

News Release

UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01 ON 18 MARCH 2009

CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER FOR WALES LAUNCHES STUDY ON CHILD TRAFFICKING IN WALES

Keith Towler, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, will today (18 March 2009) publish the findings of a study on child trafficking in Wales.

Conducted by ECPAT UK on behalf of the Children's Commissioner, the study – *Bordering on Concern* – focused on finding an evidence base for child trafficking in Wales. It also examined the levels of awareness of child trafficking issues among social services and selected voluntary sector organisations, explored how identified cases of child trafficking had been dealt with by social services and the extent to which local authorities promote cooperation between statutory and other agencies.

Evidence was found of confirmed and suspected cases of child trafficking encountered by social services, the voluntary sector and the police. Practitioners described 32 cases that caused them concerns; these cases involve children aged three and a half years and upwards, from a variety of countries of origin. Notably, more boys than girls were identified during the study.

The report concludes with six recommendations from the Children's Commissioner for Wales, ranging from the need for the Welsh Assembly Government to undertake an audit of relevant training currently available to practitioners, to tasking the Government to convene an all-Wales group on trafficking whose remit shall include collecting and disseminating relevant data and information and monitoring trends. It goes on to recommend that all Local Safeguarding Children's Boards to implement the *Safeguarding Children Who May Have Been Trafficked Guidance 2008* within one year of the publication of the report.

More...

Keith Towler, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, explains his reasons for commissioning the research:

"For child trafficking to be tackled effectively there first has to be an acceptance that it exists.

"The sample we've got here is small but is undoubtedly only the tip of the iceberg. I hope this research will help shift the culture of disbelief and that practitioners will start working together to ensure all children and young people in Wales – wherever they originate – enjoy the same rights, including the right to be safeguarded."

Christine Beddoe, from ECPAT UK, who led the study added:

"Trafficked children were found throughout Wales but there was evidence of a number of barriers to identifying children and keeping them safe. Of these barriers the most worrying was that professionals didn't believe it could happen. This left children vulnerable. Government agencies must actively promote child trafficking as an issue that can and does happen in their local area."

Ends

Notes to Editors

To arrange an interview with Keith Towler or Christine Beddoe please contact Sara Young on 01792 765638 or 07794 123132.

You can download a copy of *Bordering on Concern: Child Trafficking in Wales* from www.childcomwales.org.uk

ECPAT UK (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) is a leading UK children's rights organisation.

ECPAT UK works at the highest levels of government but also reaches out to practitioners and those working directly with children through research, training and capacity building.

www.ecpat.org.uk