



EAST AYRSHIRE CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE: 19 MAY

CHILD TRAFFICKING

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of a new formal procedure for assessing and recording cases of child trafficking which became operational on 1 April 2009 following the UK Government's ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Child Protection Committee previously considered Child trafficking in November 2007. During a nationwide operation against human trafficking codenamed Pentameter 2, a model protocol was issued by the Scottish Government Child Protection Policy Team to provide guidance for staff involved in the protection of children located as part of Operation Pentameter 2. This protocol was agreed by East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee on 28 November 2007.
- 2.2 In February 2009 the Scottish Government published Safeguarding Children in Scotland who may have been Trafficked. (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/261528/0078243.pdf>) It is intended to supplement local interagency child protection procedures. Trafficked victims are coerced or deceived by the person arranging their relocation. On arrival in the country of destination, the trafficked victim is forced into exploitation by the trafficker or person into whose control they are delivered or sold. The Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime to the UN Convention (2000) (ratified by the UK on 6 February 2006) establishes children as a special case. Any child transported for exploitative reasons is considered to be a trafficking victim, whether or not they have been deceived. This is partly because it is not considered possible for children to give informed consent. Even when a child understands what has happened they may still appear to submit willingly to what they believe to be the will of their parents or accompanying adults.
- 2.3 The Scottish Government paper describes the problem of child trafficking, the impact of child trafficking on children's health and welfare, the roles of the Child Protection Committee and services in place. The paper then highlights actions for services including identifying trafficked children.
- 2.4 The role of Child Protection Committees is identified as being to co-ordinate at a strategic level what is done by their members to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their local area and to ensure the effectiveness of their work. The Scottish Government is developing a draft protocol for Child

Protection Committees to consider adopting and states that local committees should have a strategy in place for raising awareness in local communities of the possibility that children are trafficked and exploited and how to raise a concern.

3. NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM FOR IDENTIFYING AND RECORDING CASES OF CHILD TRAFFICKING

3.1 From 1 April 2009, all suspected cases of human trafficking, including suspected trafficked children, should be reported to the Competent Authority for consideration and decision using a specially designed form. The referral should be submitted by the child's lead professional or their equivalent in local authority social work departments. At all times it should be used in conjunction with Safeguarding Children in Scotland who may have been Trafficked and local child protection procedures.

3.2 The Competent Authorities for the United Kingdom will be: -

- a central multi-agency Competent Authority based in the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC); and
- a linked but separate Competent Authority in UKBA which will assess cases where trafficking is raised as part of an asylum claim or in the context of another immigration process.

3.3 The role of the Competent Authorities will be 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. Any case must be referred via the National Referral Mechanism for the Competent Authority to make a decision.

4. REFERRAL FORM AND ASSESSMENT TOOLKIT

4.1 A specific referral form must be used which incorporates a matrix of evidence based indicators which have been established through research into child trafficking and will help the professional to develop their report. An assessment toolkit has also been developed to assist professionals and is based on one use in the London Borough of Harrow. The toolkit is now being piloted across a number of UK sites, including Glasgow. The assessment tool employs the same matrix of trafficking indicators as the Competent Authority referral form and should assist in the completion of the referral form.

5. EAST AYRSHIRE RESPONSE

5.1 The Scottish Government is holding an awareness raising event on 18 May 2009 which will be attended by the Child Protection Co-ordinator. A model protocol will be made available at this event for local areas to use and adapt for their own circumstances. East Ayrshire Child Protection Committee will need to consider the development of a local protocol and development of a

strategy for raising awareness in local communities of the possibility that children are trafficked and exploited and how to raise a concern.

6. RECOMMENDATION

6.1 The Child Protection Committee is asked to:

- i) note the content of the report and the development of an East Ayrshire protocol to support the process which came into force on 1 April 2009.

Susan Taylor
Chair of Child Protection Committee
7 May 2009

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