

Debunking Common Myths about Human Trafficking or Exploitation

Common Myths	Debunking
Restricted movement	In extreme cases some people may have no or limited freedom of movement but for many others they appear to be able come and go as they wish but they are controlled via threats, psychological control and fear. There is some evidence that mobile phones and/or social media can be used to locate and monitor movement and control them remotely.
Movement or crossing borders must have occurred	In Scotland there is no need for movement or travel to have occurred for human trafficking or exploitation to have taken place. International borders do not need to be crossed and victims can be trafficked from one part of a city to another. In some cases people may have freely travelled to Scotland from abroad but have then fallen prey to trafficking and exploitation. UK nationals can be trafficked and exploited and there is a significant increase in UK citizens being identified.
People can agree to being trafficked and exploited	You cannot consent to being trafficked. People may perceive their current situation as an improvement in circumstances or say they don't feel abused or exploited. This does not mean trafficking or exploitation has not taken place. Some women may have already been involved in prostitution and agreed to come to Scotland but on arrival are subjected to further harm via perpetrators.
Victims/survivors will be relieved or grateful for being recovered	People may appear to be resentful or angry when recovered and identified. This can be a common reaction to trauma. People may also be sending money home to family or be worried about the consequences of speaking out and be anxious about what will happen to them. Hostile reactions to police or 'supporters' and refusals of assistance are not uncommon or unique to victims of trafficking and exploitation.
Not taking opportunities to escape	There may be many reasons why someone appears not to have tried to escape. The impact of cumulative trauma and coercive control can lead to people believing they cannot escape, they may fear reprisals (or have experienced them before) including to family members if caught by the perpetrators, they may have 'trauma' bonded to the perpetrator or the fear of the unknown may prevent attempts.

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Family or close relationships	People are trafficked by family members, husbands/wives, partners and friends. Children are vulnerable to families intentionally or unintentionally colluding with perpetrators and women are vulnerable to 'grooming' by men.
Receiving payment for services	Some victims may receive some monies or 'payment' from perpetrators. Frequently though, disproportionate and illegal expenses are deducted such as rent, transport, clothing, equipment and 'fines' reducing payment to very little. In TARA's experience women exploited in the sex industry are often charged for online advertising, condoms and laundry as well as the above. For some victims there is an illegal 'debt' retained by their families in their home countries resulting in significant fear of reprisals if they do not send 'repayments' home.
It doesn't happen in Scotland	People who have been trafficked and exploited have been identified and recovered across Scotland. Police Scotland and support services have identified trafficking in 27 of our 32 local authority areas. Women, men and children have been exploited in the sex industry, labour and domestic servitude in villages, towns and cities across the country.



Civil Legal Assistance Office