

FORCED CRIMINALITY

DEFINITION:

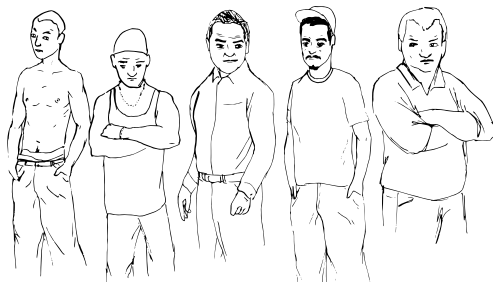
Victims are trafficked into and within the UK for forced criminality for a range of crimes including street crime such as selling counterfeit DVDs, bag snatching, ATM theft, pick-pocketing and forced begging.

FACTS:

- Victims trafficked for forced criminality may also be exploited for benefit fraud. E.g. for extra tax credits, housing benefit, and – in the case of child victims – for child benefit.
- There is evidence of organised crime networks trafficking children to the UK and other parts of Western Europe for criminal activities.
- The European Union has issued a directive which requires all Member States – including the UK – to give prosecutors and courts discretion not to prosecute in cases where someone has committed an offence as a result of being a victim of trafficking.¹
- Each case is different and prosecutors need to decide whether or not it is in the public interest to prosecute.
- Nonetheless some victims end up being prosecuted, convicted and imprisoned for crimes they have committed whilst they have been trafficked.
- Some organised crime gangs may seek to control their victims by blackmailing them with the threat of prosecution and imprisonment.
- Children are often forced to beg and steal because of the large amounts of income they can generate for their traffickers.
- In some cases, children are forced to beg or steal by their parents or family members; they may feel obliged to commit criminal activity ‘for the good of the family’.

QUOTE:

“I was forced to beg, steal and to sell the ‘Big Issue’ magazine illegally. After working for 12 hours each day I would be collected, searched and beaten. I was forced to work on the streets throughout the winter months without a coat to wear or anything to eat or drink.”



¹ Article 8 of the EU Directive on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims (DIRECTIVE 2011/36/EU)