

**The
Children's
Society**

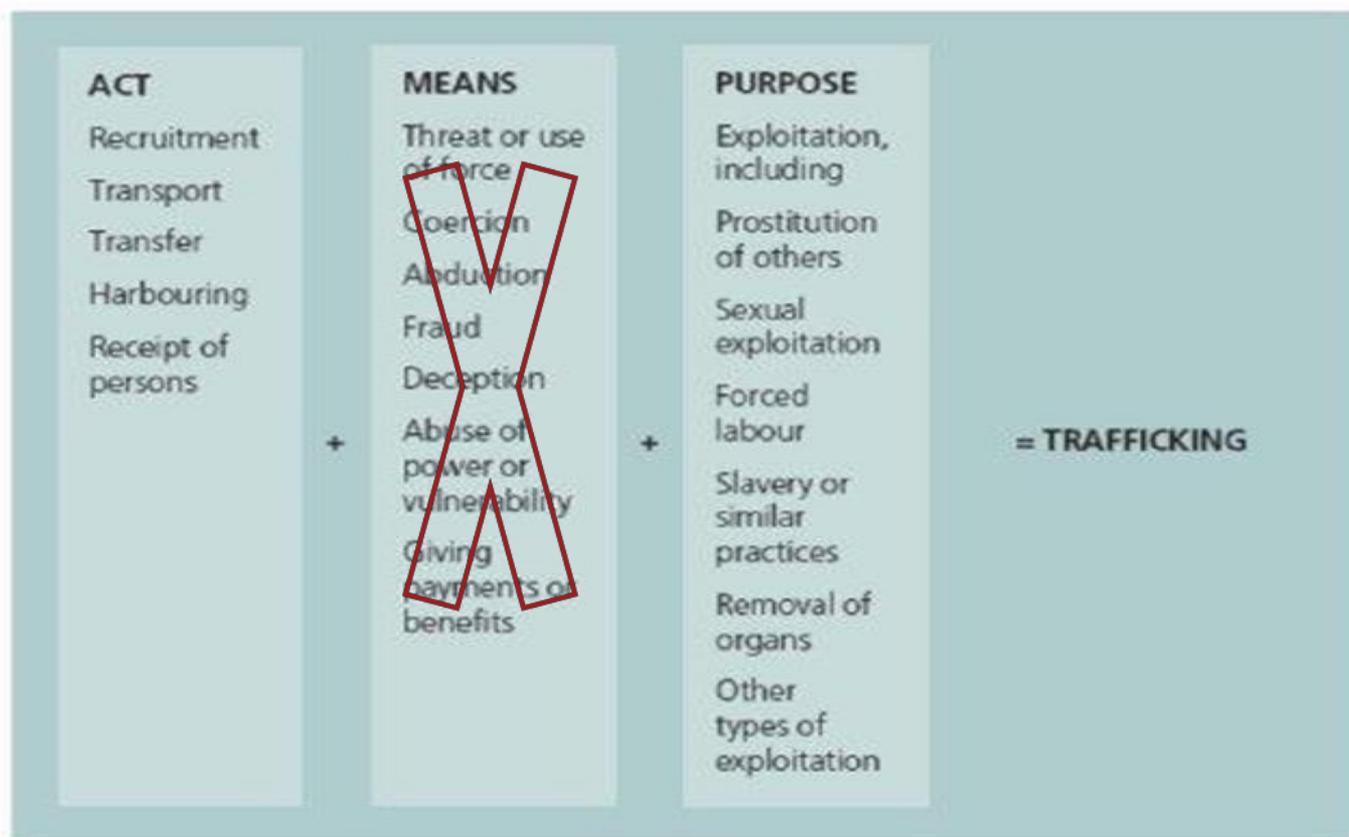
Modern Slavery and exploitation – children and young people

Rhiannon Sawyer
Area Manager, Children's Services Greater London
rhiannon.sawyer@childrenssociety.org.uk

Widening focus

- Criminal exploitation related to ‘county lines’
 - Missing CYP
 - Known to YOT
- Sexual exploitation and trafficking
- Labour exploitation and trafficking
- This is modern slavery

The Palermo Protocol establishes **children** as a special case for whom only two components required - movement and exploitation - because a child can not give consent to being exploited, even if they are aware/agreeable to being moved.



Criminal exploitation related to 'county lines'

- **The phone line**
 - **Worth 20k est.**
- The lines between counties / local authorities
- The train line

- Known by young people as 'going country', 'going OT', 'going to the trap'

Context

- Children, usually boys, are regularly trafficked out of major cities along 'county lines' for the purpose of criminal exploitation
- The children will be sent to 'trap' houses, or 'bandos' (or any other street name 'OT' etc.) where they will be made to sell drugs for anything from a few days to 6 weeks+
- Conditions in the locations are often grim, the children are exposed to adult sexual behaviour, violence, drugs and poor conditions
- Children are given targets for selling, punished if targets are not met, a phone with drug users' numbers on, and often given weapons to protect themselves
- The OCGs will target SEN or PRU schools as the children are particularly vulnerable

Internal trafficking for criminal exploitation

- ‘Accounts from practitioners indicated that the use of young people in drug transportation was an organised activity, directed by local gangs... Train tickets would be bought in advance by “*the elders*”, and the fact that young people had valid train tickets for these journeys, which they would not normally be able to afford, provided evidence that their trips were organised.
- *The method of recruitment ... is to target young, easily influenced youths as young as 12 years old from local schools and the surrounding area. They recruit them with the lure of earning money or being given new trainers, tracksuits etc. then use these runners to deal for them.*

CSE risk whilst being internally trafficked

- Videos being circulated of gang members beaten, naked, crying
- Youngers being raped orally or anally by one older or multiple gang members
- Younger gang members being 'disgraced' in other, similar ways
- Young males witnessing adults having sex in the traphouses
- Young males being forced to carry drugs in their anus
- Young male having to walk home in the middle of the night naked from the waist down, unable to say what had happened to him
- Older adult females 'using' younger males to gain status within the gang

The scale of the problem

- Far bigger than the scale of Rotherham
- Children are picked up and criminalised
- Children's missing episodes are long
- The neglect, trauma and conditions they are exposed to in the trap houses are something we would never accept for a child within the family home
- Vulnerable adults are also targeted
- Cost to society
- Children blamed in the same way CSE victims are blamed 'put themselves at risk', 'choosing that lifestyle'

Prevention

- If children are trafficked from another country, children have already experienced this type of abuse but we can prevent re-trafficking through effective intervention
- Whole-school approach has been found to be most effective in preventing CSA/E
- This can be replicated throughout a community (night time economy, children's services, food outlets, guidance for parents/carers, WTA with children's homes, YOT and PRU staff taking lead in gathering intel, community and faith groups)
 - Operation Makesafe
 - CSA/E Prevention Strategy (April 2018)
 - PACE, Intel guidance, Ofsted guidance
- All the good practice around CSE and missing must be replicated for child criminal exploitation – best practice is to approach CSA/E, missing, trafficking and 'county lines' from a multiple vulnerabilities perspective to ensure children are not seen in silo or any less abused/exploited than others
- Frank but gentle conversations about rape, STIs, further risk, hiding drugs in rectal passage, gang rape (risks)

Intervention

- Internationally trafficked children are at high risk of being trafficked within 72 hours of going into care
 - Where appropriate, remove phones and access to social media and monitor communication. Make sure child is included in this process and there is a time limit
- Early relationship building. Be able to articulate what we can offer them that they were not getting when they were with their traffickers
- Criminalisation
 - If you are brought into care after being arrested/picked up in a cannabis farm, then taken straight to court. You will be in great fear of criminal repercussions. It is up to professionals to ensure the child is supported and feels safe. (Any child under 18 should not be seen as a criminal in the context of their own trafficking)
 - Access representation with expertise in trafficking and involve support agencies straight away

Intervention

- Young people who are sexually and criminally exploited are groomed to believe they have agency and choice in their exploitation
 - This is a difficult challenge and we have to help them feel heard but also not collude with this grooming mentality
 - Young people should have choice over the intervention – how long, what work is done, and it should not be mandatory
- Intervention should be gender and trauma informed
 - Understand behaviour as a response to trauma
- Intervention should not mimic the transactional nature of exploitation (paid incentives, duress)
- Intervention should be socio-educational and look at other oppressive structures in place so young people can understand why exploitation happens and begin to understand which rights they should be granted access to
 - Patriarchy, rape culture and sexism
 - Racism and classism
 - Capitalism and consumerism
- We should take into account the delicacy of working with a child to help them understand their exploitation whilst also not disempowering them and taking their ‘power’ away
- Intervention should help young people navigate their way through statutory and criminal justice processes – be an advocate

Safety Planning

- **With young person**
 - Any areas/people you are at risk in/from?
 - Use scenarios to get them to plan what they would do in high risk situations
 - How to call the police, who to call. Other helplines like Samaritans, Childline etc.
 - Never blame the child or make them feel judged
 - Set up self-care / calming strategies so young people can reduce the feeling of needing to runaway
 - Frank conversations about rape, hiding drugs in rectal passage, gang rape (risks)
- **With professionals**
 - Ensure all professionals understand areas/people of risk
 - Appropriate placements (training for foster carers, SLAs with children's homes, risk assessing other children in placement)

Recovery and trauma

- The later stages of trauma recovery is getting young people to a place of wanting to campaign or participate, take part, stand up for others
 - Participation
 - Choosing what services they want
 - Sitting on interviews
- Access to longer term therapy
- Work to reclaim agency after perpetrators have taken from YP
- Widen their support network, access to safe spaces to meet other young people
- Self-care options including meditation, exercise, music, food
- Being aware of the triggers, self-harmful mentality and vulnerabilities to substance misuse
 - Have open and frank conversations with young people
 - Question their thinking
- We always need to ensure that discreet language we use or write can put the blame on the child and become the narrative surrounding the child and part of recovery is always having the same stance that the child was never at fault for what happened to them

Professional Language

- Media representations of sexual exploitation frequently use victim blaming language e.g. 'Underage girl befriended 200 men online' and 'I groomed my teacher, now I want his babies'.
- Alexis Jay's independent inquiry into CSE in Rotherham found that 'Police officers on the ground displayed attitudes that conveyed a lack of understanding of the problem of CSE and the nature of grooming.' Victims were not believed by the police or the council's child protection services.
- Seriously Awkward Campaign TCS- 'Old Enough to know Better'- young people often blamed for the abuse by services.
- Young people exploited criminally often seen as 'working' and 'putting themselves at risk' – exploitation is not legitimate work
- Young people sometimes told how much money they are costing authorities – this reflects the focus on money surrounding criminal exploitation, and transactional nature of sexual exploitation
- 'Repeat mispers', 'we will put you in secure', 'frequent flyers', 'liars' – young people's risk being normalised, being threatened, not being believed (children who are exploited often test professionals by making real and false disclosures)

Gathering evidence and intel

Why is intelligence important?

Intelligence is collected information which is subjected to a risk assessment process and is then used to build a picture of current trends/patterns in order to assist the police to prevent, investigate and disrupt crime. Intelligence collection is a continuous process and there may be local requirements for its recording and use. Information disclosed by a young person might not be directly related to the safeguarding of that young person, however, this intelligence may lead to the safeguarding of many others so should be treated in the same way.

Examples of intelligence

WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN and HOW (also consider frequency, was it mentioned once? Do they keep mentioning it?)

- Names / nicknames / characteristics / descriptions / movements of perpetrators / boyfriends / other young people / associates / parents or carers or family members of other young people
- Any info about other young people mentioned i.e. school / area / school uniform / approx. age
- Places where young people are congregating / possible CSE hotspot location and activities observed including, names of areas / housing / playgrounds / shops / places / schools / clubs / takeaways / substance misuse / times / numbers of young people and age / description of adults present
- Methods, timings, times and routes of travel i.e. bus route/ oyster card details
- Names of apps / online sites being used by young persons
- Names of drugs / alcohol being used (this can include slang names used)
- Names of out of borough links
- Number plates
- Phone numbers (belonging to vulnerable persons, victims, perpetrators)
- Social media contact names and/or social media identifiers
- Names of businesses / hotels / taxi driver companies being used or frequented
- Particular types of clothing
- Names of gangs / rival gangs / rivalries / or crimes being committed in groups / networks / weapons
- Any indicators of CSA / CSE / grooming / gifts – must also be escalated as safeguarding concern

Engagement

- Manage young people's expectations thoughtfully – be honest about what they can and can't expect from you.
- Work at their pace. It might take a while to gain their trust and they might not be ready to talk about some issues. They might not have some of the basic 'building blocks' in place that you think they do.
- Unconditional positive regard. Young people at risk may display challenging behaviours. As professionals it's important we maintain a supportive, respectful, empathic and non-judgemental approach.
- Role model healthy, consistent relationships and appropriate boundaries.
- Keep them informed. Prepare and communicate plans or changes well.
- Keep the young person at the centre of the work – what they think, how they feel, what their interests, hopes and worries are.
- Give them choices. We all feel anxious when things are out of our control – give them choices where possible to help increase their sense of control and reduce their anxiety.
- Keep activities interesting and engaging. CSE is a heavy topic – we need to make it accessible to them.