A report released recently by the Centre for Social Justice has criticised Britain for not dealing with the growing and critical issue of human trafficking within and along its borders. Many things have been blamed for its proliferation; such as the formation of the EU, poverty, the internet. But aside from the suggested measures that need to be put in place to combat this alarming issue, which will take time and a combined effort from all countries affected – namely the world – perhaps something needs to be done about creating awareness and arming our children against what potentially awaits them somewhere in their future.

 Whether directly or indirectly, there is an increasing chance that, due to the non-discriminate nature of human trafficking, many of our young will be affected. If not faced with the offer of free drugs and alcohol, or someone to care about them (because your own family doesn’t give a…), then they will know someone who has been approached, or had a near escape from a man who said he’d hurt their family if they didn’t come with him and do as they were told. And sometimes it’s not that blatant; grooming, as it’s known, can be a subtle manipulation involving a new ‘friend’ on facebook that identifies a gaping hole in a child’s life and offers to fill it with special attention, if only they could meet and discuss it…

How best to educate our teens on trafficking is still to be decided. This is not an issue us Westerners were aware we’d have to face. Is this not an affliction suffered by poorer nations? Apparently not. So how do we alert them to these potential dangers? More leaflets? More Stranger Danger campaigns?

When sex is being ‘sold’ like a bag of toffees on every media platform, how do you explain to young, impressionable kids that it’s not just their teeth that will rot if they buy them?

Could the answer lie in fiction? After all, everyone likes a good story. And if the book held a subtle message pertaining to the dangers of sex trafficking and it was part of their education – like use a condom, and eat your greens – would they even notice they were being educated?

A new book called *Ring Around Rosie* highlights the horrors of child trafficking and prostitution through a fictional story. It is about a 14 year-old British girl who accidentally gets caught by traffickers and taken to London, where she faces prostitution, the plight of others worse off than her, as well as her own demons, all whilst her brother Ted and student journalist Martha scour London and its dark recesses in a race to save Rosie before it’s too late.

It’s an adventure story, a thriller that approaches these issues sensitively whilst leaving the reader under no illusion that sex trafficking is a very real problem not just throughout the rest of the world but in the UK too.

“I think we’ve reached a point where the only way to protect our kids from everything they see through the internet and TV is to educate them on how to deal with each situation they may be confronted with,” says author of *Ring Around Rosie*, Emily Pattullo.

Emily goes on to suggest that by planting a subtle seed about sex trafficking through fiction it will then create a curiosity to find out more. “Then you hit them with the real thing, the non-fiction that really lays it all out for them.”

*Slavery Inc*, a new book by acclaimed Mexican journalist Lydia Cacho, does just that. In this groundbreaking work of investigative reporting, Cacho exposes those responsible for the funding of this heinous crime, and highlights the growing threat to young women and children. Over five years, she travelled the globe following the trails of trafficking rings, most of which led back to influential people, all in aid of alerting the world to this underground economy in which a sex slave can be bought for the price of a gun.

Both authors, in their own way, have the power to educate our children about things that could be a very real threat to their future. And I think, perhaps, we should let them.