



Human Trafficking

One year on

Summary

The Problem

- *800,000 people trafficked* across international borders each year.
- *Up to 4,000 women in the UK were victims* of trafficking for sexual exploitation in 2003 – this figure is estimated to have increased.
- *80% of women involved in off-street prostitution* in London are believed to be foreign nationals, of which a large proportion are likely to have been trafficked.
- *Increasing number of children as victims* – over an 18 month period, from 2006 to 2007, 330 children are known to have been trafficked into the UK. The actual number is probably much higher.
- *The conviction rate for trafficking is down 40%* on last year and there are still no convictions for labour exploitation.

Recommendations

Police

- Establish a UK Border Police Force.
- Measures to intercept traffickers and victims at our borders.
- Replace ad hoc police operations with a mainstreaming of trafficking as a police priority.

Prosecute

- Robust law enforcement to bring more traffickers and employers of forced labour to justice.

Protect

- Expand and make full use of the safe accommodation at the Poppy Project, and revise the regulations currently restricting application of its support services to children.

International Action

- Set a deadline and timetable for ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings 2005.
- Drive for better cooperation of national authorities within Europol and Eurojust.

Introduction

This time last year, the Conservative Party launched ‘Human Trafficking – The Modern Slave Trade’ in which we highlighted the severity and increasing prevalence of people trafficking in the UK, 200 years after William Wilberforce succeeded in abolishing the slave trade.

Human Trafficking refers to the transportation of people in order to exploit them, by deception, intimidation, or coercion, and involves widespread and grave human rights abuses.

In our 2007 report we identified the two main forms of exploitation in the UK as being:

Exploitation of labour – Particularly common in agriculture, construction, domestic cleaning, contract cleaning, and the care sector and highlighted in several well publicised and tragic examples such as the Chinese cockle pickers who drowned in Morecombe Bay.

Sexual exploitation – Frequently involving women or girls trafficked to work as domestic servants. They are often mistreated on arrival, including through physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Many are lured under false pretence of more favourable work or remuneration and made financially dependent on arrival.

Involvement of organised crime – There are many crimes associated with human trafficking including employment of illegal immigrants, drug crimes, money laundering, prostitution, and child abuse. The links between human trafficking and organised crime are of serious concern.

The UK is classified by the UN as a ‘high’ level destination country for trafficking (based on reported incidents) and a ‘medium’ level transit country. During a four month operation in 2006, 84 potential victims from 22 different countries were recovered, predominately from Eastern Europe, China, South-East Asia, Africa, or Brazil. (Home Office UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking, March 2007)

It is estimated in the U.S. State Department Annual Report on ‘Trafficking in Persons’ that around *800,000 people are trafficked across international borders every year*. Of this figure approximately 80% are women or girls and 50% are minors (U.S. State Department 2007 Trafficking in Persons Report)

Home Office research estimates that in 2003 there were up to 4,000 women in the UK that had been trafficked for sexual exploitation. It is estimated that the figure may have grown since. The average earnings of a trafficked prostitute for his or her pimp are roughly £100,000 a year. (Hansard, 13 December 06: Col 300WH)

60% of victims of trafficking arrived in the UK illegally. (Joint Committee for Human Rights Report on Human Trafficking, 2006)

We also reviewed the Government’s record in tackling human trafficking:

- **A few specialised police operations** including Operation Pentameter, which was specifically aimed at helping trafficking victims of sexual exploitation and arrested 232 people, with 134 charges laid, and rescued 84 victims, including 12 minors, between February and June 2006.
- **Various pieces of government legislation** available to fight human trafficking. These include:
 - The Immigration Act 1971
 - The Sexual Offences Act 2003
 - The Immigration and Asylum Act 1996
 - The Asylum and Immigration (Treatments of claimants etc.) Act 2004
 - The Gangmaster (Licensing) Act 2005
- **However, prosecutions for trafficking were low:**
 - Between 2004 – 2006 there were only 30 convictions for trafficking offences
 - There had been no convictions achieved for trafficking for labour exploitation
 - Between 1997 and 2004 the government prosecuted only 35 employers under s.8 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 (Employing a person subject to immigration control who has attained the age of 16) of which 17 were found guilty.

The Joint Committee on Human Rights stated in 2006: “While the legislative framework to prohibit trafficking is clearly in place, we share the concerns of those who say that there have not been enough prosecutions under the existing laws on trafficking, compared to the number of victims arrested, detained, and deported. Lack of awareness and training among law enforcement agencies may be contributing factors for this.” (Joint Committee for Human Rights Report on Human Trafficking, 2006)

The Conservative Party launched a policy initiative on human trafficking on 3 January 2007 issuing a report with a series of policy recommendations. These included:

- Sign and ratify the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings 2005 (ECATHB)
- Establish a UK Border Police Force;
- Separate interviews at all airports for women and children travelling alone with an adult who is not a parent, guardian, or husband, to identify potential victims;
- Strengthen coordination between relevant Government departments and SOCA, reinforcing the UKHTC, in order to ensure a coherent, joined-up approach;
- Ensure each police force and the LGA has a strategy for dealing with suspected victims of trafficking; and
- Set up a helpline providing information for women who have been trafficked, and for those who suspect exploitation.

One Year on – What has the Government achieved?

The Government responded to Conservative calls to join the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, signing on 23 March 2007.

On the same day, the Home Office published the ‘UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking’ which laid out the Government’s strategy for dealing with this escalating crime. Expectation was high amongst interested parties that real progress could be made on this issue.

The ‘Action Plan’ correctly identifies that reliable data on Human Trafficking was still lacking both internationally and nationally, and this meant that “at the moment we do not have sufficient evidence regarding trafficking for forced labour to enable us to make a full assessment of whether it poses a significant problem for the UK.”

The Government committed to further detailed research as “a high priority”, but minimal new information is available.

From the new data available, we can see that the problem is still widespread and escalating:

- The International Labour Organisation estimates that there are 12.3 million people in forced labour, bonded labour, forced child labour, and sexual servitude at any given time. Other estimates of this range from 4 million to 23 million. (U.S. State Department 2007 Trafficking in Persons Report)

In the UK, data on trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation indicates a problem spiralling out of control.

- New Home Office figures estimate the size of the UK market for human trafficking for sexual exploitation was up to £275 million in 2003. Victims are bought and sold in the UK for anything between £500 and £8,000 and a trafficker working in an off-street brothel is likely to make in the region of £1,000 a week.
- The Eaves Housing charity estimates that during the summer of 2004 there were approximately 8,000 women involved in off-street prostitution in London alone. Of these it has estimated that some 80% were foreign nationals of which a large proportion are likely to have been trafficked. They also found that a massive 81% of women working as prostitutes in flats, parlours, and saunas were not originally from the UK. (Poppy Project Response to ‘Tackling Human Trafficking.’)

So what progress has the Government made one year on?

Progress towards implementing the European Convention.

The Joint Committee on Human Rights recently stated (see *Annex 1* for a list of the cross-party membership of the JCHR):

- “...we are concerned that the Government has not gone far enough or has not so far showed signs of acting with sufficient vigour.” (JCHR Human Trafficking: Update, October 07, HC 1056)
- “...we were disappointed to hear the Minister state in debate on 24 May that “we do not have a timetable for ratification””. (ibid)
- “We recommend...the Government announce a target date for ratification and publish a ratification plan, to concentrate minds across Whitehall on the necessary action and guard against slippage.” (ibid)

Despite repeated Conservative requests, the Government have not provided any further information on UK plans for ratification. (See the most recent response, in Hansard, at *Annex 2*)

The Convention has now been ratified by the required ten countries (Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Georgia, Moldova, Romania, and Slovakia) and will *enter into force on 1 February 2008*, without Britain as a party to it.

What progress has the Government made more widely to tackle the problem?

- **Border controls:** The Government has announced a new Border Service, but the newly configured organisation will not include the police, thereby depriving it of any additional law enforcement authority or capacity. The Government has failed to properly manage our borders. One of the many consequences has been the ease with which human trafficking takes place across UK borders.
- **Ad hoc police operations** continue with Operation Pentameter 2, a six month police operation targeting those being trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The limitations of such short term operations are highlighted by the fact that the original Operation Pentameter was only able to visit around 10% of the estimated number of UK sex establishments. (BBC Online, 19 March 07)
- **Criminal Convictions** – In the Action Plan the Government states “The Crown Prosecution Service... regard trafficking cases as a priority and seek to make full use of the anti-trafficking legislation at their disposal, where appropriate.”
 - In practice, there have only been 67 convictions for trafficking under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Hansard 468 c359-60W) and *the conviction rate has fallen by 40% from 27 in 2006 to just 16 in 2007.* (Hansard 468 c765W)
 - There have been *no convictions to date for forced labour* under the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants) Act 2004 (Hansard 468 c765W).
 - The Joint Committee on Human Rights stated in its report in 2006 that “there have not been enough prosecutions under the existing laws on trafficking”. Since this report was published, prosecutions have fallen further.
 - There is evidence that *police targets are distracting* from the effort to tackle trafficking. Chief Superintendent Paul Phillipson, of Cambridge Police, recently commented in interview: “I don’t have any targets around how many traffickers I arrest. I don’t have any targets around how many brothels I close. I have lots of other targets which I have to focus on...” (BBC TV, Daily Politics, 23 November 2007).
- **Victim Protection** – In 2006 the government announced that it had secured a *new two year £2.4 million funding arrangement for the Poppy Project* to provide safe accommodation and support services for adult women trafficked into the UK for sexual exploitation. This is welcome, but limited resources are not being used to their maximum potential.
 - Between March 2003 and February 2006, the Project received 431 referrals of which 70 concerned minors. However, owing to “referral criteria set down by the Home Office” the Project is unable to accept anyone under the age of 18. The most vulnerable victims, *children, are excluded* from the main source of victim protection provision.
 - Notwithstanding the new funding agreement, there are *no additional places available in safe accommodation.*
 - Owing to the referral criteria placed on the Poppy Project by the Government, in a six month period to February 2007, *occupancy levels were consistently below 50% of their maximum capacity, dropping as low as 37% in December 06.*
 - Last year, the Conservatives proposed a *Helpline* providing information for the victims of trafficking. Instead, the Government announced in their Action Plan “a helpline advice service for professionals and front-line agencies.” (Home Office UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking, March 2007 P.12)
- **Trafficking of children** is an escalating problem with a weak support structure in place.
 - *Over half of trafficked children disappear from social services:* Recent research published by the UNICEF showed that in an 18 month period, 330 children were believed to have been trafficked into the UK. Of that total 183 went missing from the care of Social Services.
 - *There is no safe accommodation providing 24 hour care for trafficked children* and as a result many of them end up in foster care, hostels, or even bed and breakfast accommodation. (Unicef Rights Here, Rights Now report)
 - There is evidence that *‘Children who are trafficked may still be under the control of traffickers while they are in local authority care’.* (ECPAT UK ‘Missing Out: A study of Trafficking in the North-West, North East, and Midlands, 2007.)

One Year on – Conservative Policy

The Government's approach in 2007 has been ad hoc and piecemeal. In contrast, the Conservative Party has spent 2007 further developing its analysis and practical policy recommendations. We are now proposing a further series of practical measures that would make a real difference to the victims of trafficking and send a clear message to traffickers that they cannot operate with impunity in the UK:

Police UK Borders

- *A Conservative Government will establish a UK Border Police Force.* The Government has announced it will amalgamate existing border authorities into a new Border Service. Critically, it will not include the police and therefore any additional law enforcement impact will be limited. In April 2007, the Conservative Party commissioned Lord Stevens to chair an Advisory Committee, reviewing the appropriate model for our Border Police Force. Interim findings favour a Force with: the necessary powers to stop, search, investigate and prosecute; the remit to tackle organised crime, illegal immigration and international crime (including human trafficking); and composed of all the necessary arms of law enforcement including the police. *The final report and recommendations will be published in the coming weeks.*
- *Police operations* have to date comprised ad hoc operations, such as Pentameters I and II. A Conservative Government would make Pentameter permanent. Our approach would mainstream human trafficking as a “core” police priority.
- Existing Conservative policy on border control measures to address trafficking:
 - Separate interviews at all airports for women and children travelling alone with an adult who is not a parent, guardian, or husband. This practice, implemented successfully in the United States, will help identify potential victims.
 - Checks by immigration officials on the dates of return tickets where such adults accompany a minor, to enable any discrepancies to be clarified.

Prosecute the Traffickers

- *Robust law enforcement* is required to punish and deter traffickers. The Government says law enforcement is a priority, but prosecutions are down 40% on last year. A Conservative Government would reverse this trend, making human trafficking a prosecution priority.
- *Focused prosecutions* are necessary to tackle supply and demand. In addition to prosecuting traffickers for sexual exploitation, we need to see a renewed focus on employers and those profiting from trafficking for forced labour (for which there have been no convictions to date).

Protect the Victims

- *Increase the number of places at safe houses:* It is vital to make full use of the Poppy Project's capacity. A Conservative Government would focus on maximising the number of places available for victims in safe accommodation and making sure the available places are fully used.
- *Remove the bar on children.* Whilst half of the places available at the Poppy Project are left empty at any one time, those under 18 are excluded from its care. Conservative policy is to revise the regulatory framework so that 16 to 18 year olds can be admitted to the Poppy Project consistent with the regulation applicable to child protection and care.
- *Existing policy on victim protection includes:*
 - Setting up a helpline for victims of trafficking, to provide information on care and services available as well as contacts for confidential police cooperation.
 - Measures to promote social responsibility, including campaigns targeted at both potential ‘consumers’ and ‘employers’, highlighting the suffering of victims.

International Action

- *Ratify the Convention:* The Conservative Party calls on the Government to set a deadline and implementation plan for ratification of the European Convention, given the Convention will enter into force without the UK in February 2008.
- *Focus Europol and Eurojust* on maximising practical cooperation between national authorities to tackle human trafficking.

Annex 1

Members of the Joint Committee on Human Rights

Member	Party
Mr Andrew Dismore MP (Chair)	Labour
Mr John Austin MP	Labour
Mr Douglas Carswell MP	Conservative
Dr Evan Harris MP	Liberal Democrats
Mr Virendra Sharma MP	Labour
Mr Richard Shepherd MP	Conservative
Lord Dubs	Labour
Lord Fraser of Carmyllie	Conservative
Lord Lester of Herne Hill	Liberal Democrats
Lord Morris of Handsworth	Labour
The Earl of Onslow	Conservative
Baroness Stern	Cross Bench

Annex 2

Reply to Written Parliamentary Question, 5 December 2007

Damian Green: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which requirements of the European Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings require amendments to UK (a) primary and (b) secondary legislation; when the Government plans to bring forward such amendments; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Coaker: We consider existing domestic legislation to be largely compliant with the Convention. Victims of trafficking are already being identified, supported and where appropriate may be issued with limited or indefinite leave to remain in the UK. However, we have identified a need for limited amendments to legislation and procedures, including the mechanisms for the support of victims of trafficking. The detail of the legislative changes required is still subject to discussion within government but we will ratify the Convention as soon as we can. (Hansard, 5 Dec 07, 468 c1220-1221w)