

Serious Organised Crime Agency

United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre

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Presentation Content

- Brief Overview of the UKHTC
- Operation GOLF – Overview
- Current UK Case Study



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UKHTC - Overview

UK Human Trafficking Centre

Partnership working
to combat
Human Trafficking



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UKHTC - Overview

- Created in April 2006
- Became part of Serious Organised Crime Agency in 2010 – Based Birmingham
- Multi Agency Centre (SOCA and UKBA)
- Roles dictated by UK Action plan on 'Tackling Human Trafficking'



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UKHTC - Overview

Key Roles

- Collating and disseminating intelligence
- Identifying current trends
- Co-ordinating operations
- Tactical advice and support
- Assistance with victim care and support
- One of two UK Competent Authorities for 'National Referral Mechanism'



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UKHTC - Overview

Remit of the Centre

Adults and Children (Lead C.E.O.P)

All types of trafficking including;

- Sexual Exploitation
- Forced Labour
- Domestic Servitude
- Illegal Organ Harvesting
- Into / within / out of the UK
- Trafficking of UK Nationals within the UK



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UKHTC - Overview

Strategic Partners

- All UK Police Forces
- Crown Prosecution Service
- UK Border Agency
- Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
- Local Social Services/Children's Services
- Non Government Organisations/Charities
- International Law Enforcement Agencies



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UK Stance to Child Trafficking Victims

- Trafficking causes significant harm to children in both the short and long term; it constitutes physical and emotional abuse to children
- The safety and welfare of the child is paramount (i.e. the nationality or immigration status of the child is secondary and should be addressed only after the child's safety is assured);
- Trafficked children are provided with the same standard of care that is available to any other child in the UK
- All decisions or plans for the children should be based on good quality assessments and supported by easily accessible multi-agency services
- All agencies should work in partnership with members of local communities, to empower individuals and groups to develop support networks and education programmes



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UK Stance to Child Trafficking Victims

Supporting Documents - Policy

UK Action Plan on Action Against Human Trafficking (Under Review – Revised Policy due)

CPS – Policy for Prosecuting Victims of Trafficking (May 2011)

LSCB – Trafficked Children Toolkit (Feb2011)

UKBA – Every Child Matters (2009)

ACPO – Guidance on Child Trafficking Victims

Awareness

ECPAT – Child Trafficking – Begging and Organised Crime

NSPCC (CTAIL)



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Operation GOLF

- Romania entered EU - 2007
- Freedom of travel/migration within EU
- 2007 London (Met Police) saw 750% increase in Begging/Theft crimes
- Most arrested were young Romanian 'Roma' children
- 100's arrested used small circle of 'Appropriate Adults' when interviewed
- Above led to setting up Operation GOLF



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Operation GOLF

- First police led EU Joint Investigation Team (JIT) on Human Trafficking in Europe
- JIT between Metropolitan and Romanian Police/Prosecutors
- Strategic Partners - UKHTC/CPS/Europol/Eurojust
- Focused on Child Trafficking by an Organised Crime Group based in Tanderei region – Romania
- Large numbers of children trafficked into England and Wales for exploitation
- Children used to commit Begging/Theft and for Benefit Fraud



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Operation GOLF

- Romanians identified over 1000 children believed trafficked out of country in 4 year period
- Approx 3/ 4 transported by drivers connected to the Crime Group
- UKHTC established over 1/3 were or had been in UK
- Nearly 500 addresses in UK linked to these 1/3 and associates
- Over 1300 crimes were identified as linked to those children identified
- Nearly every Police Force in England and Wales affected by this criminality



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Operation GOLF

Results Include;

- MPS made over 130 arrests – Offences included; Trafficking, Child Neglect, Money Laundering, Fraud, Theft, Forgery
- First convictions in UK for Child Trafficking for committing criminality
- 26 males charged in Romania with trafficking 181 children to UK for exploitation
- UKHTC referred nearly 200 children to local Police for consideration under child protection procedures



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Case Study – Operation ‘L’

- 2010 -Operation GOLF identified ‘Ani’ – now 14 yr old girl, trafficked from Romania in 2004
- Was now living with Romanian couple, Leticia and Alex and their own four children (9 mths – 14 yrs)
- Warrant executed on house – Ani found to be sharing a room with couples 14 yr old son as a couple
- The family originate from Tanderai, Romania
- Leticia and Alex arrested on suspicion of trafficking Ani and children taken into care



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Case Study – Operation ‘L’

- Operation focused on care and movement of Ani
- Believed that she was trafficked and exploited for crime/servitude
- Earliest record – 2008 Ani’s mother reported loss of her birth certificate to police - London
- Mid 2009 Ani examined at a London hospital
- Believed Ani joined Leticia and Alex late 2009 - Liverpool
- Two Romanian notary documents found at house authorising care of Ani – mothers ill health



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Case Study – Operation ‘L’

- Ani first came to notice of police 1 week after joining family – arrested for fraud
- Next 4 months – arrested 13 times, committed 18 offences, including;
 - Begging
 - Fraud
 - Burglary
 - Theft
- Begging M.O – pretending to be deaf/dumb – collecting for charity – false documents
- Arrested with several associates – including son of Leticia/Alex



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Case Study – Operation ‘L’

- When arrested used several false identities
- Always gave details of Leticia/Alex to be notified and act as ‘Appropriate Adult’
- Associates gave same notification details
- All carried the phone number of Alex, although few knew his full name
- Evidence that Ani was under control of others on occasions – including children of the family
- Arrests made over a large geographical area – covering several Police forces/Local Authorities



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Case Study – Operation ‘L’

- Leticia/Alex claimed to have looked after Ani whilst her mother was recovering from illness
- Enquiries showed that her mother was reported as being in full health when in UK
- She was now living in France, in good health
- Leticia/Alex claim meeting Ani’s mother was by chance on a visit to Romania
- Enquiries reveal extensive telecommunication data indicating pre planning
- Leticia/Alex’s own children received state education – Ani was never registered with a school



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Case Study – Operation ‘L’

- Ani is believed to be a ‘child bride’
- Ani first came to notice at London Hospital –
Virginity test
- Roma culture – Girls marry at 13 -14 yrs
- Virginity is very important at this time
- Dowry usually paid by boys family to girls family
- Once ‘married’ girl usually has children soon
after
- Ani had baby in 2011 – Alex’s son is father
- Once dowry paid, bride will carry the debt
- To recoup debt, often made to commit crime



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Case Study – Operation ‘L’

- Leticia and Alex charged with;
 - Child Trafficking
 - Fraud by False representation
 - Conspiracy to commit crimes (carried out by Ani)
- Currently awaiting trial
- Ani remains in the care of a UK Local Authority Children’s Service



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Case Study – Operation ‘L’

Investigative Challenges

- Lack of knowledge of Human Trafficking – Offender -v- Victim
- Offences committed over large area – Several Police forces and even more Local Authorities
- Knowledge by offenders of UK systems/processes
- Misplaced trust of victim(s)
- Weak system of support to children at interview following arrest(‘Appropriate Adult’)



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Questions ?



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