

Child Trafficking

Information taken from NSPCC <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/child-trafficking/n>)

What is child trafficking?

Trafficking is where children and young people tricked, forced or persuaded to leave their homes and are moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold. Children are trafficked for:

- [sexual exploitation](#)
- benefit fraud
- forced marriage
- domestic slavery like cleaning, cooking and childcare
- forced labour in factories or agriculture
- committing crimes, like begging, theft, working on cannabis farms or moving drugs.

Trafficked children experience many types of [abuse and neglect](#). Traffickers use [physical](#), [sexual](#) and [emotional abuse](#) as a form of control. Children and young people are also likely to be physically and emotionally [neglected](#) and may be [sexually exploited](#).

Types of child trafficking

Traffickers often [groom](#) children, families and communities to gain their trust. They may also threaten families with violence or threats. Traffickers often promise children and families that they'll have a better future elsewhere.

Trafficking is also an economic crime. Traffickers may ask families for money for providing documents or transport and they'll make a profit from money a child "earns" through exploitation, forced labour or crime. They'll often be told this money is to pay off a debt they or their family "owe" to the traffickers.

Traffickers may:

- work alone or in small groups, recruiting a small number of children, often from areas they know and live in
- be medium-sized groups who recruit, move and exploit children and young people on a small scale
- be large criminal networks that operate internationally with high-level corruption, money laundering and a large numbers of victims.

Signs of child trafficking

Knowing the signs of trafficking can help give a voice to children. Sometimes children won't understand that what's happening to them is wrong. Or they might be scared to speak out.

It may not be obvious that a child has been trafficked but you might notice unusual or unexpected things. They might:

- spend a lot of time doing household chores
- rarely leave their house or have no time for playing
- be orphaned or living apart from their family
- live in low-standard accommodation
- be unsure which country, city or town they're in
- can't or are reluctant to share personal information or where they live
- not be registered with a school or a GP practice
- have no access to their parents or guardians
- be seen in inappropriate places like brothels or factories
- have money or things you wouldn't expect them to
- have injuries from workplace accidents
- give a prepared story which is very similar to stories given by other children.

Effects of child trafficking

Trafficking can have both short and long term effects and the impact can last a lifetime.

Children and young people who've been trafficked might:

- not understand what's happened to them is abuse - especially if they've been groomed
- believe they're in a relationship with their abuser and unaware they're being exploited
- think they played a part in their abuse or have broken the law
- feel very guilty or ashamed about the abuse they've suffered.

Being kept captive or living or working in poor conditions can have a serious impact on a child's mental and physical health. They might also be suffering from the effects of abuse and neglect.

Children may feel distressed and alienated if they've been separated from their families, friends, communities and cultures.

They'll often have had no access to education or opportunity for social and emotional development. Children exploited for domestic servitude and forced labour can suffer physical injuries, develop problems with their emotional health and be denied access to an education. Children trafficked for sexual exploitation are at high risk of prolonged periods of sexual violence, physical injuries, sexually transmitted infections and, for girls, multiple pregnancies.

Who's at risk

Any child is at risk of child trafficking.

Human trafficking happens due to:

- inequalities between countries, such as different education or employment opportunities
- poverty
- the effects of war
- the demand for cheap or free labour or a workforce who can be easily controlled and forced into criminal activity
- low levels of education
- lack of equal opportunities, discrimination or marginalisation.

Report child trafficking

Children who are trafficked are intentionally hidden and isolated from the services and communities who can identify and protect them. If you're worried about a child, you can take steps to keep them safe.

If you think a child or young person is in danger, contact the police on [999](#).

Contact your local child protection services. You can find their contact details on the website for the local authority the child lives in.

Contact the Modern Slavery Helpline to get help, report a suspicion or seek advice. Call [0800 012 1700](#) or fill in their [online form](#).