

Action To Detect Modern Slavery In East Sussex - 15.01.20

Police, supported by local agency and charitable partners, have carried out vehicle checks on a major trunk route as part of an ongoing operation aimed at helping people at risk of modern slavery in East Sussex.

On Monday morning (13th January) Sussex Police officers stopped six vans on the southbound A21 at Johns Cross north of Hastings, and talked to 12 men including six drivers, to establish whether they were involved in any exploitative work at construction sites in the Hastings area.

Also present to support the police operation were representatives from the Surrey and Sussex Road Policing Unit, the Gangmaster and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), King's Church anti-trafficking team and the Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA).

None of the men spoken to at the stop check were found to be involved in modern slavery but officers spotted another vehicle nearby, which appeared to be avoiding police interest, and traced it to a site in Hastings.

The driver was spoken to although there was no evidence to link him or the vehicle or anyone at the site to any offences.

Project Discovery in East Sussex brings together local police officers, fire officers, Stop the Traffik Hastings, King's Church and staff from Hastings and Rother Councils, the DWP, the GLAA and local charities, all with the aim of seeing victims of modern slavery rescued and supported, and perpetrators brought to justice.

Detective Constable Amanda Snashall of Sussex Police said; "Our enquiries in East Sussex and elsewhere have suggested that many such men may be financially exploited and living in poor conditions, working in the agricultural or construction sectors, with for example no access to a National Insurance Number and some having no access to any identity document at all.

"Our activity today did not result in identification of any victims or offenders, but it produced useful intelligence and is part of our long-term operation to locate and offer support any such victims, as well as identifying and where appropriate anyone involved in exploitation.

Natalie Williams from King's Church, said; "It is shocking that modern slavery is taking place in our communities and neighbourhoods, but it is. The members of Discovery work together really well to find, rescue and support the men, women and children who are being exploited.

"We need organisations such as the police and the church and others in partnerships such as this, so that our combined work can see perpetrators brought to justice and survivors helped to rebuild their lives."

Katy Bourne, Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, who also attended to watch the

operation, said; "The Discovery Team has been held up as an example of good practice and recognised nationally for their proactive disruptions and intelligence gathering in this area.

"Modern slavery and exploitation is often a hidden crime and for that reason, we don't always know the true extent of it, even though it is happening all around us.

"It was great to see this team in action today, gathering vital intelligence and demonstrating to the public that modern slavery will not be tolerated in Sussex."

For advice and information on spotting signs of modern slavery and how to report it see the Sussex Police website <https://www.sussex.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/ms/modern-slavery/>

Help Us Keep Sussex Safe

Seen something suspicious or have information about a crime or incident? Please contact us at <http://www.sussex.police.uk/contact-us/>, email us at 101@sussex.pnn.police.uk or call 101.

Alternatively you can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555 111, or online at www.crimestoppers-uk.org