

GANGS BRING CHILDREN TO UK TO USE IN BENEFIT FRAUD; DAILY MAIL REPORTER

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CHILDREN and babies as young as three months old are being trafficked into Britain to help foreign gangs milk the benefits system of millions of pounds.

The children, who are often sent here with their parents' consent, are placed with unrelated adults and used to support fraudulent benefits claims involving fake employment records and forged immigration documents.

The money is paid into accounts controlled by the fraudsters - many of whom are from Romania - and wired back to their home towns, an investigation revealed.

Tandarei, a small town in eastern Romania - identified as a trafficking hub by the Sunday Times - has seen 100 imposing houses valued at around £ 20million spring up on the back of the fraud over the last five years.

In a police operation in Ilford, East London, earlier this month, four suspected child victims of trafficking from Romania were placed in foster care.

Last year Nigerian Peace Sandberg, 40, was jailed for 26 months for illegally bringing a three-monthold baby into the country so she could get priority for housing.

Anthony Steen MP, chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on trafficking of women and children said the Department of Work and Pensions and HM Revenue and Customs, needed to 'get a grip' of the benefits system.

A spokesman for HMRC said it 'takes fraud extremely seriously and had a range of checks in place' to prevent it.