

Domestic Abuse & Trafficking

What is it?

The first internationally recognised definition of human trafficking comes from the Palermo Protocol and defines it as:

“Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of 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 of another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practises similar to slavery, servitude or removal of organs”

In its most basic form, trafficking refers to the movement of an individual with the intention of exploiting them for gain. This can include exploitation sexually or for labour. Transportation does not just relate to international boundaries but can refer to movement within the same country. Trafficking has two core forms: Labour Trafficking and Sex Trafficking and both affect men, women and children across the world.

In the UK we have the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) which is a framework used to help identify victims of human trafficking in all its forms and it ensures victims receive all the necessary help as soon as possible.

The Facts

70% of adult
female trafficking
victims
experienced
domestic abuse
beforehand.

1 in 6
runaway children
and young people
have experienced
domestic abuse

1631
potential victims
were submitted
to NRM from
January to March
2018

In the UK most
victims originated
from **Albania,**
the UK and
Vietnam.

In the UK the
highest number
of victims were
exploited for
LABOUR

Similarities

Oftentimes victims of trafficking also report having been the victim of domestic abuse prior to being trafficked. As a result, domestic abuse is often seen as a “push” factor for trafficking in that victims of domestic abuse often flee their homes without any financial or social support leaving them vulnerable to traffickers. Furthermore, domestic abuse can sometimes be a gateway into trafficking with partners, or even spouses, exploiting their relationship through trafficking the other party. Bearing all this in mind it is clear to see there are strong ties and similarities between domestic abuse and trafficking, thus it is vital that we are aware of these links and crossovers in order to protect vulnerable members of society.

Secrecy

Both domestic abuse and trafficking occur in secrecy – they require this to some extent in order to thrive. In both situations the victim is often hesitant to disclosure, never mind report, incidents of abuse or trafficking for a number of reasons. These include the consequences for their behaviour from the alleged offender, the fear of not being taken seriously or believed and the realisation that if no further action is taken from their reporting they will be the victim to further abuse.

Violence

Whilst violence is not always present in these cases, where it is used it is often extreme and repetitive in order to force the victim to comply. Often physical violence is tied with physical abuse including withholding food or drink, erratic and unpredictable moods and frequent changes of location in order to prevent stability or the formation of relationships.

Dominance and Power

Although the extent to which the domination and power is used is variable, it is still a frequent factor in both trafficking and abuse. This dominance and power extends far beyond physicality and seeps into coercive control, restricting the victim’s movements and continually keeping track of where the victim is, what they are saying, who they are talking to and what they are talking about.

Rules

Extensive rules are often in place for both trafficking and abuse. These rules become a daily occurrence which determine every aspect of the victim’s life from; who they can and cannot see, where they can and cannot go, what they can and cannot wear, eat or do. Specifically in abuse it may be ensuring the children are quiet and that dinner’s made, whereas for trafficking victims it could be ensuring they reach their “quota” for the evening and that they never say “no” to a request.

Relationship-Based

Whilst a relationship is a clear necessary component for domestic abuse to occur, it is an often overlooked yet pivotal part of trafficking. Often in the case of trafficking, specifically sex trafficking, the alleged offender will start a relationship with the individual they have identified. Overtime this may build into a sexual relationship and eventually cumulate in the victim being “pimped” out to other people. Whilst this isn’t always the case this method is quite commonly used.

This is not an exhaustive list of the similarities between these two crimes and other similar factors include: **past history of trauma, financial control, societal stigma preventing victims speaking out and psychological abuse and instability.**