

ATTN: LOCAL AUTHORITY CHILDREN'S SERVICES

30th September 2010

Safeguarding Trafficked Roma Children and Families

Background:

Trafficking threat to Roma children and families

The following information provides an update to briefing sent to London Directors of Children's Services and LSCBs on 30 July 2010. This update is sent on behalf of Operation 'GOLF' to all Directors of Children's Services and LSCB Chairs in England to inform them of the heightened concern regarding the risk to Roma children and families around human trafficking. The concern stems from a number of police operations carried out in Romania and the UK.

In 2007 the Romanian National Police opened an investigation into the trafficking from Romania of Roma children for forced criminality and other forms of exploitation across Europe. They identified that the gang responsible and the child victims all originated from a single town in south-east Romania.

The Romanian police identified that over 4 years the gang moved 1,107 children from this town into Western Europe. There is evidence that most of these children were exploited by being forced to beg or steal in a number of European countries. It was established that the proceeds of this criminality was then being routed back into Romania to benefit a few crime bosses, also from the Roma community.

In 2008 a Joint Investigation Team was set up by the Metropolitan and the Romanian Police to combat this gang under the name of OPERATION GOLF. On 8th April 2010, 26 gang members were arrested in Romania and charged with trafficking 181 children out of Romania for the purposes of criminal exploitation.

The investigation has revealed that in many cases the parents of the children were/are complicit in their trafficking and continued exploitation. In other cases the parents may have been subject to debt slavery and coercion.

Within the UK a number of the child victims have been found living in a variety of domestic circumstances - some with parents, some with extended family and others placed with 'families' to which they are not related.

This update is to assist you to respond in partnership with the police if, in the course of their investigations they identify children or families in your local area who may have been trafficked.

It should also be born in mind that the method of exploitation adopted by this gang should not be seen in isolation and other children in similar exploitative situations who are not part of this specific investigation may well be encountered.

Attached to this update is a planning tool adapted from the London Safeguarding Children Board trafficked children toolkit to assist in developing your response to safeguard and protect

Roma children and families. Please see the attached for further planning and assessment tools and/or refer to: www.londonscb.gov.uk/trafficking

In case of any queries relating to:

- Operation GOLF – contact: colin.carswell@met.pnn.police.uk
- Planning tools – contact: philip.ishola@harrow.gov.uk
mike.scott@londoncouncils.gov.uk

For further information on training related to safeguarding child victims of trafficking, including training on identification and assessment tools, contact:

ECPAT UK, Karen Sizeland. Training Manager 020 7233 9887 training@ecpat.org.uk

Planning Tool

This tool should be used if children and/or families are identified:

1. **by the Police and referred to children services; or**
2. **through contact with or investigation by children services; or**
3. **by other agencies leading to a referral to children's services.**

Good practice

To provide the appropriate immediate care package (taking into account the specific needs of trafficked children and risk associated with placement and the risk that the child will go missing from care) and oversee the provision of appropriate services via the existing access to children's services route.

To aid this process please refer to the attached Good Practice Guidance.

- It is known that Traffickers move child victims between exploitative situations and addresses within the local authority or between local authorities.
- It may be the case that as part of the data checking process you undertake (name, address) of the suspected trafficked child, additional names and addresses become known. These should be recorded and acted upon in partnership with the Police and all agencies involved in a multi-agency assessment
- On visits to address you may come across children (who may have been trafficked but not pre-identified. These children may or may not be with adults who claim to be parents or relatives of the children. We strongly advise that until the relationship between the adults and children has been checked and confirmed the children are viewed as potential victims and afforded the same service response as those confirmed victims.

We recommend agencies work together to directly coordinate any action required.

4. Accommodating

It is recommended that when planning your accommodation option the risk detailed in point 1 (i.e. in cases of additional children identified and minimising the risk of children going missing) be factored into your accommodation plan.

Please refer to the attached Good Practice Guidance.

5. Accommodation Options:

- 1) Foster Care;

2) Supported Accommodation.

- In both cases, foster carers and residential staff will need to be fully briefed as to the specific issues for trafficked children and the risks to children while in the placement.
- It is highly likely that a suspected Trafficker will attempt to make contact with the victim or the victim with the trafficker by phone or via the internet. It is recommended that any safety plan takes these risks into account.
- We recommend close monitoring of the child's movements and the removal of any mobile phones the child may have and that the child's usage of phones/internet available to them while in a placement be closely monitored.

Please refer to the attached Good Practice Guidance which includes guidance on placement monitoring and phones.

6. Assessments. Health/Needs. Achieving Best Evidence [ABE].

- The child victims you are likely to encounter may require immediate medical attention. Injuries may not be immediately recognisable. (Within this investigation children have been found with multiple cigarette burns.) As such it is recommended that a full medical health assessment be carried out at the earliest opportunity.
- When Social Workers are interviewing child victims regarding their trafficking experience in order to assess needs/risks to them or others and to any placement, it is recommended that these interviews be ABE compliant - the information obtained may be used in any criminal prosecution.
- Close working with local CAIT team is essential.

7. Identify a Lead Professional to oversee your Children's Services response. Operational Team to support if the numbers of suspected victims increase.

The size of the operational team will be dependent on the number of children identified within your area.

Suggested Make up of this Team: *The list below will vary depending on your local departmental arrangements and is only a guide and not exhaustive.*

- a) Senior Lead Professional/Manager
- b) Experienced Social Workers
- c) Designated Child Protection Nurse
- d) Placements Team
- e) Administration.

e1) Example 1: Checking children's names against local children's service database, linking with Education, Health, Benefits and Corporate Fraud in order to carry out similar checks. Recording intelligence obtained as the operation progresses and building a local profile map.

e2) Example 2: Day to day logistical administration support for the Operational Team.

- *N.B Spreadsheets to capture information detailed in point e) (above) are available as part of the planning tools pack, to obtain this pack contact philip.ishola@harrow.gov.uk or mike.scott@londoncouncils.gov.uk*
- f) *Interpreters - please be advised there are 2 distinct Languages you may encounter ROMA (likely) or ROMANIAN.*

Key tasks:

- Determine how information will be stored.
 - Determine how project team meetings and how communications outside of meetings will be conducted.
 - Create database to retain information relating to the investigations where shared information, such as plans and contact information will be stored.
 - Link the database with existing Local Authority electronic client files.
 - Schedule meeting dates at regular intervals to ensure robust monitoring of cases, and allow for information analysis and sharing.
 - Information on outcomes of assessment will be immediately shared with the appropriate agencies.
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This planning tool should be used in conjunction with the following:

- Good practice guide (LB Harrow)
- Indicator Matrix (and how to use guide)
- Child Trafficking Assessment form
- NRM referral form

These are available via www.londonscb.gov.uk/trafficking

TERRITORIAL POLICING COMMAND

UK & Romanian Joint Investigation Team

Operation 'GOLF' is currently working with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Child Abuse Investigation Command (SCD 5) and partner agencies.

The Metropolitan Police have received legal advice and have been directed that under Article 4 of the European Convention of Human Rights (see below) the police has a positive duty to recover and safeguard the victims of trafficking as well as fully investigate the circumstances.

The European Convention on Human Rights –

ARTICLE 4

1. No one shall be held in slavery or servitude.
2. No one shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour.
3. For the purpose of this article the term 'forced or compulsory labour' shall not include:
 - (a) any work required to be done in the ordinary course of detention imposed according to the provisions of Article 5 of this Convention or during conditional release from such detention;
 - (b) any service of a military character or, in case of conscientious objectors in countries where they are recognized, service exacted instead of compulsory military service;
 - (c) any service exacted in case of an emergency or calamity threatening the life or well-being of the community;
 - (d) any work or service which forms part of normal civic obligations.