

## Operation Thames

# Organised Immigration Crime, Human Trafficking and Exploitation

Sussex Police is currently reviewing its processes for combating all types of Organised Immigration Crime, Human Trafficking and Exploitation (OICHTE) offences, which are in effect “Modern Day Slavery”.

Human trafficking is the movement of a person from one place to another into conditions of exploitation using deception, coercion, force, the abuse of power or the abuse of someone’s vulnerability.

‘Exploitation’ may include:

- prostitution
- forced labour (including criminal activity like shoplifting or cultivating cannabis)
- slavery or low-wage work or
- removal of organs for transplant.

Trafficking does not only affect people entering the UK. Trafficking can involve bringing people into the country (legally or illegally), taking people out of the country or moving people within the UK. UK nationals can be trafficked within or out of the UK; it is not only foreign nationals who can fall victim to this area of organised crime.

Research and operational experience has shown that there are a number of activities into which organised crime groups will commonly seek to place trafficked people for the purposes of exploitation. Some of these activities will be criminal; others may appear lawful on the surface (and of course in most cases will not be committing trafficking offences).

Potentially vulnerable venues and locations might include:

- Brothels/ massages parlours
- Gentlemen’s clubs/ exotic dancing clubs
- Areas associated with on and off-street prostitution
- Areas associated with roaming DVD sellers
- Areas associated with roaming building/ tarmac canvassers
- Areas associated with organised or persistent begging
- Soup kitchens/ homeless hostels
- Pick Your Own fruit farms
- Nail bars
- Car washes
- Smaller fast food outlets
- Residential/ care homes
- Cannabis factories

It is vital that community and business partners assist us by reporting activity that might arouse suspicion that vulnerable individuals are being exploited following trafficking. Victims will often be tightly controlled, working long hours for little or no pay and living in poor or cramped housing with little contact with the outside world. Victims may also report that their travel documents have been taken from them.

A number of recent investigations by Sussex Police have confirmed that this type of crime *is* being committed in our county. However, we want to know more about the extent and scale of this problem. We would ask communities and businesses to be vigilant for any such suspicious activity, reporting any incidents to the police and quoting the operational name ‘Op Thames’.

Sgt Jim Collen

Operation Thames Project Team, Crawley Police Station