

2013

# Why is There Lack of Recognition for British Children who are Victim to Internal Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation?

Westcott, Anne

Westcott, A. (2013) 'Why is There Lack of Recognition for British Children who are Victim to Internal Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation?', Plymouth Law and Criminal Justice Review, 5, pp. 191-211. Available at: <https://pearl.plymouth.ac.uk/handle/10026.1/8981>  
<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/8981>

---

The Plymouth Law & Criminal Justice Review  
University of Plymouth

---

*All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.*



## **WHY IS THERE LACK OF RECOGNITION FOR BRITISH CHILDREN WHO ARE VICTIM TO INTERNAL TRAFFICKING FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION?**

***Anne Westcott***<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

Child trafficking has been conceptualised as ‘modern day slavery’. Slavery has been held up as the worst possible exploitation in human history (Lee, 2007). For more than 20 years UK governments have ratified United Nation Conventions and Protocols and rescheduled laws in its effort to eradicate this crime. However, despite such political commitment, in reality thousands of British children are still victims to internal trafficking for sexual exploitation in the UK today.

Over the last 10 years the UK government has employed agencies, in the shape of the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC), the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and the Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre (CEOP). Each of these organisations have the specialised framework of identifying trafficked children (and adults), and estimating the scale of the problem. However, in each of the current reports delivered by these agencies, there is little or no statistical data and recognition for British national children (CEOP, 2010; HM Government, 2011; SOCA, 2012).

The aim of this study was to try and seek out ‘why there is lack of recognition for British children who are victim to internal trafficking for sexual exploitation?’ By carrying out an analysis of academic, media and journal text and interviewing policing bodies and an NGO, who have direct experience with this subject matter, some quite alarming revelations were revealed. These include the covert nature of the crime; child protection professionals and the police not understanding the definition of ‘human trafficking’ as set out in the Palermo Protocol (2000); police officers not recording incidents of children being internally trafficked; police recording sexual exploitation as sexual abuse; no statutory responsibility of the police to pass information on trafficked children to either the UKHTC or the NRM; and the lack of police resources to deal with the situation. As such, this study presents that the

---

<sup>1</sup> Anne was the 2012 Winner of the School Prize for Criminology and Criminal Justice Studies. She is currently undertaking the MSc Social Research programme at Plymouth University.

internal trafficking of British children is not only a crime against humanity, but also a crime in which the UK government and its agencies appear to ignore.

**Keywords:** Modern-Day Slavery, child sex slavery, Child Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation

## **Introduction**

'Child sex slavery' has been a feature of virtually all major civilisations in history (Craig, 2010). In 2006, UNICEF estimated that there were 1.8 million children in the world involved in the commercial sex trade in any one year, 1 million of these children are forced into prostitution, trafficked or sold for sexual purposes (UNICEF, 2004; 2006). Trafficking of children for sexual exploitation has been described as a contemporary form of 'sex slavery', one of the most heinous crimes of the twenty-first century (Lee, 2007). When an offender takes a child against their will and forces them to engage in sexual activities, that offender has stolen that child's freedom and dignity (Craig, 2010). Furthermore, child sex trafficking, affects the physical and mental health of children and young people, and destroys lives. According to the NSPCC (2011:n.p), 'child victims may experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which can result in symptoms of hostility, aggression, difficulty in recalling details or entire episodes in their lives and difficulty concentrating'. Moreover, 'sexually exploited children and young people often suffer sexually transmitted diseases, teenage pregnancy and high levels of drug/alcohol use/dependency'.

For more than 20 years the UK government has made many 'pledges' to protect all children from 'sex trafficking' by ratifying United Nations (UN) Conventions on children's rights; adopting the UN Palermo Protocol and amending legislation such as the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (UNICEF, 2011; Buck, 2008; HM Government, 2011; United Nations, 2000; National Archives, 2003;2007). In order to address the obligations set out in UN Conventions, the UK established the Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC), described as a central point of expertise and coordination for statutory organisations and individuals involved in child protection (HM Government, 2007).

To further meet with obligations the UK introduced a National Referral Mechanism (NRM) whose framework is to identify all victims of trafficking and provide figures to the Government on the scale of the issue (Finch 2011). In July 2011, the Coalition Government adopted a new *Human Trafficking Strategy* to ensure better identification and safeguarding of children at risk of being 'trafficked' (HM

Government, 2011). Yet, despite what appears to be a political commitment to children being trafficked in the UK, a review of reports delivered by the Government and its agencies, offered little or no recognition of British national children who are being 'internally trafficked for sexual exploitation' (CEOP, 2007; 2009; 2010, HM Government, 2011).

In order to try and identify why there is lack of recognition for British national children, both primary and secondary qualitative research methods have been drawn upon. This study utilised existing literature from non- governmental organisations (NGOs) and recognised publications, such as academic text, the media and journals. Although the majority of secondary data analysed for this research was valuable in providing an opportunity to explore and understand the topic, especially relating to 'modern day slavery', most alluded to the necessity of supporting victims of this crime, with little recognition for the magnitude of this phenomenon, and how the UK government and its agencies are responding to it.

Therefore, an examination of existing data on statistics for child trafficking for sexual exploitation was employed. Samples were gathered from UK government reports, CEOP, Save the Children, End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes UK (ECPAT UK), and the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group (ATMG). However, despite an abundance of exploratory research, the only statistics identified were those based on children and young people who have been referred to an organisation as potential victims of sex trafficking.

In light of these factors, primary research was conducted in an attempt to offer an alternative insight into why there is negligible or no recognition of the internal sex trafficking of British national children. Data collected involved the use of semi-structured interviews conducted with members of staff from Greater Manchester police, Devon and Cornwall police and Barnardo's Against Sexual Exploitation (BASE) based in Plymouth.

The motivation for choosing Greater Manchester police came from a 2011 report which identified that sexual offences in the Greater Manchester area had risen by 15%. From 2000 to 2011 Greater Manchester police, the third largest police force in the UK, recorded 24,429 sexual offences, of which 18,584 arrests were made and 3084 individuals charged (Carroll, 2011). Furthermore, there has been extensive media coverage, over the last few years, of cases involving children used for sexual

exploitation. Greater Manchester police rate this crime as one of the greatest threats in its force area (Laville, 2011).

In contrast, Devon and Cornwall police were chosen both for convenience, and that they are the largest police force in England by geographical area, and the fifth largest in the UK. Furthermore, the interviewee was an officer involved in the largest covert operation carried out in the South West to identify perpetrators of child sexual exploitation. BASE Plymouth were chosen due to their work with sexually exploited children, many of whom they believe have been victim to 'sex trafficking'. At the risk of generalisation, it is acknowledged that in qualitative research it is not necessary to ensure that your sample is representative. However, it is worth noting that the comments made by interviewees for this study, may not be characteristic of all individuals in the same or similar professions (Bryman, 2008).

The emphasis for this study has been, to try and unearth why there is lack of recognition for British national children who are internally trafficked for sexual exploitation. Although a profusion of secondary analysis failed to identify any evidence that draws attention to possible reasons, a number of issues relating to the hidden nature of this crime, and some quite startling revelations by interviewees have been highlighted and will be discussed in a forthcoming section.

## **1 Literature Review**

### ***History of 'child sex slavery'***

Historical studies have shown that 'child sex slavery' was a feature of virtually all major civilisations in history, and identified how, in the majority of cases, children were forced to perform sex acts, which left them vulnerable to violence, extreme harm or even death (van de Glind and Kooijmans, 2008). Hobbs (2007) identified how the use of children for sex can be found in the literature of ancient Greece and Rome, where it is recorded that the rich and wealthy used 'underclass' children for concubines<sup>2</sup> (Hobbs, 2007). The history of 'child sex slavery' is further demonstrated in a report by Barnardo's (2007) *Unfinished Journey: Remembering slavery, working towards equality*. Evidencing the more recent disadvantages and inequalities that children suffered, Barnardo's (2007) documented how in 1808 children made up one quarter of the world's slaves, and identified how the majority were kidnapped or

---

<sup>2</sup> A concubine is a person who provides sexual services to a man of higher social standing in whose household they reside. Even child slaves, who were purchased by the rich and wealthy for their labour value, were more often than not subject to their owner's sexual desires (Rodriguez, 1997).

tricked into sexual slavery by false promises of employment, marriage and a better life (Sanders et al., 2009).

Much of the historical literature pertaining to the enormity of global 'child sex slavery' is in the grey domain. However, more contemporarily, a UNICEF (2006) publication *The State of the World's Children* estimates that there are 1.8 million children involved in the commercial sex trade in any one year. Another UNICEF (2004) publication *Child Protection: A Handbook for Parliamentarians* estimated that 1 million children a year are forced into prostitution, trafficked or sold for sexual purposes (UNICEF, 2004; 2006).

### ***Abolition of 'child sex slavery'***

Through teachings in schools and sensationalism in the national and international media, many of us believe that 'child sex slavery' is abolished in the UK, and only occurs elsewhere in the world (Kristoff, 2007; BBC News, 2008). It has been over 200 years since the British government outlawed slave trading throughout the British Empire. The passing of the Slave Trade Act 1807 led to the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade (Gupta, 2007). According to van de Glind and Kooijmans (2008: 151) 'this act was hailed as a national and international victory for humanity'. In 2007, Britain marked the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade. Gupta (2007:1) described it as 'a year that was bursting at the seams with commemorations' and Prime Minister Tony Blair talked of 'sorrow' and 'regret' (Blair, 2007).

Yet despite the revelation that 'slavery is a thing of the past, the shocking reality is that thousands of children are still victims of 'sex slavery', and worse still, it is alive and well and in the UK today. The authenticity of this statement is identified in an article published by *The Guardian* newspaper in November 2009, highlighting the increasing concerns of 'child sex slavery'. In the article, Martin Narey, then chief executive of Barnardo's children's charity acknowledged that British children were being sold for sex around the country. Narey (2009) suggests that the true extent of the problem is unknown due to the clandestine nature of the crime.

### ***Theories behind child sex trafficking***

Historically, there were a variety of reasons why children were targeted for 'sexual slavery'. Sanderson (2006) identifies a diverse range from erotic beatings and incest, particularly effective for impotence and depression, to children sexually abused

through social, military and economic activities. However, more recently, academics (Rock, 2007; Levi, 2007) have adopted criminological and sociological theories in their attempt to understand this phenomenon. An analysis of these theories, central to developing a better understanding of why children are victims of 'sex slavery', revealed possible reasons as to how this crime has remained hidden from public view.

One opinion offered by Levi suggests that child trafficking for sexual exploitation is an organised crime, in which children are traded as commodities, like drugs and arms. He suggests that traffickers in remote locations develop an alliance with other traffickers, who have transportation to safe houses in numerous locations. Therefore, collaborating with other organised groups can assist traffickers in expanding their covert operations (Levi, 2007). Levi's complex position on this crime recognises a possible issue which the UK police could face when trying to uncover such organisations. The movement of children from one location to another could ensure that these criminal operations remain covert, allowing the traffickers to evade police detection.

Rational Choice Theory (RCT) is useful in attempting to understand this crime. According to Matza (1964) 'criminals are reasoning beings who choose to commit a crime after weighing the costs, benefits and risk of committing these crimes' (Matza, 1964 cited in Rock, 2007:17). In child trafficking for sexual exploitation, this may involve the likelihood that there is a ready supply of potential victims, a market willing to absorb the trafficked victims, high yield profit and a low likelihood of being caught and prosecuted (Rock, 2007). RCT appears to suggest that through careful thought and planning, the perpetrators of this crime are able to avoid detection. This could impact on the recognition for this phenomenon.

Somerset (2001) suggests that the lack of prosecution is because there is often difficulty in proving and investigating trafficking offences. Not only must the child testify, against individuals who have threatened them and their families with violence, they must prove that they would not have entered into 'sex slavery' if they had not met the trafficker. However, in any 'child abuse' case identified in the UK, police officers know that children, either because of their age or needs, are unable to give informed consent to this activity (Home Office, 2008).

### **Children's Rights**

An examination of legislation on children's rights identified how, for more than 20 years, the UK government pledged to protect all children from child trafficking for sexual exploitation. An overview of all the various Conventions implemented highlights how the Government responded to this pledge. One important response was the signing and ratification in 1992 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). Article 3 of the UNCRC provides that in all actions concerning children the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration. Article 34 of the UNCRC concerns the child's right to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse including for prostitution and pornography. Article 35, requires states to make every effort to prevent the sale, trafficking and abduction of children for any purposes or in any form (UNICEF, 2011). Alderson (2008) identified that the Convention does not have legal status in UK domestic law, but it does provide a legally binding framework to ensure young people's rights are upheld.

Another example of the UK Government's pledge to protect children from 'sex trafficking' was the signing and ratification in 2000 of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Convention concerning Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour 1999. Article 3 defined the worst forms of labour to include the sale and trafficking of children and the use of children for prostitution. Ratification commits the UK government to take immediate and comprehensive action to prohibit and eliminate these crimes.

In May 2002, the United Nations (UN) supplemented the CRC by adopting Optional Protocols (OP). Buck (2008: 167) identified the overall aim of the OP as 'an attempt to strengthen the criminalisation of child trafficking for sexual exploitation'. Under Article 1, state parties shall prohibit the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The UK Government ratified the OP in 2009 (Buck, 2008). In the UK's first report to the UNCRC on the implementation of the Optional Protocol, statistics revealed that from 2004 to 2009 just 35 individuals have been prosecuted for arranging or facilitating, within the UK, a person for sexual exploitation. These statistics fail to identify if any of the prosecutions were related to the internal trafficking of British national children (HM Government, 2011).

An additional pledge was outlined in the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Human Trafficking 2005, which the UK government ratified in December 2008. This Convention set out measures to promote and protect the human rights of victims of trafficking which states are obliged to implement, including standards in

relation to identifying victims. In 2010 Rights of the Child UK (ROCK) produced a paper, responding to the UK government consultation *Rights and Responsibilities: developing our constitutional framework*, identifying strong support for the Convention from all three political parties. The UK government's pledges suggest that 'no stone would be left unturned' in their effort to abolish child 'sex slavery'.

### ***Definitions of Human Trafficking***

The definition of countering child trafficking is set out in the Palermo Protocol 2000, derived from the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime. The Protocol was ratified by the UK Government in February 2006, and lays the foundation for UK laws against human trafficking (Dewey, 2008). Article 3 of the Palermo Protocol identifies

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of 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, of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person or of 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. (United Nations, 2000).

Although the Protocol's primary focus appears to be the criminal prosecution of the perpetrators of trafficking, it also considers the trafficking of children as a special case. Under Article 2(a) the purposes of the protocol are *to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, paying particular attention to women and children*. The Protocol clarifies that even where the child (any person under the age of 18) may have given consent to exploitation, this should be disregarded as irrelevant and that the recruitment and so on of children for the purposes of exploitation is also to be considered as trafficking in persons. Thus, the Protocol offers no loopholes for traffickers to use the alleged consent of victims in their own defence.

### ***Policies***

The growing realisation that this crime was on the increase led the Government to restructure the Sexual Offences Act (SOA) 2003, in an effort to tackle the problem, and to criminalise the practice itself. The specific provisions referring to the

criminalisation of trafficking are to be found under section 57-60. Internal trafficking was made an offence under section 58 where it is deemed that:

A person commits an offence if he intentionally arranges or facilitates travel within the United Kingdom by another person (B) and either;

A, 'he intends to do anything to or in respect of B, during or after the journey and in any part of the world, which if done will involve the commission of a relevant offence' or

B, he believes that another person is likely to or in respect of B, during or after the journey and in any part of the world, which if done will involve the commission of a relevant offence (National Archives, 2003).

It is important to note, that rather than primarily focusing on the sexual exploitation of children, this legislation draws attention to the process that may lead the child into a situation of exploitation.

Despite internal trafficking finally receiving recognition as an issue which requires separate consideration to that of international trafficking, the effectiveness of the SOA 2003 has been drawn into question. As Norris (2008: 14) pointed out, 'there have only been 67 convictions under the SOA 2003 and only 12 defendants have been charged in three separate cases of child trafficking since 2000, with only ten convicted'.

An examination of the UK National Archives for anti-trafficking Conventions identified that the UK government ratified the Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings in December 2008. The Convention set out a number of objectives, which included *to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings* and *to protect the human rights of the victims of trafficking*. A further examination revealed that the UK government is legally bound to the Convention's core principle of proper identification of all victims of trafficking (National Archives, 2007).

### ***Practice***

Under the obligations of the Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings 2007 and in an effort to enhance the UK's commitment to combating child trafficking, the Government introduced a *UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking* (2007). The Plan identifies how law enforcement efforts on trafficking for sexual exploitation has focused on foreign nationals, mostly adults, and highlighted how more effort was needed to tackle trafficking of UK national children (HM Government, 2007). The Government recommended a revision of their '*Working Together Guidance*' for practitioners to include identifying and safeguarding children

who are being sexually exploited, as this would entail a greater understanding of the nature and extent of internal trafficking in the UK (HM Government, 2007).

At the same time, the Government appointed the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC), a multi-agency organisation led by the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA). A review of the Action Plan identifies the role of UKHTC as, a central point of expertise and co-ordination, for all police forces, the UK Border Agency (UKBA), HM Revenue and Customs, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and charitable and voluntary expert groups (HM Government, 2007). One of the aims of the UKHTC was to develop a greater understanding of the extent and nature of internal trafficking of children for sexual exploitation.

The Action Plan further reveals the Government's intention to establish the Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre (CEOP), to ensure that the overall response to 'trafficking' focused on child protection. In addition, the Government authorised CEOP to provide guidance to agencies and NGOs, involved in the protection of children, in the identification of victims. In a further attempt to gain a better understanding of child trafficking in the UK, the Government commissioned CEOP to conduct a study, so that agencies involved could gain a better understanding of the scale of the crime. The study contains data from 41 police forces, 20 children's services, 21 border and immigration agencies and 8 NGO's. Of the 59 children recognised as trafficked for sexual exploitation, none were identified as British nationals trafficked in the UK (CEOP, 2007).

In 2009, CEOP issued another report *Strategic Threat Assessment: Child Trafficking in the UK 2009*, here British children, girls and boys, make up the second largest group of victims, with 46 individuals. CEOP (2009) identified, that these children were being groomed by local criminal networks using gifts and relationships to trick them into sexual exploitation. However, a further CEOP report *Strategic Threat Assessment: Child Trafficking in the UK 2010* identifies only 5 British nationals.

To further meet with UK obligations under the Council of European Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings 2007 the Government introduced the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in April 2009. The framework of the NRM is to identify victims of trafficking in the UK and provide figures to the Government for the number of trafficked children who were referred. Some of the referring authorities (also known as first responders) include: SOCA/UKHTC; Local Authorities; UKBA; UK police forces and Local Authority Children's Services (Finch, 2011). However, the

UK has only two designated competent authorities for formal identification under the NRM; these are the UKBA and UKHTC.

In 2010, the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group, made up of NGOs and children's charities, undertook research into the first year of the NRM's operation. The report *Wrong kind of victim?* finds that one-third of the individuals considered under the NRM were children. Of the 143 referred children, 45 girls and two boys were identified as British nationals trafficked for sexual exploitation in the UK. However, the report also acknowledges that the number of referrals is not a true reflection of the extent of internal child trafficking, as many child protection practitioners see the NRM as a bureaucratic vetting process (ATMG, 2010).

In July 2011, the Coalition Government released *Human Trafficking: The government's strategy* this document identifies the Government's intention to work closely with partners, to ensure better identification and safeguarding of children at risk of being trafficked into the UK for sexual exploitation. However, it fails to mention the internal trafficking of British nationals. Furthermore, CEOP's *Child Trafficking Update 2011*, issued in conjunction with the Government's strategy, also fails to identify any British national children victim to trafficking for sexual exploitation.

## **2 Findings and Discussion**

### ***A Hidden Crime***

It was the theory of Rational Choice (Matza, 1964 cited in Rock, 2007:17) that highlighted one reason why this crime remains 'hidden'. Child sex traffickers are very often described as calculating individuals, who weigh up the risk and benefits of their crime. This was highlighted in June 2011, when the *BBC News* reported that nine men from Telford in Shropshire had sold the sexual services of 7 teenage girls, undetected for over 2 years. The report suggests that the offenders were able to avoid detection because they had complete control over these vulnerable young people. Concerns were only raised when the girls, all under the age of 16, were unable to account for the amount of money, alcohol and mobile phone credit that they had acquired (*BBC News*, 2011). However, despite what is clearly nine males involved in 'sex slavery', only one defendant was accused of trafficking a child for sexual exploitation, whereas the other defendants answered charges of sexual activity with girls under the age of 16 (*BBC News*, 2011).

Another possible reason why there is lack of recognition for this crime was identified by Barnardo's who suggest that children are very unlikely to report that they have been sexually exploited, because they are groomed by their traffickers to be fearful of authority, and are often threatened with dire consequences should they not comply (Barnardo's, 2011). Further suggestions as to why children may not come forward were offered by BASE project workers, who argued that:

Young people are not always happy to attend court and relive their experience. Young people fear, parents and the perpetrators, also one or two young people have gone missing never to be found, maybe even died, survivors of this crime just don't want to come forward and talk about it. (Interviewee 4)

Trafficking can involve the movement of a child from one location to another by more than one individual. Levi (2007) suggested that collaborating with other individuals can assist traffickers in keeping their operations covert. This complex theory is reiterated by police officer X from Greater Manchester Police who argued;

I think traffickers go to places where there is least resistance', you have to remember they are anonymous and very hard to track down. These people often have no roots, or work in groups making it even harder to track them down. If you don't get your hands on them quickly, you will struggle to find them. (Interviewee 1).

The interview with BASE project workers emphasised another possible reason for lack of recognition, by suggesting that it was often a difficult subject to approach. One of the workers stated; '*child protection professionals don't talk about it because it is a hidden crime*'. Under the Children Act 1998 child protection professionals have a statutory duty to identify children who are in need of or likely to be in need of child protection (Stafford et al., 2012). However, if child protection practitioners do not recognise internal sex trafficking, it is unlikely that any children at risk or likely to be at risk of this crime will be documented

### ***Sexual Exploitation or child Abuse?***

Limited knowledge also appears to be an issue when related to the definition of child sexual exploitation (CSE) or child sexual abuse (CSA). According to Barnardo's (2011), sexual exploitation is,

...a form of sexual abuse in which a child or young person is exploited, coerced and/or manipulated into engaging in some form of sexual activity, in return for something they need or desire and/or for the gain of a third person'. (Barnardo's, 2011:8).

CSA is an adult causing physical or psychological harm to a child for his own or her own sexual gratification (Levesque, 1999). Although identified as a form of sexual

abuse, CSE is often a manifestation of power, greed and inhumanity (Madrinan, 2009).

However, of real concern to BASE project workers was the lack of understanding of CSE by many child protection professionals. One project worker stated that:

People need to understand what sexual exploitation is, they mostly see it as sexual abuse, lack of recognition causes huge problems when signposting young people to relevant organisations for help. A sexually exploited child is often subjected to a great deal of violence and often by more than one abuser people working with children need to know how to deal with this. (Interviewee 4).

In 2011, CEOP issued a report *out of mind, out of sight: Breaking down the barriers to understanding child sexual exploitation*, in which it was identified that very few cases of CSE are recognised in the UK. CEOP suggest that this is due to lack of engagement with victims and data collection (CEOP, 2011). In the report, CEOP identified that there was a limited response from agencies, especially children's services and Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs), when a request was made for information on the prevalence of CSE. The highest response came from police forces. However, a significant number of forces reported that they did not hold any relevant data. This was highlighted in the interview conducted with Devon and Cornwall police, in which they identified how child sexual exploitation is recorded as rape, indecent assault or contact with a child. This is further highlighted in the Telford case.

### ***Burying their heads in the sand***

In order for the UK to become a hostile environment for the internal trafficking of children for sexual exploitation, traffickers must believe that their crimes will be investigated and prosecuted and that those prosecutions will involve lengthy prison sentences. However, it would seem that a number of police officers, who are the 'gatekeepers' of the criminal justice system, dismiss the crime of internal trafficking. Interviews conducted with both Greater Manchester and Devon and Cornwall police, revealed a number of reasons for their dismissal. Firstly, the police officers in this sample suggest that the police do not appear to understand the definition of 'trafficking'. Police officer Y from Devon and Cornwall police argued that;

Few understand the definition some just see trafficking, as a child being moved from one country to another. Some don't think that it is important as long as we prosecute the perpetrators that sexually exploit these children. There is too much onus on definitions. (Interviewee 2).

Police officer X from Greater Manchester police stated that;

*The definition is irrelevant to the police, because we just work off the offences. People get charged with the offence it's straight forward it doesn't hinder us. (Interviewee 1).*

Secondly, for those police officers that did comprehend the definition of 'trafficking', the likelihood is that a perpetrator may never be charged with this crime. According police officer Y from Devon and Cornwall police;

We have not prosecuted anybody for trafficking, we have dealt with operations where clearly they have been trafficked, but we have charged them with other offences like, rape, sexual assault, indecent assault. (Interviewee 2).

Police Officer X from Greater Manchester Police argued;

The legislation is quite distinct; trafficking is taking a person from one part of Britain to another within the UK. The offence is quite well defined, so we work within that. But for me trafficking is a bit of a smoke screen, because the actual offence is rape, so what's trafficking all about, we charge them with rape, you get life for rape, so why would we introduce trafficking. (Interviewee 1).

In 2006, the UK Government ratified the Palermo Protocol which clearly defines 'human trafficking', and lays the foundation for UK law (United Nations, 2000). Furthermore, section 58 SOA 2003 identifies the definition of 'internal trafficking' as to arrange, or facilitate, the movement of someone within the UK, for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Therefore, police officers have a legal obligation to both understand the definition of 'human trafficking' and bring the perpetrators to justice.

### ***British children not recorded***

Another reason given by Devon and Cornwall police for their dismissal of internal child trafficking is that they have no formal way of recording this crime. Police officer Y argued;

We would have to go into every single crime, to see if that rape is a trafficking job that we have charged with a rape, therefore it is recorded as a rape. (Interviewee 2).

Police officer Y added;

The issue I would have at the minute is that if my Senior Management said to me 'tell me how many internal trafficking for sexual exploitation incidents you have had? 'Give me the data and I will do something about it'. But like Domestic Abuse used to be, we don't have the stats, so we bury our heads in the sand for years before something bad happens, then all of a sudden people come out of the woodwork and say 'how awful is this'. But we have been saying how awful this is for a very long time and nothing has been done about it. (Interviewee 2).

In 2009, Martin Narey then Chief Executive of Barnardo's children's charity identified that internal trafficking of British children for sexual exploitation was on the increase (Narey, 2009). Therefore, recording this crime would see a rise in police statistics. Williamson (2003) suggests that statistics are a means of measuring the relative effectiveness of police forces, therefore any rise in crime recorded by the police is interpreted as evidence of failure, with much humiliation when data is published in the national and local media.

### **UKHTC**

In 2007, the Government appointed the UKHTC, a multi-agency organisation led by SOCA. According to the Government the UKHTC is a central point of expertise where all police forces, the UKBA and NGOs, known as 'First Responders', should refer children and young people who they believe may have been 'trafficked'. However, when police officer Y from Devon and Cornwall police was asked 'Do you report cases of internal trafficking to the UKHTC?' the answer was quite clear-cut,

Probably not – you are correct to recognise the situation around internal trafficking, it is under reported and there is a lack of knowledge in many agencies around this issue. As with the child sexual exploitation, many incidents that are trafficking appear as other offences under the Sexual Offences Act. That is not a criticism it is just how it is. There is no mandatory pressure on local police forces to provide the stats; this is all academic anyway because the vast majority of officers have little awareness of trafficking. (Interviewee 2).

However, according to the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA, 2009:33), 'All cases of child trafficking should be sent to the UKHTC as a matter of course as this is the central repository on all human trafficking'.

### ***National Referral Mechanism - in name only***

In April 2009, the UK Government introduced the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) to meet with obligations set out in the Council of European Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings 2007. The title of NRM was borrowed from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (ATMG, 2010). The OSCE suggest that the core of any NRM is to offer guidance to statutory and other child protection organisations in identifying all trafficked individuals, so that they are able to build a picture on the scale of the problem (ATMG, 2010). However, recent statistics supplied by the Serious Organised Crime Agency on NRM referrals, suggest there is a clear lack of familiarity with British national children internally trafficked (SOCA, 2012).

From July 2011 to September 2011, NRM statistics revealed a total of 95 cases of child trafficking. Just 12 cases were identified as British nationals (SOCA, 2012). However, It is important to note that like the UKHTC there is currently no statutory responsibility on 'first responders' to refer any trafficked child to the NRM (Chandran, 2011).

### ***Competent or Incompetent Authorities?***

In April 2009, the UK Government decided that decisions about who is a victim of 'human trafficking' should lie with a designated 'Competent Authority' (CA). These were to be the UKHTC and the UKBA. The role of the CA's is to determine if there are reasonable and/or conclusive grounds that a person referred may be considered and recorded as a victim of 'human trafficking'. However, the use of both UKHTC and UKBA as CA's has triggered much criticism from Children's Services and other anti-trafficking organisations (ECPAT UK, 2010; Chandran, 2011; ATMG, 2010). The Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group (2010:9) report *Wrong kind of victim* described the UKBA as 'minimally trained staff', which 'put more emphasis on the immigration status of the presumed trafficked persons, than on the alleged crime against them'. Furthermore, the UKHTC who assess cases where the victim is British, were criticised in the report as 'not fit for purpose'.

### ***It could end in tears...For our children***

In the interviews conducted with Greater Manchester and Devon and Cornwall police, both police officers identified that the 'trafficking' of children is a very resource intensive crime (Interviewees 1 &2). Police Officer Y stated,

Unfortunately, like all police forces my Chief Constable has competing demands, he needs to police the streets at nightclub time, he needs to make people feel safe in every town, city and village in Devon and Cornwall. He has level 2 crime for drugs, burglary etc., they are all competing demands. My argument would be, which is going to cause more risk to society, the burglar or the, sex offender. The answer for me every time is the sex offender. (Interviewee 2).

This suggests that the police want to recognise this crime, yet due to lack of resources they are not in a position to do so. Another significant reason was identified by Police officer X from Greater Manchester police, who stated that,

Hierarchy need an incentive to spend money on investigating. Trafficking is a prime example. I know government talk the talk, but is there anybody really interested in internal trafficking. (Interviewee 1).

This statement is reiterated in a report by Barnardo's (2010), in which it is identified that CEOP, who are affiliated with SOCA, suggest that 'internal

trafficking' is not important as it only obscures the already complicated issue of child exploitation. However, as the literature for this research identified, child trafficking is a modern form of slavery, a crime against humanity (Chandran, 2011). Therefore, to ignore the element of 'trafficking' within this crime is to suggest that the UK Government has only ever paid 'lip service' to the Protocols and Conventions that they have ratified over the last 20 years.

## **Conclusion**

Thousands of British national children are being 'trafficked' around the UK. These children, sometimes taken miles away from their family and friends, are coerced, threatened, and often violently beaten, and then sold for sex to multiple abusers (Narey, 2009). This shocking crime has been described as a form of 'modern-day slavery' (Craig, 2010). Yet, research for this paper has revealed that there is little or no recognition by the UK Government and its agencies for British national children subjected to this crime.

Interviews conducted for this study highlighted a number of reasons why the interviewees believe that recognition for these children is problematic. Child trafficking is a 'hidden crime', therefore perpetrators and victims often remain undetected; Children victim to this crime fear their parents, authority and reprisals from their abusers, making them reluctant to come forward; frontline police and child protection professionals do not understand what actions define trafficking; police are unable to formally record incidents of 'child trafficking' or 'sexual exploitation'; there is no statutory duty for the police to refer any child victim to trafficking to either the UKHTC or the NRM and no resources are made available by the Government to identify and protect British national children.

The honest and open answers provided by the interviewees, clearly identify many reasons why there is lack of recognition for the internal trafficking of British national children for sexual exploitation. Therefore, this suggests that the objectives for this research have been fulfilled. However, the reality is that this study has failed to find the reasons why there is little recognition for these children. When a government pledges to protect all children from 'sex slavery', they would ensure that professionals know how to identify the victims; they would ensure that these crimes are recorded; they would ensure that the police have a statutory duty to pass information on all children victim to this crime to dedicated 'centres of expertise'; and they would ensure that resources are made available to

all frontline child protection professionals. Yet the UK Government has significantly failed on many levels. The explanations provided by the interviewees, highlight the inadequacies of a government who have actively praised their abolishment of 'child sex slavery', when this has proven to be on paper alone and not in practice.

Faced with the information gathered for this study, one can be sure that the modern world accepts that 'child slavery' is a great evil that needs to be eradicated. Therefore, as 'world leaders' in the fight against 'human trafficking' the UK Government needs to accept responsibility for all children victim to one of the most heinous crimes of the twenty-first century (Craig, 2010). Although 'internal trafficking' is often 'invisible', for those who really wish to find it, the evidence is freely available...on British streets.

## **References**

- Alderson, P. (2008). *Young children's rights: Exploring beliefs, principles and practice*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- AMTG (2010). 'Wrong Kind of Vicim?' [Online]. Available at: [http://www.antislavery.org/includes/documents/cm\\_docs/2010/a/1\\_atmg\\_report\\_for\\_web.pdf](http://www.antislavery.org/includes/documents/cm_docs/2010/a/1_atmg_report_for_web.pdf) (Accessed: 14 January 2012).
- Barnardo's, (2010). 'Sexual Exploitation: Internal Trafficking of Children and Young People at risk in the North East and Cumbria' [Online]. Available at: <http://www.nr-foundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Sexual-Exploitation-Internal-Trafficking.pdf> (Accessed: 19 February 2012).
- Barnardo's (2011). 'Puppet on a string' [Online]. Available at: [http://www.barnardos.org.uk/ctf\\_puppetonastring\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/ctf_puppetonastring_report_final.pdf) (Accessed: 21 October 2011).
- BBC News, (2008). 'All pupils to learn about slavery' [Online]. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/7582004.stm> (Accessed: 11 November 2011).
- BBC News (2011). 'Girls treated as commodities, child prostitution trial told' [Online]. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-shropshire-13766736> (Accessed: 24 August 2011).
- Blair, T. (2007). 'Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act 1807-2007' [Online]. Available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/322014.pdf> (Accessed: 3 November 2011).
- Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods*. 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Buck, T. (2008). 'International Criminalisation and Child Protection: the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child', *Children and Society*, 22, pp.167-178. [Online] DOI: 1111/j.1099-0860.2008.00148.x (Accessed: 3 January 2012).
- Carroll, J. (2011). 'sex attacks on the rise in Manchester's student area' [Online]. Available at: <http://www.student-direct.co.uk/2011/10/03/exclusive-sex-attacks-on-the-rise-in-manchester%E2%80%99s-student-areas/> (Accessed: 11 February 2012).
- CEOP (2007). 'a Scoping Project on Child Trafficking in the UK' [Online]. Available at: [http://www.ceop.police.uk/Documents/child\\_trafficking\\_report0607.pdf](http://www.ceop.police.uk/Documents/child_trafficking_report0607.pdf) (Accessed: 21 December 2011).
- CEOP (2009). 'Strategic Threat Assessment of Child Trafficking in the UK' [Online]. Available at: [http://ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/Child\\_Trafficking\\_Strategic\\_Threat\\_Assessment\\_2010\\_NPM\\_Final.pdf](http://ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/Child_Trafficking_Strategic_Threat_Assessment_2010_NPM_Final.pdf) (Accessed: 21 November).
- CEOP (2010). 'Strategic Threat Assessment: Child Trafficking in the UK 2010' [Online]. Available at: [http://ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/Child\\_Trafficking\\_Strategic\\_Threat\\_Assessment\\_2010\\_NPM\\_Final.pdf](http://ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/Child_Trafficking_Strategic_Threat_Assessment_2010_NPM_Final.pdf) (Accessed: 21 November 2011).
- CEOP (2011). 'Child Trafficking Update 2011' [Online]. Available at: [http://ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/child\\_trafficking\\_update\\_2011.pdf](http://ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/child_trafficking_update_2011.pdf) (Accessed: 22 November 2011).
- Chandran, P. (2011). 'The Identification of victims of trafficking' in Chandran, P. (ed.) *Human Trafficking Handbook*. London: LexisNexis, pp. 27-47.
- Craig, G. (2010). *Child slavery now: A contemporary reader*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Dewey, S. (2008). *Hollow bodies: institutional responses to sex trafficking in Armenia, Bosnia and India*. Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press.
- ECPAT UK, (2010). 'Child Trafficking in the UK: A Snapshot' [Online]. Available at: [http://www.ecpat.org.uk/sites/default/files/child\\_trafficking\\_in\\_the\\_uk\\_a\\_snapshot.pdf](http://www.ecpat.org.uk/sites/default/files/child_trafficking_in_the_uk_a_snapshot.pdf) (Accessed: 13 February 2012).
- Finch, N. (2011). 'Child Trafficking in the UK in the context of International legal protection' in Chandran, P. (ed.) *Human Trafficking Handbook: Recognising trafficking and modern-day slavery in the UK*. London: LexisNexis UK, pp. 221-226.
- Gupta, R. (2007). *Enslaved: The new British Slavery*. London: Portobello Books Ltd.
- HM Government, (2007). 'UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking' [Online]. Available at: [http://www.ungift.org/doc/knowledgehub/resource-centre/Governments/UK\\_Action\\_Plan\\_to\\_Combat\\_Human\\_Trafficking\\_en.pdf](http://www.ungift.org/doc/knowledgehub/resource-centre/Governments/UK_Action_Plan_to_Combat_Human_Trafficking_en.pdf) (Accessed 14 October 2011).
- HM Government, (2011). 'United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC): Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography' [Online]. Available at: [http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded\\_files/humanrights/uk\\_government\\_s\\_report\\_on\\_the\\_opsc.pdf](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/humanrights/uk_government_s_report_on_the_opsc.pdf) (Accessed: 6 January 2012)

- Home Office, (2008). 'The duties and powers of the police under the Children Act 1989' [Online]. Available at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/about-us/corporate-publications-strategy/home-office-circulars/circulars-2008/017-2008/> (Accessed: 11 April 2012).
- Home Office (2009). *Extending our reach: a comprehensive approach to tackling serious organised crime*. Norwich: TSO.
- Kristoff, N. (2007). 'The 21st-Century Slave Trade' [Online]. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/22/opinion/22kristof.html?ref=humantrafficking> (Accessed: 12 November 2011).
- Laville, S. (2011). 'Groomed, raped, discarded: how one girl's story opened police eyes to abuse', *The Guardian*, 29 June, p.13 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/jun/29/abused-girl-police-grooming-gangs> (Accessed: 1 April 2012).
- Lee, M. (2007). *Human Trafficking*. Cullompton: Willan Publishing.
- Levesque, R. (1999). *Sexual abuse of children: a human rights perspective*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Levi, M. (2007). 'Organised crime and terrorism' in Maguire, M., Morgan, R. and Reiner, R. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, 4th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.771-809.
- Madrinan, C. (2009). 'Worst Forms of Child Labor: Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children' in Hindman, H. (ed.) *The world of child labor: An historical and regional survey*. New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., pp. 95-101.
- Matza, D. (1964). 'Rational Choice Theory' in Rock, P. (2007) 'Sociological Theories of Crime' in Maguire, M., Morgan, R. and Reiner, R. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-42.
- Narey, M. (2009). in Williams, R. 'Hundreds of British children could be being trafficked, Barnardo's say', *The Guardian*, 17 November 2009 [Online]. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2009/nov/17/sexual-exploitation-child-trafficking> (Accessed: 12 December 2011).
- National Archives (2003). 'Sexual Offences Act 2003' [Online]. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/all?title=Sexual%20Offences%20Act%202003> (Accessed: 2 December 2011).
- National Archives (2007). 'Home Secretary signs vital anti-trafficking convention' [Online]. Available at: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news/convention-against-trafficking> (Accessed: 21 December 2011).
- Norris, L. (2008). 'Child Trafficking in the UK: An Examination of Contemporary Approaches' [Online]. Available at: <http://combattrafficking.eu/sites/default/files/documents/Norris%20-%20Child%20Trafficking%20in%20the%20UK.pdf> (Accessed: 3 December 2011).
- NPIA (2009). 'Investigating Child Abuse and Safeguarding Children 2nd edition' [Online]. Available at: [http://www.npia.police.uk/en/docs/Investigating\\_Child\\_Abuse\\_WEBSITE.pdf](http://www.npia.police.uk/en/docs/Investigating_Child_Abuse_WEBSITE.pdf) (Accessed: 10 April 2012).

NSPCC (2011). 'Identifying victims of trafficking' [Online]. Available at: [http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/resourcesforprofessionals/childtrafficking/identifying\\_victims\\_of\\_trafficking\\_wda84863.html](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/resourcesforprofessionals/childtrafficking/identifying_victims_of_trafficking_wda84863.html) (Accessed: 13 March 2012).

Rights of the Child UK (2012). 'Why incorporate?' [Online]. Available at: [http://www.crae.org.uk/assets/files/ROCK%20Coalition\\_Why%20Incorporate%20the%20CRC.pdf](http://www.crae.org.uk/assets/files/ROCK%20Coalition_Why%20Incorporate%20the%20CRC.pdf) (Accessed: 9 April 2012).

Rock, P. (2007). 'Sociological Theories of Crime' in Maguire, M., Morgan, R. and Reiner, R. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3-42.

Rodriguez, J. (1997). *The historical encyclopaedia of world slavery*. California: ABC-CLIO, Inc.

Sanders, T., O'Neill, M. and Pitcher, J. (2009). *Prostitution: Sex work, policy and politics*. London: Sage Publications.

Sanderson, C. (2006). *Counselling adult survivors of child sexual abuse*. 3rd edn. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

SOCA, (2012). 'Annual Plan 2011/12' [Online]. Available at: <http://www.soca.gov.uk/about-soca/how-we-are-run/accountability> (Accessed: 10 April 2012).

Somerset, C. (2001). *What the professionals know: The trafficking of children into, and through the UK for sexual purposes*. London: ECPAT UK.

Stafford, A., Parton, N., Vincent, S. and Smith, C. (2012). *Child protection systems in the United Kingdom: A comparative analysis*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

UNICEF (2004). 'Child Protection: A Handbook for Parliamentarians' [Online] Available at: [http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Guide\\_Enfants\\_OK.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Guide_Enfants_OK.pdf) (Accessed: 11 November 2011).

UNICEF (2006). 'The State of the World's Children' [Online] Available at: [http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/pdfs/sowc06\\_fullreport.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/pdfs/sowc06_fullreport.pdf) (Accessed: 4 October 2011).

UNICEF (2011). 'Convention on the Rights of the Child' [Online]. Available at: <http://www.unicef.org/crc/> (Accessed: 12 December 2011).

United Nations (2000). 'Protocol against the smuggling of migrants by land, sea and air, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime' [Online]. Available at: [http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final\\_documents\\_2/convention\\_smug\\_eng.pdf](http://www.uncjin.org/Documents/Conventions/dcatoc/final_documents_2/convention_smug_eng.pdf) (Accessed: 14 October 2011).

Van de Glind, H. and Kooijmans, J. (2008). 'Modern-Day Child Slavery', *Children and Society*, 22, pp.150-166. [Online] DOI: 1111/j.1099-0860.2008.00147.x (Accessed: 3 January 2012).

Williamson, T. (2003). 'Uses, Misuses and Implications for Crime Data' in Carson, D. and Bull, R. (eds.) *Handbook of psychology in legal contexts*. 2nd edn. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., pp. 207-228.