight important observations for policy makers and provide baseline data for future research (Omelaniuk 2005).

The aim of the initial phase of the research was to gather baseline data for Glasgow relating to:

- the prevalence of child trafficking amongst unaccompanied asylum seeking children
- profiles of those children identified as potential victims

An action research component to the work was adopted, ensuring that findings were being reported to a strategic steering group to inform practice as it progressed. This action-oriented approach has been the hallmark of much early trafficking research, designed to inform local counter-trafficking interventions (Laczko 2005) and to encourage a cyclical process of linking emerging findings with ongoing policy and research developments.

Region of origin	Male	Female	Total
Asia	45	3	48
North Africa	1	-	1
Central Africa	5	12	17
West Africa	4	8	12
East Africa	38	27	65
East Asia	-	16	16
Europe	2	-	2
Not known	1	-	1
Total	96	66	163

Table 1- UASCs referrals to social work Asylum Assessment Team since September 2005

The social work asylum assessment team have been maintaining a record of UASCs arriving in Glasgow since September 2005. 163 new referrals had been received up until 20 May 2008 (table 1), which are thought to represent over 80% of all UASCs in Scotland. Exact figures for Scotland are not known as the Home Office do not publish regional data. Home Office statistics for the UK, covering approximately the same period, indicate 5535 UASC applications, suggesting that Glasgow worked with about 3% of the total UK new claimants during that timeframe.<sup>4</sup>

75 individual UASC cases, known to the asylum assessment team at any time during 2007, were the identified sample for data analysis. Age disputed cases were included if the child's social work Carefirst record indicated they were 17 years of age or under during 2007. This represents just over 1% of the 6000 UASC cases the Home Office estimated were being supported throughout the UK (Home Office 2007c). While these were an easily identifiable group of children the issue of sampling a group already known to welfare services was a potential bias noted (Tyldum and Brunovskis 2005), not least because they are likely to differ from children who do not come to the attention of the authorities.

<sup>4</sup> Home Office asylum statistics from quarter 3 2005 to quarter 1 2008 (Home Office 2007b)

Region of origin	Male	Female	Total
Asia	22	3	25
North Africa	1	-	1
Central Africa	3	7	8
West Africa	3	9	1
East Africa	9	11	7
East Asia	-	7	3
Total	38	37	75

Table 2 – open UASCs cases to the Asylum Assessment Team during 2007

The first stage of the research was a ‘screening’ exercise, utilising a list of indirect indicators adapted from CEOP (2007), to identify potential concerns. Additional details were also collected on a standard data collection form with the aim of developing a general profile of potentially trafficked children. Indicators that related to travel to, or entry into, the UK were not included in the assessment of concerns as they are also indicators that can apply equally to children who may have been smuggled and as the population comprised asylum seeking children immigration issues were likely to be present. Cases were categorised as follows and it should be noted that the majority of the children presenting with concerns also had four or more additional indicators relating to their journey and immigration issues:

Suspensions – 2 or 3 indicators

Concerns – 4 or 5 indicators and / or specific concerning information

High concerns – 6+ indicators and / or specific concerning information

If records indicated a child had disclosed they had been trafficked this was designated ‘high concerns’ regardless of any other indicators. Similarly, if there was ‘concerning information’ (including police involvement regarding potential trafficking or children disclosing specific abuse prior to, during, or after their journey) a specific number of indicators did not necessarily have to be recorded to designate a category. In this respect professional judgement was also included in the assessment.

Stage two of the research involved reading the paper case files of those children identified as concerns or high concerns in the initial screening. This was undertaken to provide additional evidence to confirm (or otherwise) the initial screening designations and to identify additional information for profiling. The second stage was only applied to concerns and high concerns cases because the ‘suspensions’ cases were considered low risk and no previous concerns had been raised about trafficking. The potential, when applying this criterion, for missing additional information and / or cases was noted.

It is important to note that the levels of concern did not translate into any statistical probability of having been trafficked, or being at risk. Further work is required before the indicator list can be utilised as a reliable assessment of potentially trafficked children – it remains only a useful aid to guide professionals in their assessments. The small number of cases that were

removed from the concerns category after further investigation suggests the indicator list may be a useful 'screening' tool for identifying initial concerns.

## **Ethical issues**

As in any area of research involving children child protection issues and confidentiality required careful consideration. It is recognised that with this particular population there are additional concerns regarding the nature of the exploitation and abuse they may have been subject to, and the fact the children may be thousand of miles from their homes and under the 'control' of agents and / or traffickers.

To address any potential practice and child protection issues arising from the research a multi-agency steering group acted as a practice guide and regular meetings were held to discuss and progress developments and issues arising. The researcher also liaised with the strategic child protection team at all stages of the research and via them to other agencies if required.

An important point in relation to child protection practice was the fact that identified 'concerns' as part of the research did not necessarily constitute evidence of trafficking that would be appropriate for legal or child protection purposes. There was discussion within the steering group that without specific 'evidence' of trafficking further investigation may have been detrimental to the children, and some consensus that as the children were already known to, or in the care, of the social work department immediate child welfare issues would have been addressed and monitored. Given the absence of knowledge in working with children who have been trafficked the debate about best practice is ongoing.

## 5. FINDINGS

Following the initial screening of 75 electronic social work UASC records, 23 children were identified as having 'concerns' or 'high concerns' about trafficking, either having been exploited on route to the UK, or being at continued risk of future exploitation. There were suspicions about a further 9 children.

43 of the children had 1, or no, low level indicators present.<sup>5</sup> These 43 cases were considered not to have any evidence recorded by social work that would indicate suspicions of trafficking. Acknowledging the suggestion that all UASCs should be considered as potential trafficking cases until known otherwise (CEOP 2007; Somerset 2004), additional information held by police or UK Borders Agency may have altered this assessment and reiterates the need for effective sharing of data between agencies.

Following the reading of case files of the 23 children where 'concerns' or 'high concerns' were initially identified two cases were removed from the concerns category. The final assessment indicates:

- 16 (21%) children with 'high concerns'
- 5 (7%) children assessed as having 'concerns'
- 11 (15%) children indicating 'suspicions'

There were sufficient concerns and indicators present to indicate 28% of children were probable trafficking victims. For those children with 'high concerns' the available information was sufficiently concerning to support a conclusion that a fifth of UASCs presenting in Glasgow to the social work asylum assessment team have almost certainly been trafficked. As a corollary of reading only case files of one agency, with no additional information, it is assumed that these estimates are conservative prevalence rates. Taking into account the 11 children with fewer indicators there are at least suspicions of trafficking in nearly half of the UASC population presenting in Glasgow.

Based on Home Office (2007c) figures, ECPAT (2008) estimate a minimum of 600 (10%) of supported UASCs across the UK are known or suspected of being trafficked. ECPAT acknowledge this is a 'very conservative estimate based on limited data' and the present study indicates that in Scotland the proportion is two to four times greater. While it is not known if the Scottish sample is representative of the UK as a whole, generalising the findings of the present research would indicate a potentially trafficked population of UASCs of approximately 1200 to 1700 children nationally.

The known background, journeys and experiences of the 21 children identified as presenting with highest concerns were further analysed and information from this group is detailed further below.

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<sup>5</sup> For 12 of these there was not enough information recorded on the electronic system, or the cases were only recently opened, to make a more evidenced judgement.

## Gender

Females	Males
17	4

Table 3 – gender

The large numbers of females compared to males who have been identified in the concerns group reflects previous research. The movement of girls and young women for sexual exploitation and domestic servitude is the most widespread reason for trafficking (Bokhari 2008; Scarpa 2005; UNICEF 2005), and the numbers of females identified in Glasgow may reflect this pattern. A third of the females were pregnant at first contact with social work services, although it should be noted that evidence of sexual activity (including pregnancy) is one of the possible indicators of trafficking.

## Age

Age	Nos
12	1
13	-
14	3
15	6
16	6
17	5

Table 4 – age on first contact with social work in Glasgow

Ages on arrival in the UK were available for some of the children but generally this data was not sufficiently well recorded, or known, to be included. It appeared that a small number of children had been in the UK for over a year before becoming known, a period when the authorities would have been unaware of their presence in the country, where they were, or what was happening to them.

While all persons under the age of 18 years are regarded as children in respect of the Palermo Protocol and by the UNCRC, in practice the response in the UK to children under 16 differs from that provided for those 16 years and older. This is particularly apparent around the issue of accommodation as under 16 year old UASCs are generally accommodated in local authority residential units, or occasionally with foster parents, while over 16s are often housed in B&Bs initially, moving onto supported tenancies, or their own tenancy with social work support.

## Accommodation

Accommodation	Under 16	16+
Social work care	9	-
Supported/shared tenancy	-	4
B&B / hotels	-	5
Other	1	2

Table 5 – accommodation following initial contact with social work



The majority of under 16 year olds identified to the social work department in Glasgow were accommodated in children's units. One child who stayed with relatives was later accommodated when it was assessed that the adults were in fact not relatives.

There is potentially a child protection issue associated with the accommodation of over 16 year olds, as none were accommodated directly into social work care. Due to concern about the potential risks to unaccompanied children it may be difficult to provide adequate safeguarding for those children not directly in social work care, as they cannot be monitored throughout the day. However, the over 16 UASCs in Glasgow are receiving support from social work services, an improvement on earlier practice in England which identified little support for over 16s (Somerset 2001).

### Region of origin

Region	Nos
Asia	1
West Africa	6
East Africa	5
Central Africa	3
East Asia	6

Table 6 – region of origin

Reflecting previous UK research (CEOP 2007; ECPAT 2007), the largest source regions for trafficked children entering the UK were West Africa and East Asia. Beyond identifying source countries and regions, profiling common characteristics, background and trafficking routes was complex, not least because of the limited information contained in case files. Generally, social work records did not contain information about the backgrounds or journeys – probably a result in most cases of the children being unclear about their routes, or perhaps reluctant to share this because of fear of reprisals from traffickers.

Where information was available details were so varied that it was not possible to identify any overall profile for UASCs in Glasgow, reflecting the fact that profiling trafficked children to help the identification of potential future victims may be a difficult task. While this may be due to the small sample size and limited information, there are indications that it may not be instructive to attempt to make simple comparisons between children (Brennan 2005).

Regarding journeys and arrivals it was apparent that Glasgow was not the entry point into the UK for the majority of children. Only one child was identified as having flown into Glasgow airport, with others arriving at other ports of entry before travelling to the city, although it appeared that Glasgow was the destination in many cases as they travelled to the city within a day or two of arriving in the UK. Public transport, usually bus, was the most common form of travel to Glasgow, with a small number of children reporting arriving by car. There were also indications of some children being in other areas of the UK for varying periods before arriving in Glasgow raising concerns about how

long they were in the country before becoming known to the authorities and providing some evidence of internal trafficking.

## **Exploitation**

Identifying the type of exploitation the children experienced was difficult, although it was apparent that the fluidity of abusive situations and the vulnerability of the children made them susceptible to various and multiple exploitative scenarios. There were descriptions of sexual and physical abuse prior to, during and after the journey, with some children forced into domestic work for long periods in transit countries. The physical and sexual abuse of trafficking victims during their journeys is not unusual (Kelly 2002) and there is recognition that trafficking causes multiple rights violations for children, through various abusive situations (Rafferty 2007; UNICEF 2006).

Identifying patterns of exploitation may help to understand certain aspects of trafficking, and aid the legislative process, but attempting to categorise children using this criteria may underestimate the totality of their experiences and undermine efforts to provide appropriate support.

It was rare for children to disclose to social workers that they had been trafficked, although their descriptions of abusive experiences were strongly indicative of victimisation. In many cases where these experiences were noted workers had not made any explicit reference to the possibility of trafficking, recording the details of the events but with no explanation or analysis. While practitioners were supporting children, they may have been unable to identify the indicators of trafficking (Ariyo 2007), to progress the safeguarding / child protection agenda. Where, in a number of cases, the possibility of trafficking had been raised with the children and / or in the case notes, it was clear that professionals were frustrated in attempts to progress these concerns because of the children not wishing, or being unable, to say anything, and a general absence of concrete 'evidence'.

## **Support and interventions**

The UNCRC is clear that specific attention should be given to victims of trafficking and article 39 emphasises the role of State Parties to:

*Take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.*

The children identified received support in relation to their basic domains of care in respect of food, shelter, physical health and education. Many of the children had embraced the educational aspect of their support and continued education beyond the school leaving age of 16, supported by a number of agencies. Social work reviews and pathway assessments were completed

where appropriate and support in terms of language barriers was provided for meetings and reviews, although records indicated some problems in day-to-day communication within children's units. Despite positive work by individual professionals it was apparent that agencies could not deal with the additional complexities and needs of trafficking victims, both in identification and the provision of specific services for children.

The effects of trafficking on children have generally been documented in the context of psychological consequences and treated as a clinical issue (Rafferty 2007) and reference to the trauma children had experienced during their journeys was apparent in most files, even if trafficking was not explicitly mentioned. Where trauma was suspected or evident, including some diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder, children were referred to a psychological service for counselling, although this was not specific for trafficking victims. Most children who were referred appeared reluctant to take up the counselling, reflecting the silent or circumspect responses found in UASCs when discussing their backgrounds and experiences (Kohli 2006).

Unlike TARA, the well-established service for women over 18 years of age, there is no dedicated service in Glasgow for victims of child trafficking and this was reflected by the absence of specific interventions to address the consequences and experiences for children. While many of the children did not report being victims of trafficking, making focussed work more difficult, a service that works specifically with suspected trafficking victims may be beneficial and help children to begin to deal with their experiences. Such a service may also provide useful information, through talking with survivors, to begin documenting more clearly their backgrounds and factors contributing to their exploitation.

Statutory child protection and / or vulnerable young person procedures were largely absent.<sup>6</sup> Only two children were subject to any CP investigations, one of which was a pregnant young woman brought under pre-birth vulnerability procedures. This absence of child protection / vulnerability practice may reflect the lack of recognition of trafficking amongst practitioners, or that it is not viewed as child protection. Somerset (2004) found that social workers in London were missing child trafficking cases because they were not trained to identify children at risk, it may be this is being repeated in Glasgow. Somerset also identified concerns that children are being denied the support of child protection procedures because of their immigration status, although no evidence of this was apparent in Glasgow. The limited child protection action probably reflects the absence of guidelines for practitioners during the time of this study, a result of policy and practice gaps and questioning the efficacy of official responses to child trafficking to date (ECPAT 2007).

Recent guidelines for safeguarding children published in England and Wales (Home Office 2007a) and a similar consultation in Scotland (Scottish Government 2008), state that children identified as being trafficked, or where there are concerns about trafficking, should be subject to local child protection

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<sup>6</sup> Older children and young people in Glasgow are often part of the Vulnerable Young Persons Procedures if child protection procedures are not appropriate or the young persons behaviour is making them vulnerable to exploitation or harm.

procedures. The potential for missing child protection issues in smuggling cases should also be recognised and it may be good practice to consider assessment of concerns in all UASC cases. As the awareness of trafficking increases there may be a corresponding increase in the use of child protection procedures, although the difficulty of identifying a child as a victim will remain. As this research was in progress the first child protection case conferences for suspected child trafficking were held in Glasgow.

Indications of police involvement / knowledge regarding trafficking concerns were identified in 9 of the cases. It was not clear from social work records the full nature of police involvement, if any investigations had taken place or merely that concerns were communicated. Nearly a quarter of the children had been reported to the police after going missing from social work care although all, except one, appeared to have returned.<sup>7</sup>

Additional information from the asylum assessment team indicates that of the 163 new UASC cases opened since September 2005, 9 (6%) had disappeared from care, although it is not known if these were potential trafficking victims or not. The CEOP (2007) study identified 55% of the data sample as missing, many of who were thought to have been re-trafficked, and a similar number of missing children was noted by ECPAT (2007). This apparent low number of children reported missing and whereabouts unknown in Glasgow requires further investigation, as there are considerable differences to the remainder of the UK.

### **Limitations of the research**

The data collection, even for this small-scale local exploratory study, has been complicated by many of the factors that have been identified in previous research. Not least is the recognition that any case file or database analysis will only provide a partial picture of the experiences of children. Unlike previous government sponsored UK research this study relied on the records of one agency, social work, and any indicators identified in case files and electronic records could not be subject to triangulated evidence from other sources. Using data only contained in social work records will limit the amount of information available to make informed comment. Some social work records hinted at more information being available in police, UKBA and lawyer's files, information that children were unwilling or unable to share with social work staff. It is likely that with additional information the number of children identified as potentially trafficked would have increased.

The sharing of sensitive information in suspected trafficking cases has been highlighted previously as a potential problem in gathering research and intelligence data and developing effective interventions for children. This of course has to be weighed with the rights of the children regarding sharing of personal data. What is required is a more systematic, appropriate, sharing of information between agencies, both from a practice and intelligence gathering perspective, and to support the development of a theoretical understanding of

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<sup>7</sup> Since the research was completed it has emerged this young person appears to have been re-trafficked.

trafficking in the UK and how it relates to the global issue. Without this it is likely that attempts to address issues of child trafficking will remain partial and potentially ineffective.

Focussing on a sub population, especially one already known to welfare services, and utilising a list of indirect indicators cannot provide definitive evidence of prevalence rates. Without definitive evidence from conviction of traffickers, or specific witness statements and testimonies from children, the use of proxy, indirect indicators of trafficking may be one of the most systematic methods of estimating the numbers of children trafficked (Laczko and Gramegna 2003). Research is at the stage where the use of such proxy indicators is exploratory and the association of such indicators with actual trafficking is largely unknown. One danger of widely promoting the use of such indicators in practice, or research, is that practitioners adopt a tick box approach to assessment, without looking at other possible explanations and broader child protection indicators. It should always be stressed that the indicators are just that – they are not a standardised risk assessment. The study has found the list of indicators may be useful for identifying initial concerns; whether this can be developed into a more systematic assessment will only become apparent with further research.

One of the most difficult areas when identifying indicators has been the 'historical' nature of some of the events described in case files. In many of the background descriptions and journey experiences to the UK there were clear indications of sexually and physically abusive situations, which were more difficult to identify once in the UK. In some instances children may have been abused while being smuggled highlighting the, perhaps, artificial distinction between trafficking and smuggling when children are involved and subject to multiple abuse (Laczko 2002).

A major limitation of the research is the biases that are introduced when designing a study to investigate a 'hidden population' (Tyldum and Brunovskis 2005). It is recognised that the UASCs identified for this study may differ from unaccompanied or separated children who do not come to the attention of the authorities, or other groups of children who may be victims of trafficking. They may also differ from children who arrive with relatives, or people purporting to be relatives, and who are subsequently exploited, but again are not known to the authorities. The A8 former East European countries are represented in other UK trafficking research, but were less likely to be included in the present sample as they generally would not be claiming asylum. To address some of these concerns further research utilising similar methodology on other subpopulations would aid the development of a broader knowledge base.

The action oriented aspect of the research to quickly inform local practice in Glasgow, while positive in being a localised response, has limitations regarding its short term duration, seeking relatively quick answers to inform policy. To fully understand the phenomena of trafficking much more detailed work is required that directly speaks to the children. Longitudinal studies could uncover more of the individual stories and ethnographic information (Kelly 2005; Brennan 2005) and track interventions and outcomes. The ethical

considerations involved in this, especially with research hoping to directly inform policy, is not insubstantial because direct interviews exposes children to the risk of secondary trauma (Brennan 2005), as a result of recounting their experiences to numerous law enforcement, immigration and social work agencies. While a solution may be combining the research activities of national and local government, voluntary organisations and academic institutions (Brennan 2005), in reality practice is a long way from achieving this level of partnership working and may also introduce more complicated ethical issues.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children have previously been recognised as a high risk group for trafficking (CEOP 2007; Save the Children 2006), although figures on the actual proportion of UASCs thought to be victims has been largely absent across the UK, and estimates of any trafficked children have been completely absent in Scotland (Amnesty International 2008). This exploratory research has identified that in Glasgow 21% of unaccompanied asylum seeking children have sufficient indicators to suggest they have been trafficked, a further 7% are likely to have been trafficked, and for another 15% of children there are suspicions about trafficking. Overall, where the criteria for at least suspected cases was met there are indications that 43% of UASCs in the city are possible trafficking victims. Inclusion of data held by other agencies, or testimonies by children themselves, may provide additional information to confirm or change these estimates, highlighting the importance of multi-agency cooperation.

Attempts to identify common characteristics to begin profiling UASCs at risk of trafficking have proven problematic. Even with the limited information available in social work records it is clear that the backgrounds, journeys and accounts of the children are individual and continue to defy adequate profiling. The best that can be achieved may be to analyse and profile victim characteristics and routes at particular times, recognising that traffickers are likely to continually change their methods. The findings would appear to support the assertion of Brennan (2005) that effective profiling of trafficking victims is problematic.

What limited information is available suggests West Africa and East Asia are the most common source regions for trafficked UASCs in Glasgow. It is also apparent the city is rarely the port of entry into the UK, the vast majority of children coming from other areas, some taking a year or more to arrive and remaining hidden to the authorities during that time.

Where information is available about the journey and experiences of the children it indicates multiple types of abuse, suggesting that children are rarely trafficked for one type of exploitation, or are at least susceptible to multiple abuses as a result of trafficking or smuggling. Children who were working in domestic servitude were also physically and sexually abused and deprived of their basic rights. Attempting to categorise children, either by types of exploitation, background and journey, is likely to underestimate the totality of their experiences and hamper efforts to provide appropriate support.

Once identified by social work services in Glasgow children were provided with levels of support and care that would be expected as a minimum to meet their basic needs. Gaps in services related to interventions to address and cope with the specific trauma of trafficking, although the well-documented difficulties children face with disclosure is likely to challenge agencies in establishing appropriate services and working in a sensitive manner. Given the absence of any national and local guidance, or training, it was not expected that specific responses to child trafficking would be well developed

at this point in time in Glasgow. There was little awareness amongst professionals about the possible indicators of trafficking and perhaps reluctance to firmly identify victims in the absence of 'evidence'. Only since this research commenced have the first child protection case conferences been held in Glasgow as a result of suspicions about trafficking.

The prevalence rates and background details that have been identified provide additional evidence that the vulnerability of UASCs suggests they should be considered as possible trafficking victims until more is known about their situation. At a minimum the presence of unaccompanied children arriving in this country should trigger some level of child protection investigation, which can include an assessment of the risk of trafficking.

Policy and practice developments in Scotland to address the issue of child trafficking are at an early stage and for the foreseeable future will be developing without a robust evidence base for either basic prevalence data, knowledge of the children's backgrounds or journeys, or theoretical understanding of the issues. This paucity of data to inform local and national policy is a major challenge and there is a clear need for research to link directly into policy development. However, the requirement for a 'quick' answer to some of the prevalence and profile questions should not preclude robust methodological enquiry.

While there are limitations with the present research, as an exploratory study attempting to identify the issue of child trafficking amongst a known at risk population it has been positive in beginning to quantify the numbers of victims. It is the first in Scotland to systematically collect and publish prevalence data on a specific subpopulation associated with child trafficking and to gather information about the characteristics of the children. Given the large proportion of UASCs in Scotland who are supported in Glasgow the generalisation of the research findings to the remainder of the country is possible, although due to the small number of UASCs who arrive in Scotland it is not known if these findings are representative of the wider UK UASC population. There are initial indications that differences exist between Scotland and other areas of the UK, not least children missing from care, and Scottish specific research is required to explore this further.

This research should be the baseline for future work, as it only provides an indication of trafficking victims amongst one subpopulation. Amendment of the data collection tool and indicators list will allow further research to be undertaken with various at risk groups to fill the knowledge and information gaps that exist. Future research should adopt a multi-methods approach and secure multi-agency involvement and resources to develop a research and knowledge transfer programme to continue the investigation of child trafficking and link into national and international academic and intelligence resources. Research, policy and practice developments will have to progress simultaneously to achieve positive outcomes for children and develop better understanding of a trade that targets and victimises vulnerable children, while remaining largely immune from effective interventions to protect the victims, prosecute the perpetrators and fully understand its antecedents.



Adopting the following practice and research initiatives should ensure the development of a broader understanding and knowledge base for child trafficking in Glasgow and address some of the issues identified in this research.

- Consider the possibility that all UASCs arriving in Glasgow are potential trafficking victims until known otherwise, or at a minimum commence initial child protection investigations on all unaccompanied children, which includes an assessment of the risk of trafficking
- Ensure that in all suspected child trafficking cases consideration be given to initiating child protection procedures, with children's rights and victim focus foremost
- Review practice in relation to the accommodation of over 16 year old unaccompanied asylum seeking children newly arrived in Glasgow
- Develop specialist services to address the specific experiences of trafficked children
- Promote improved co-ordination and information sharing between the various agencies including the introduction of local procedures for inter-agency referrals
- Develop a local database of potentially trafficked children for access by social work, police and UK Borders Agency that can link into any future national referral mechanism
- Within social work suspected trafficking cases should be notified to the centre child protection team to ensure appropriate support and information sharing
- Develop a multi-professional training programme focussing on trafficking issues, specifically raising awareness of the indirect indicators
- Develop a multi-agency research programme that can investigate all aspects of trafficking and link into national and international academic and intelligence resources
- Utilise the data collection form and list of indicators, after appropriate amendments, to investigate other at risk groups

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## 8. APPENDIX

### Indicators identified in 'concerns' and 'high concerns' cases

Indicators (adapted from CEOP 2007)	Number of children identified
Does not appear to have money but does have a mobile phone	4
Signs of unexplained money	7
Driven around by an older male or female friend	5
Frequently in the company of older men and / or women	13
Withdrawn and refuses to talk	6
Signs of physical or sexual abuse	14
Has contracted a sexually transmitted disease	
Signs of sexualised behaviour or language / pregnancy	11
History of missing links and unexplained moves	17
Goes out the same hours every day (unless legitimate, verified work)	4
Required to earn a minimum amount of money every day	
Works in various locations	2
Has limited freedom of movement	2
Unexplained missing for periods of time	9
Known to beg for money	
Being cared for by adults(s) who are not their parents (except those in social work care)	13
The quality of the relationship between the child and their adult carers is not good	1
Has not been registered with or attended a GP	5
Has not been enrolled in school	4
Has to pay off large debts	1
No control over earnings	
Hands over a large part of earnings to another person	
<i>Travelled separately from family members to UK</i>	20
<i>Accompanied to UK by someone whose relationship to the child was unknown</i>	16
<i>Has had their journey or visa arranged by someone other than themselves or family</i>	16
<i>Not in possession of their own travel documents</i>	13
<i>Has false papers provided by another person</i>	3
<i>Unable to confirm which adult is going to accept responsibility for them</i>	2
<i>Entered the country illegally</i>	16
OR THE PERSON	
In control of the child has applied for visas on behalf of many others	1
In control of the child acts as guarantor for other visa applicants	
Interpreting was previously known to the child	