Introduction – our Experience

1. FCA Scotland is Scotland’s largest fostering organisation, working in partnership with 30 council’s to provide services to over 325 looked after children across Scotland. We are part of a larger FCA network which provides similar services throughout the rest of Britain, across Europe, and in an increasing number of countries across the rest of the world, including Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

2. We have developed specific services focussed on support for sanctuary seeking young people, which provides placements and support for children and young people who have arrived in the UK as unaccompanied asylum seekers. Increasingly, trafficked children are also placed with us (in the UK) by local authorities to receive the same level of care and support.

Scope of our Submission

3. We very much welcome this inquiry, and the opportunity to provide information to the Committee which may be of some interest.

4. Our own experience in this regard is in dealing with referrals of trafficked children. Our particular area of expertise is therefore on a highly focussed personal level, wherein we have built up an understanding of the impact and trauma of trafficking on children, and are continuing to develop an expertise in providing the appropriate care and support for these innocent victims.

5. However, we understand that this is not the focus of the Committee’s interest in the issue at this time. Our submission therefore focuses primarily on helping to address the questions regarding the scale and nature of the trafficking issue.

6. We would be pleased to answer any questions or provide additional information upon request.

- What is the scale of the trafficking issue, in terms of the number of people involved and the geographical areas which people trafficked tend to be sourced from?

7. Due to its nature as an underground ‘black-market’ activity, it is very difficult to establish the true extent of trafficking in Scotland, or the UK as a whole. Most figures are based on estimates or extrapolations.
8. On an international level, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 2.4 million people were victims of human trafficking between 1995-2005. The U.S. Department of State’s *Trafficking in Persons Report: 2007* estimates that between 600,000 and 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders each year. Of this number, approximately 70% are female, and 50% are children.

9. According to latest UNICEF figures, it estimates that 1.2 million children are trafficked worldwide every year (including children trafficked within national boundaries) and that two children per minute are trafficked for sexual purposes.

10. On a UK level, a survey conducted by the Government's Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) indicated that 325 children had been identified as potential victims of trafficking between March 2007 and February 2008. However, police and campaigners believe that this is just the "tip of the iceberg" and that the true figure is likely to be in the thousands.

11. The trafficked children were identified as coming from 52 separate countries with many forced into sexual, labour or criminal exploitation as well as forced marriage and illegal adoption.

12. Within Scotland, the most comprehensive picture to date of the extent of trafficking is contained within the 2008 Amnesty International briefing paper ‘Scotland’s Slaves’. Although unable to give overall figures for the number of trafficked people in Scotland, the report does provide a wide range of broader statistics, including a 2006 UNICEF report which suggests that there are around 5000 child sex workers in the UK at any one time, most of them trafficked.

13. The report also indicates that the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) estimates that Scotland has 13.5% of the UK’s trade in human beings.

14. Cases of trafficking have been found in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dumfries and Galloway, Falkirk, Grangemouth, Stirling and Tayside and the trafficked victims found in Scotland were from Lithuania, Slovakia, Nigeria, China, Estonia, Somalia, Thailand, Guinea and Russia. Globally, the UN has identified over 125 countries from which victims of trafficking have originated. However, with regard to determining country of origin, it is also worth noting that many children who are trafficked into Europe and the UK are done so with a false passport or none at all. This means that determining the country of origin depends on the child’s claim, language used, and a range of other characteristics.

- **What is the nature of the problem? Are people trafficked primarily for reasons related to sexual exploitation or with regard to false labour?**

15. The UN estimates that females are involved in 77% of trafficking cases worldwide, with sexual exploitation a factor in 87%.
16. There appears to be increasing evidence that the UK is a major destination 'market' for trafficked women. Police believe that about 4000 have been brought into the UK and then are forced into the sex trade, prostitution, sex shows, brothels etc. Many victims are from Eastern Europe. The UK is the main destination for Lithuanians; others are from Asia, Africa and South America. International gangs from countries such as Albania, Lithuania and the Czech Republic are among those involved.

17. However, sexual exploitation is only one motivating factor behind trafficking. The Scottish Government’s guidance *Safeguarding Children in Scotland Who May Have Been Trafficked*, published in 2009, indicates that there are a broad range of motives behind trafficking. These include:

- sexual exploitation;
- domestic servitude;
- sweatshop, restaurant and other catering work;
- credit card fraud;
- begging or pick pocketing or other forms of petty criminal activity;
- agricultural labour, including tending plants in illegal cannabis farms;
- benefit fraud;
- drug mules, drug dealing or decoys for adult drug traffickers; and,
- illegal intercountry adoption.

18. The guidance indicates that “younger children are sometimes trafficked to become beggars and thieves or for benefit fraud. Teenagers are often trafficked for domestic servitude or sexual exploitation.”

19. CEOP also lists ‘underage or arranged marriage’ as an additional factor.

20. Our own experience indicates that the kind of exploitation trafficked children are exposed to is not always confined to one category, and that types of abuse are often interconnected. For example, a child trafficked for domestic servitude can often also be subject to sexual exploitation.

21. Despite the horrific nature of trafficking, victims sometimes develop a sense of loyalty towards the trafficker. Children and adults carry a huge burden of responsibility and a duty for the family they may have left behind, and the trafficker often takes on the role of an “Uncle”, “Mother”, or “Guardian”. This facilitates a greater level of control and manipulate over their victims.

22. It is only eight years since the trafficking of people into the UK for prostitution became a crime (under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act), and only six years since Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants) Act criminalised trafficking for any purpose.

23. One feature of recent reports on trafficking is a recognition of the need to provide more focussed care and support for the victims. There is a degree to which police practice has begun to reflect this need, but there is certainly a need for more coherent policy and guidance.
24. With regards to trafficked children, the Borders and Immigration Agency published, in 2008, *Improving the Care of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children*, outlines five key reforms to ensure better outcomes and support for asylum seeking and trafficked children. Greater focus on the level and type of care received is one of the objectives.

25. However, in August 2009, child protection charity Ecpat UK called for more to be done, claiming that up to 60% of children rescued from traffickers later go missing from local authority care, often ending up back in the hands of criminals. One of the key recommendations being made by Ecpat UK is the appointment of legal guardians for trafficked children, a recommendation perhaps worthy of consideration.

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April 2010