

# SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN WHO MAY HAVE BEEN TRAFFICKED

Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board

Multi-Agency Protocol

**2016**

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## 1 Introduction

Child trafficking is the movement of children into and within a country in order to exploit them. It is a largely hidden problem and is often described as a form of modern-day slavery. The children involved are coerced, bribed or forced into the control of traffickers and are unable to escape; all will experience significant harm as a result of their experiences.

Because of the nature of trafficking, it is often difficult to identify the children involved as traffickers exercise such a degree of control over their lives. They are rarely seen by professionals as traffickers seek to avoid contact with the authorities. As a consequence, it is not known how widespread the problem is.

Hertfordshire's Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) has produced this protocol in order to provide information and guidance to all members of the children's workforce in Hertfordshire. The purpose of the guidance is to enable professionals and others to identify trafficked children and make appropriate referrals so that victims can receive protection and support.

## 2 Purpose and scope of protocol

This protocol will apply whenever professionals have concerns that a child they are in contact with may have been trafficked into the UK and are still under the control of traffickers for the purposes of exploitation.

The aim of the protocol is to:

- raise awareness of child trafficking within agencies so that they are better able to identify those children who may have been trafficked;
- provide appropriate interventions to protect, support and safeguard the welfare of trafficked children through integrated, multi-agency service provision;
- provide a robust framework for multi-agency co-operation and working practices based on:
  - a clear understanding of each agencies role and responsibilities
  - agreed joint working practices and referral pathways
  - the sharing of information, knowledge and expertise
  - multi-agency training that enhances the contribution of every agency.
- promote high level links and intelligence gathering between local

agencies, communities and national and international agencies in order to improve identification of trafficked children and combat trafficking.

The policy applies to:

- all partner agencies of the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board
- front line workers within the borough who come into contact with children and young people, including voluntary organisations
- law enforcement agencies within Hertfordshire who come into contact with trafficked children

### **3 Principles**

- All agencies have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of trafficked children, and their welfare should be the paramount concern.
- It is recognised that trafficked children will have suffered some significant harm and will require specialist services to help them recover from their experiences. They will be entitled to all available services regardless of their immigration status.
- Agency responses will be proportionate to the level of risk to the child, and child protection procedures and other legal interventions will be used where appropriate in order to protect the child and safeguard their welfare.
- Agencies will share information in a timely manner in accordance with procedures agreed in this protocol in order to ensure action and intervention is taken at the earliest opportunity and that appropriate services are provided.
- Agencies will co-operate with law enforcement agencies to provide information and intelligence in order to improve the success of any action taken against offenders and to contribute to the reduction of child trafficking in the borough.
- Agencies will be sensitive to the needs of individuals who are genuinely caring for trafficked children and recognise their potential status as a victim.
- All agencies working to this protocol will ensure that they work in a manner that is consistent with the Equality Act 2010, in order to promote equality and social and ensure equal service provision for all regardless of race, religion, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or legal status.

## 4 Policy framework

### 4.1 International convention

Trafficking is defined in the UN *Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime* as:

*“the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat of 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 achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation”.*

The UK is a signatory to the UN convention, including the *Palermo Protocol* that deals specifically with the trafficking of children, and the European *Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings*. These agreements provide the framework for the UK’s national policy on trafficking.

### 4.2 National strategy

The UK government’s strategy on tackling human trafficking is to take action at all steps of the trafficking journey, from recruitment to eventual exploitation, by:

- helping agencies to better identify victims
- tackling the recruitment of victims in the country of origin
- disrupting trafficking through strengthened border controls
- co-ordinating an effective multi-agency response in the UK that supports victims and prosecutes perpetrators.

Children who have been trafficked are particularly vulnerable and will have very specific needs, and that their care, protection and support will be crucial in enabling them to recover from their experiences and return to a normal life.

Therefore, all trafficked children are entitled to the same level of care and protection under UK legislation and to have their welfare safeguarded and promoted as those normally resident in the UK, regardless of their immigration status.

### 4.3 National referral mechanism

In order to ensure a truly national response to the issue of child trafficking, and as part of the requirement of the European Convention, the UK has set up a national referral mechanism to enable front-line services to refer on cases of child trafficking to local and national agencies.

The mechanism provides a framework for the reporting of child trafficking concerns via *competent authorities* at local and central government level. Competent authorities are those authorities who are most likely to come into contact with suspected trafficking victims and who are best placed to assess whether they have been trafficked.

There are 2 stages to the decision-making process:

- Agencies who suspect that a child may be trafficked will make a referral to Children's Services as the local competent authority. Children's Services then carry out a trafficking assessment to establish whether there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the child has been trafficked and what services and support needs to be offered.
- If assessment proves there are reasonable grounds, Children's Services then refer the child on to the UKHTC as central competent authority to decide within 30 days if the child has indeed been trafficked. The UKHTC will then gather information and co-ordinate all agency responses, including that of law enforcement and immigration agencies, including resolution of the child's immigration status.

## 5. Information on child trafficking

### 5.1 Recruitment

Child trafficking takes place against a background of poverty, exclusion and the desire for a better life in the UK. Some parents agree to their child coming to the UK in order to escape civil war or political instability, and occasionally children may have been abducted.

Many of the children who are brought to the UK have been deceived by traffickers into believing that they will have opportunities to attend school or get a good job.

Children who are trafficked are controlled by the trafficker at every point, from recruitment, arrival in the UK and up to and sometimes including their exploitation. Forms of control can be based on:

- deception
- physical/other abuse
- fear of physical abuse through threats
- threats against the child's family
- retaining travel and other documents
- threat or fear of deportation
- control of movement/social isolation.

Traffickers may be an organised group or an individual working alone; they may be involved in any or all stages of trafficking, from recruitment, transit and organising the child's exploitation on arrival into the UK.

Children may be trafficked for the following purposes:

- sexual exploitation
- domestic servitude
- forced labour
- benefit fraud
- street crime such as credit card fraud or begging
- drug related crime
- debt bondage.

Even where the child appears to have consented to arrangements, as the victim is a child, any consent is deemed irrelevant as they are not deemed to be able to give informed consent.

## 5.2 Travelling to the UK

Although some trafficked children are smuggled into the country, most arrive in the UK through normal channels but may be travelling on forged documentation or unable to provide valid entry visas and are hence entering the UK illegally.

Where UK Border Agency officers have concerns about a child presenting to immigration control, they will be referred to the local authority's children's social care office.

As the child's journey is likely to have been arranged by traffickers, they may be unable to give details of who is meeting them or where they will be staying. They may have a prepared story similar to ones given by other trafficked children or may be reluctant to give any details regarding either their journey or who they are meeting.

The child may be accompanied by an adult claiming to be their carer, either as a relation or because they claim to have parental consent to bring the child to the UK. Concerns may arise because there appears to be no real evidence of a relationship between the carer and the child or no evidence of parental permission.

Some children may appear to be unaccompanied on arrival requesting asylum. If the child is not travelling to be reunited with family or a genuine carer, or seems not to have a suitable place to stay, they will normally be referred to children's social care and accommodated. Their status then becomes unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC).

Although traffickers normally attempt to avoid the child coming into contact with agencies, application for asylum may be used as a means of the child obtaining legal entry to the UK, and even where the child goes into local authority care, traffickers may retain control over the child whilst they are still in care, or the child may go missing from care shortly afterwards.

### 5.3 Identifying trafficked children

- The child may be being cared for by an adult who is not their parent and with whom there appears to be no real relationship, with the carer having little knowledge of the child.
- The child may be one of many unrelated children staying at an address, and may not be registered for or in receipt of universal services such as health care or education.
- The child may be in the country illegally, with a history of going missing from care/home, may have moved several times within the UK or Europe and they may not have access to their travel or other documents.
- They may have a prepared story explaining gaps and movements similar to other trafficked children, and have a history of working in different locations.
- The child may appear to be mature and self-confident beyond their years or may be secretive and worried about giving out information about themselves, taking measures to avoid contact with the authorities. Children from overseas may seem to be in fear of being deported.
- The child may be subject to excessive controls and curtailment of their freedom. They may have had their passports and other documents taken from them and held by the trafficker/exploiter.
- The child may be required to carry out household chores in return for their accommodation. Other evidence of work includes being in the possession of a mobile phone and receiving unidentified calls and leaving the placement/accommodation for long periods.
- The child may have unexplained money or goods, may be required to earn a certain amount of money a day to pay off a debt, or may have to hand over a percentage of their earnings.
- Children both from abroad and from the UK may be trafficked within the UK, and this movement is particularly prevalent in the sex industry. Movement of the child may be in order to avoid contact with agencies

or because the nature or location of the exploitation changes over time.

## 5.4 Impact of trafficking on children

Trafficked children will be socially isolated and experience high levels of anxiety as they are in unfamiliar surroundings and separated from their family. They may be anxious for their family if traffickers have threatened them to ensure the child's compliance.

Trafficked children will suffer significant harm as a result of their experiences as their predicament makes them more vulnerable to abuse and neglect.

**Physical abuse** is likely to be used as a means of ensuring compliance and control, and could result in serious injuries which may not be treated.

**Sexual abuse** may also be used as a form of control in many forms of exploitation, and in particular where trafficked children are recruited to work in the sex industry, sexual exploitation may be widespread.

**Emotional abuse** will be experienced by all trafficked children due to their isolation, lack of a proper caring relationship, and their fears for their safety and possibly their family as well. Their powerlessness is likely to result in lack of self-esteem and lack of trust, and they may suffer considerable distress as a result of their experiences.

**Neglect** will be the outcome for all trafficked children due to the level and quality of care they are likely to receive. The secretive nature of trafficking means that medical conditions and injuries would go untreated and the child will not receive basic universal services.

In the long term, trafficked children are likely to suffer poor physical and mental health and are at higher risk of misusing substances. Sexually exploited children are at risk of sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy. Children may also suffer because they are forced to undertake heavy labour or work long hours.

## 6 Roles and responsibilities

### 6.1 Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (the Board)

The Board has overall responsibility for planning, coordinating and monitoring the work of all member agencies in implementing the child trafficking protocol, and providing a link with other Hertfordshire-wide strategies.

The Board's main remit is to:

- promote awareness of the issue within member agencies and the wider community

- provide the necessary structures and policies for the delivery of an effective strategy aimed at the reduction of child trafficking and the efficient identification, referral of and service provision for child trafficking victims via trafficking co-ordinators in partner agencies
- monitor the work of all agencies to ensure effective implementation of strategies and positive outcomes for trafficked children
- provide knowledge and expertise on child trafficking via designated officers within agencies and to oversee training for Hertfordshire's workforce in relation to the issue
- co-ordinate intelligence-gathering in partnership with law enforcement agencies and
- establish links with community groups in order to tackle trafficking.

## 6.2 Children's Services

As part of the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in the County, Children's Services will:

- deal with all referrals relating to the safety or welfare of any child who is suspected of being trafficked
- carry out an assessment of the child's needs, and provide services to meet these needs, ensure their protection, or by providing alternative accommodation where necessary
- as the local competent authority under the national referral mechanism will carry out a specialist trafficking assessment to establish whether or not there are reasonable grounds to believe the child has been trafficked, and make appropriate referrals to the UKHTC.

## 6.3 Health services

Health professionals are the most likely agency to have contact with trafficked children who seek medical treatment and may be their first point of contact with agencies within the UK, making them the most likely to identify trafficked children.

Although in general trafficked children are likely to avoid universal services or be registered with a GP, they may seek emergency treatment at A&E departments and walk-in clinics. Sexually exploited children may also present at sexual health clinics seeking treatment for sexually transmitted infections and contraceptive advice.

Health professionals should be aware of any signs of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect, such as injuries, psychological or mental health problems, substance misuse issues or non-treatment of old injuries or on-going health problems that may indicate that the child is deliberately being kept away from medical treatment.

In conjunction with this, health professionals should be aware of other indicators that may suggest the child has been trafficked:

- any discrepancies in addresses, especially if the child has recently come from abroad
- patterns of unrelated children who present for treatment giving the same home address
- any concerns regarding the quality of the relationship between the child and their carer that suggests there is no real kinship
- carers being vague about the child's or their parent's personal details or medical history.

Staff should always take a record of any addresses, both in the UK and abroad, for the child, and try to obtain as much personal information about the child, their carer and the child's family as possible.

It is possible that staff may not be able to recognise child trafficking victims on their first visit to A&E or clinics, so receptionists and triage nurses will need to be vigilant to repeated presentations by a child or unrelated children from the same address or with the same carer.

#### 6.4 Schools/education

In order to avoid suspicion of trafficking when the child initially arrives in the UK, trafficked children may be registered at a school for a short time before being moved elsewhere within the UK or abroad. Schools and schools admissions should be aware of the following patterns:

- children going missing off the roll with no explanation and who subsequently are not traceable
- patterns of applications for school places from one address for unrelated children
- applications for school places by persons who are not the child's parent or recognised carer with parental consent to care for the child (i.e.: private foster carer).

Education departments have a statutory duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to identify those children who are not in receipt of a suitable education. Statutory guidance on this duty recognises trafficked children as being at particular risk of missing school. Where a child goes

missing off the school roll, schools and education staff should follow Hertfordshire's policy.

Admissions staff should be vigilant at the point of enrolment by taking copies of any documents presented to support applications for school places and verifying the relationship between the child and the adult making the application. Documents presented for enrolment purposes and any information gathered by admissions staff may assist in locating the child if they go missing off the school roll.

Where admissions staff have concerns about patterns of applications, for example several applications for unrelated children from the same address, they should raise this with the service manager.

## **6.5 District Councils - Housing**

District Councils who are responsible for Housing and either employ or contract housing officers, estate officers, caretakers, hostel workers and others working in front-line housing services may be able to identify possible situations where trafficked children are being brought into the borough. It is likely that the children would only stay a short time and be moved on elsewhere within the UK or abroad.

District and Housing staff should be alert to the following;

- housing applications where it arises during interviews that the children are not related to the carer or each other
- any private fostering arrangements
- high turnover of children at a specific address
- when a child suddenly joins a household without any explanation
- households with a high number of unrelated children
- premises that are suspected to be used for the purposes of sexual exploitation of children.

## **6.6 Targeted Youth Support Services (TYS)**

Staff in TYS are likely to come into contact with trafficked children where they have entered the criminal justice system due to offending behaviour relating to their exploitation, for example street crime.

Children will probably be reluctant to discuss their family or history or the circumstances surrounding their exploitation for fear of deportation or reprisals from traffickers against themselves and/or their families.

Some may not have any immigration status or may have been in care in another part of the UK. Workers should try to establish as much information about the child as possible. Those claiming to be the child's parents may be implicated in the trafficking or exploitation and this may limit the manner in which the service is able to work with them.

## 6.7 Police

The police have a main role in the investigation and prosecution of traffickers which is carried out by specialist teams, including the specialist multi-agency team, Paladin, that has been set up to support the work of the UKBA in order to help them identify any children for whom there are concerns that they may have been trafficked.

In terms of core police work, the police should notify Children's Services via the MASH team if a child who may be trafficked comes to their attention during the course of any enquiries they carry out.

Police also have powers under the Children Act 1989 to remove a child from any situation which places the child in immediate danger and to take them into police protection. This should be followed by an immediate referral to Children's Services.

## 6.8 Voluntary sector and community groups

Because of their unique role in working closely with specific groups and communities and their extensive knowledge and experience, the voluntary sector and community groups are perhaps best placed to help in identifying children who may have been trafficked, particularly in traditionally hard to reach communities.

The relationship that the voluntary sector and community groups have with individual members of communities provides them with more opportunities for raising awareness than statutory agencies, especially as they are likely to be more trusted.

It is important that all voluntary and community groups in Hertfordshire work closely with the Board in order to co-ordinate the delivery of the trafficking strategy within communities, including raising awareness, bringing concerns to the attention of statutory agencies and making appropriate referrals for children who have been identified as trafficked.

# 7 Support services

The following are specialist national services that can provide information, guidance and support to agencies in relation to trafficked children. Contact details can be found in appendix 1.

## 7.1 UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC)

The UKHTC is a multi-agency service comprising of staff from law enforcement and immigration services that provide operational, tactical and legal support to all agencies with responsibility for the UK's response to trafficking. Under the national referral mechanism, it is also the central competent authority.

The UKHTC co-ordinates all work across agencies and localities and provide specific expertise, intelligence, training and advice on trafficking issues in order to support and improve joint

working.

The UKHTC also has a preventative role in raising awareness in source countries to deter individuals from trafficking or being a victim of trafficking. Their work also encourages victims in the UK to come forward and supports them as witnesses in criminal cases.

## **7.2 Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)**

The Centre has a similar remit to the UKHTC in relation to child sexual exploitation and has a dedicated child trafficking unit that works closely with law enforcement and social care agencies to enable them to carry out their roles in protecting children more efficiently.

## **7.3 NSPCC child trafficking advice and information line**

The advice line provides a service for agencies and professionals working with children who are or may have been trafficked so that they are able to discuss the issues and consider possible courses of action. It provides advice on the identification of trafficked children and how to best safeguard and promote their welfare.

## **7.4 Refugee Council Children's Panel**

The Council's advisers provide support to unaccompanied asylum seeking children in all situations to help them access legal representation and to guide them through the asylum process. Advisors also help children to access services and support from statutory and voluntary agencies, and help them trace their families in the UK and at home.

# **8 Taking action**

## **8.1 Identification**

Where a professional or agency consider based on their assessment that there are indications that there are grounds to believe the child may have been trafficked, the worker should discuss the matter with their designated officer and decide whether or not to make a referral to the MASH team.

Agencies should bear in mind that it is essential to take timely and decisive action where child trafficking is suspected because of the risk of the child being moved.

Normally, agencies would be expected to obtain the consent of the child's parent or carer regarding any referral. However, in cases where the child may be trafficked, it is possible that their carer is involved in the trafficking or exploitation and seeking their consent could put the child at further risk or lead to their being moved elsewhere.

It is therefore recommended that where professionals are considering a referral they contact the MASH advice line for a discussion on whether the child may have been trafficked and whether or not to seek consent to the referral.

## 8.2 Referral

A written referral should be made to the MASH team. Where possible, agencies should include the following information about the child:

- personal details such as their name, date of birth, and any languages spoken
- details about their current address and the name of their carer, including the child's relationship with their carer
- details about the child's family, any siblings and their current whereabouts
- any information available on the child's immigration status
- details of any statutory agencies that are currently working with the child.
- details of any evidence that suggests the child may have been trafficked, including evidence of any exploitation, as indicated in the risk assessment.

If an agency needs to make an urgent child protection referral to the MASH team because the child is at serious risk of suffering significant harm, the MASH team will accept telephone referrals, but these must be confirmed in writing within 48 hours.

The MASH team manager will make a decision on the case within 24 hours and notify referrers of what action will be taken. Where there are concerns about trafficking, the case will be passed on to the Assessment team.

## 8.3 Assessment

Following a referral, the Assessment team will carry out a child and family assessment to establish the child's level of need and what services and support they need.

Where the Assessment team believes there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the child is trafficked, the team will also carry out a specialist trafficking assessment to establish the likelihood that the child has been trafficked and make an appropriate referral to the UKHTC.

## 8.4 Services

Children's Services will provide services and support based on the child's assessed level of need but all children who meet the threshold for a service from Family Safeguarding will have an allocated social worker and a plan that sets out actions, interventions and services to ensure the child's welfare is safeguarded.

- A child in need service will be offered to those children who are unlikely to meet a reasonable standard of health and development or whose health and development would be seriously impaired unless provided with services, or disabled children.
- Where a child it is believed to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, the social worker will follow child protection procedures. Where necessary, social worker will take immediate action to protect a child, for example seeking an Emergency Protection Order.
- Where necessary, the child may be accommodated by Children's Services as they have

no one to care for them and will become looked after.

Children's Services will also:

- ensure that trafficked children receive help from CAMHS to address the negative effects of their experiences on their mental health and emotional wellbeing
- help the children to get in touch with their family
- support the child to normalise their immigration status by working in partnership with immigration colleagues and helping the child to access legal advice
- where appropriate, work with the Police and other agencies to take action against perpetrators
- make arrangements for the child's return home where this is considered consistent with their welfare.

## **9 Working with trafficked children**

- Professionals in contact with trafficked children should be aware that the child may remain under the control of traffickers even when they are in contact with agencies, including whilst in care.
- The child will be at very high risk of being moved on by the traffickers and may be scared of reprisals following contact with agencies. For this reason professionals may find it difficult to get the child to volunteer information.
- Due to their experiences, trafficked children may find it difficult to trust adults and therefore may be unable to build a good relationship with the professionals working with them.
- Professionals should be aware that the child may still be controlled by the trafficker; carers and housing key workers should remain vigilant to adults attending at the placement and the child seeming to be controlled via mobile phone.
- When working with the child, professionals should only use accredited interpreters and never use anyone connected with the child in the capacity of interpreter.
- Professionals should be aware that the person acting as carer to the child may be the trafficker or exploiter. Professionals should try to see the child on their own where possible and make an assessment of the quality of the relationship between the child and carer.

## **10 Children who are vulnerable to trafficking**

Professionals should be aware of the following indicators which can increase the likelihood that

the child has been trafficked.

## 10.1 Children in care

As children who are being looked after because they are unaccompanied minors may have been brought to the UK by traffickers, it is important that:

- the circumstances of their arrival in the UK is fully established during assessment
- where trafficking is suspected, there is a clear plan to protect the child and minimise the risk posed by traffickers
- the child is placed in a safe area and their whereabouts is not shared outside of those professionals working closely with the child
- foster carers and key workers are vigilant about anything unusual such as strangers waiting outside the placement
- professionals should share relevant information in order to establish the risk to any other child or to help disrupt or prosecute traffickers and exploiters
- anyone coming forward claiming to be the child's parent or family friend is investigated.

## Privately fostered children

Private fostering is an arrangement where a child or young person under the age of 16 (or under 18 years if they are disabled) is looked after full time for more than 27 days by an adult who is not their:

- Parent, step-parent or legal guardian
- grandparent
- brother or sister,
- aunt or uncle.

Many children who arrive in the UK have been sent here by their parents to live with a carer under a private foster care arrangement. This may be due to parents working abroad or simply so the child can attend school in the UK. However, some private fostering arrangements may involve the trafficking and exploitation of children, particularly for domestic servitude.

It is important that professionals are able to distinguish between a genuine private fostering arrangement and where a child has been trafficked into the UK for the purposes of exploitation. Advice can be sought from the private fostering social worker where it is unclear what arrangements are in place for the child's care.

Under private fostering regulations, agencies have a duty to report any private fostering arrangements that come to their attention to Children's Services. Further details can be found at Hertfordshire County Council's "Private Fostering Page" [hertfordshire.gov.uk Private fostering](http://hertfordshire.gov.uk/Private-fostering)

## 10.2 Missing children

Because of the nature of their situation, many trafficked children may go missing soon after their arrival in the UK. They may be moved in order to avoid contact with agencies or because

their exploitation means they have been moved on.

Some unaccompanied minors may go missing from their placement shortly after being accommodated. Trafficked children may be enrolled at a school for a short time then leave suddenly with no indication as to where they have moved.

Whenever a child for whom it is suspected may be trafficked goes missing, any risk assessment carried out prior to reporting the child missing to the police must include information about possible trafficking and exploitation. For details, please refer to the HSCB “Children missing from home and care” protocol available at: [Children missing from Home or Care](#)

### 10.3 Sexually exploited children

Trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation is increasingly common for children from within and outside the UK. Professionals should remain vigilant to any indicators that may point to the young person being specifically trafficked into and within the UK for this purpose.

For further details, please refer to the HSCB “Multi-agency guidance on Safeguarding children abused through sexual exploitation available at: [Safeguarding Children Abused Through Sexual Exploitation](#)

## 11 Confidentiality and information sharing

Personal information that agencies hold about an individual is subject to a duty of

confidentiality and cannot be shared with third parties unless it is lawful to do so. Sharing of information is lawful where:

- the service user has consented to disclosure
- the public interest in safeguarding a child’s welfare overrides the need to keep information confidential or stop the commission of a crime
- disclosure is required under a court order or other legal obligation.

Information can be disclosed to third parties without consent in child protection cases where there is reasonable cause to believe that the child is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm. In some cases, it may be necessary to forgo seeking consent from parents or carers as this may in itself place the child at further risk.

Trafficked children are likely to be suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm and this information should be shared with police and FSSW so that action can be taken to protect the child and deal effectively with their traffickers.

Professionals may also share information lawfully in cases of *suspected* trafficking as there is a statutory power under the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 to share information with a relevant authority (police, local authority or health authority) for the purposes of preventing crime.

In cases where it is suspected that a child may have been trafficked, it may not be expedient to obtain consent to information sharing from the person caring for the child as there is a risk that they may be implicated in the trafficking or exploitation and that the child may come to further harm as a result. For example, the child may be moved elsewhere to avoid contact with agencies.

Where professionals are unsure about seeking consent for a referral, they may wish to seek advice from the MASH advice line.

## 12 Training

Individual agencies are responsible for ensuring that staff have the necessary training to enable them to carry out their specific role under this protocol. Training will be multi-agency or agency specific depending on the role of the individual agency and will be designed to:

- raise awareness amongst staff and agencies of the issue of child trafficking and help them to recognise their role in its prevention
- assist workers in identifying those children who have been or may have been trafficked into the UK or internally
- provide guidance in assessing the child's needs and making appropriate referrals to other agencies.

## 13 Dealing with professional differences

This guidance aims to encourage a multi-agency response to child trafficking so that well-informed and timely decisions can be made on intervening in a child's life in order to safeguard and promote their welfare. In the event that there is a disagreement between agencies, this will be discussed at a local level by the relevant managers of the agencies involved in the first instance and a resolution sought within a reasonable timescale.

If this is not possible, the matter should be referred to senior managers in the partner agencies to discuss and find a resolution. If disagreements need to be escalated further, this should be via the senior representatives on the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board. Any disagreements or disputes should be clearly recorded on the service case records. All staff should be aware of the Professionals Disputes and Escalation Procedure, which can be found on the HSCB Procedures here: [Professional Disagreements About Decisions, Including Convening an ICPC, and Escalation of Concerns](#)

## 14 Review of protocol

This protocol will be reviewed on a 12 monthly basis by members of the Hertfordshire

Safeguarding Children Board.

## Appendix 1

### Contacts

The referral to Children's Social Care process for professionals is the same as for the public, via the **Customer Services Centre (CSC)**, telephone: 0300 123 4043, e-mail: [CSF.hertsdirect@hertfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:CSF.hertsdirect@hertfordshire.gov.uk).

#### **Hertfordshire Mash (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) Professional Advice Line**

01438 737511

**NSPCC child trafficking advice and information line 0800 107 7057**

#### **United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre**

UKHTC, PO Box 8000, London SE11 5EN

**Tel:** 0844 778 2406 **Fax:** 08704965534

**Email:** [UKHTC@nca.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:UKHTC@nca.x.gsi.gov.uk)

#### **CEOP**

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[Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre - internet safety - CEOP](#)

#### **Refugee Council**

PO Box 68614

London E15 9DQ

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[www.refugeecouncil.org.uk](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk)

#### **UK Border Agency**

60-68 St Thomas Street,

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