

# Flesh market

Would you know a victim of human trafficking if you came across one?

They could be a worker in a takeaway or brothel or a regular 'vulnerable' missing person.

Grahame Maxwell, deputy chief constable of South Yorkshire Police and ACPO lead on human trafficking, writes about the problem in Britain and how frontline officers can spot victims

Modern day slavery is known as trafficking in human beings and takes many guises with people being deceived and brought to Britain to work as sex slaves, forced into domestic servitude, or to work as slave or bonded labour.

The UK is primarily a destination country for a problem that is global in nature. It is estimated that 600,000 to 800,000 men, women and children are trafficked across international borders each year. Approximately 80 percent are women and girls, with up to half of those being minors, according to the US *Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report 2005*. Human trafficking is the third largest source of income for organised crime, exceeded only by arms and drugs trafficking. It is the fastest growing form of international crime, already generating seven billion dollars per year in criminal proceeds. The UN office on drugs and crime state that there are even reports that some trafficking groups are switching their cargo from drugs to human beings, in search of high profits at lower risk.

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## Trafficking victims

Victims of trafficking can come from Eastern Europe, Thailand, China, India, Pakistan, Africa, South Africa – anywhere where there is deprivation, despair and the desire for a better life. Many victims come to the UK having been deceived into leaving their home countries with the promise of a better life in the “rich” western world. Their dreams and lives are quickly shattered upon their arrival here. Sex slavery is now recognised as taking place in the UK, but as demonstrated by the horrifying case study below, it isn’t just about sex, victims are also trafficked for forced labour and domestic servitude.

### Case study 1

May was married in China to a husband from the UK who paid her trafficker £10,000 for her. She was brought back to the UK by her husband. Upon her arrival in Rotherham it became quickly clear to her that her new life was not what she had expected. Her husband quickly acquired a girlfriend, and between them they ran a takeaway restaurant, with May providing the labour for them to make their business profitable. She was repeatedly beaten and forced to live in an outhouse – even in the middle of winter. She was told that after two years she would be freed. Unfortunately for May this was not to be the case and she died from the injuries inflicted upon her by her “husband” and his girlfriend.

At the time she died May was suffering from trenchfoot – a disease synonymous with the suffering of soldiers in the water-sodden trenches of the First World War. May’s husband and girlfriend are also now serving lengthy prison sentences. Again, May was not hidden away, this terrible crime was committed in the middle of one of our communities. How many times must people have visited the takeaway and not have been aware of or even suspected what was happening?

What then have we done to try and stop this and what more can we all do about it?

The UK is committed to tackling human trafficking in all its forms. Ahead of the Home Office recently signing the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Human Trafficking, and launching the UK Action Plan on Human Trafficking, across the country we have set up a number of police units. The units use specialists in tackling trafficking and other forms of serious immigration crime. These ‘Reflex’ teams have all had numerous notable successes in arresting and successfully prosecuting traffickers.

Last year I led an operation, Operation Pentameter, involving all 55 police forces in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The operation was aimed at raising



Exploitation: workers can end up being sold into domestic service

awareness about trafficking for sexual exploitation and rescuing trafficking victims.

The next chapter in this fight will launch later this year when we run Operation Pentameter 2, this time with European partners involved, and spreading the net to look at forced labour and domestic servitude.

### Pentameter results

- Over 500 visits
- 84 percent rescues
- 252 percent arrests
- 12 percent minors
- 40 percent Eastern European
- 4000 Estimated victims in UK
- Sale price from £8000 to £500
- Up to 30 “clients” a day...30 rapes a day

As a result of the success of Pentameter, we created the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre – the UKHTC. The centre based in Sheffield, is a multi-agency unit which has staff not only from the Police but also from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), the Immigration Service, the Serious and Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), Social Services, Revenue and Customs and representatives from a number of charities and other non-governmental organisations. A victim-centred approach is adopted at the centre which also serves as an intelligence hub for the the UK, and provides tactical advice and guidance throughout the country, together with 24/7 access to support services and specialist advisers.

Traffickers operate covertly among our communities and neighbourhood policing provides the best way for all of us to work together to defeat all aspects of crime from those offences that spoil our quality of life to those more serious crimes – such as trafficking. On the front line of policing, we can all be looking out for the frequent visitors to premises that could suggest a brothel may be being operated, for the cowed and submissive worker in the shop or takeaway, for the child that never attends school. Consider that not all trafficking involves foreign nationals. There is growing intelligence to suggest that internal trafficking is a very real problem, with young people being groomed within our communities, then spirited away for exploitation. Think about those young, vulnerable regular missing persons that you come into contact with. Maybe they aren't so wayward. Maybe there is a very good reason why they won't reveal who they have been with and where they have been. Perhaps they are terrified to.

### What does a victim look like?

- Typically female
- Typically 18-24
- Sold repeatedly
- Unlikely to speak English
- From deprived area
- No longer has any documents
- Wary of Authority
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

The clients you meet who use trafficked people also have a part to play. Any man who has sex with a trafficked woman, whether or not they pay, will be raping her. The law is very clear that in terms of sex, consent must be freely given and not given under duress – clearly a person who has been deceived into coming here and sold into prostitution will not be given their consent freely. This is a point that we all need to make to all those users of sexual services that we come into contact with. But it is also worth taking the time to educate them on this issue, and remind them that the information they pass back to us, in person or through Crimestoppers, may help to rescue a woman that they have suspicions or concerns about.

### Case Study 2

Victoria was a girl of 15 whose parents approved her coming to the UK believing she was to sell ice-cream in London. A man and a woman in her home country of Lithuania had convinced them that she could earn a lot of money to help with her education by spending the summer in our capital city. Upon her arrival in the UK she was sold in an airport coffee shop for £3,000. That evening, her dreams of a new life with her education paid for were destroyed when she was brutalised and raped by the man who had “bought” her. For Victoria there followed several weeks of being repeatedly brutalised and raped by men who paid for the use of her body. Sold several times, each time her worth to the traffickers diminishing – like a second hand car – sold from trafficker to trafficker till eventually she managed to escape and seek help in Sheffield. Her traffickers have now been convicted and are serving lengthy sentences.

Grahame Maxwell is due to speak at the Police Federation's annual conference in Blackpool this month.

- If you want to know more about people trafficking please visit the UKHTC website and its linked sites at [www.ukhtc.org](http://www.ukhtc.org).