



A NETWORK OF AGENCIES TACKLING MODERN SLAVERY IN THE WEST MIDLANDS AND BEYOND

## FOREWORD

**Robin Brierley, Executive Director, West Midlands Anti Slavery Network**

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2021, I hope you, your families and colleagues are managing to keep well, and as we all are, looking forward to restrictions easing in the coming months.

This year, so far, has felt particularly busy for some reason, but I do feel that we are becoming more joined up in the West Midlands, and the structure under the VRU and OPCC is now clearly defined. I remember Donna and I speaking in a café some years ago, naively we both thought that in years to come there would be no need for the work we were then doing – how wrong we were. All these years later the network has grown beyond our wildest dreams, and the work you all do has grown along with it. In addition, that has come with a better understanding of the complexities of slavery, trafficking, and exploitation by so many other organisations now. I am forever impressed and proud in the way the many organisations work together in partnership on the various work streams and challenges we face.

We are now very much involved in other areas of work that has links to trafficking including homelessness, asylum, and more recently the issue of people with no recourse to public funds.



The WMASN team and network are now an established and formidable partnership, more recently the network as a whole was recognised for its work by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, winning the Stop Slavery in Collaboration Award. This is a significant international award and really did put the work of you all in the West Midlands on the international map, so we are eternally grateful to you all for the work you do.

The Care and Support Task Group and the Language and Use of Media group has thrived under Amber and Donna and is now influencing regionally and nationally which is amazing – if you would like to join either or both groups please contact: [amber.cagney@westmidlandsantislavery.org](mailto:amber.cagney@westmidlandsantislavery.org)

There is so much good work being done this year, but there is more to do, and new challenges are emerging all the time. I look forward to working with you all to address these challenges together in partnership, and hopefully we will be meeting again in person in the near future.

**Robin Brierley, Executive Director**

[robin.brierley@westmidlandsantislavery.org](mailto:robin.brierley@westmidlandsantislavery.org)

## West Midlands Anti Slavery Network SafePlace Update

SafePlace has continued to provide holistic, survivor centred support to survivors of human trafficking, modern slavery, and exploitation throughout the COVID-19 lockdowns at the end of 2020 and beginning of 2021. SafePlace staff and volunteers have become accustomed to new, safer ways of working to minimise the risk of COVID-19 and we are proud to say that SafePlace has remained COVID-19 free throughout these difficult times. Since the start of 2021 staff and volunteers have assisted 6 service users, which brings our total number of service users to 28. Staff and volunteers have worked hard to accommodate multiple simultaneous referrals and incredibly complex case work.

Staff continue to learn immensely from our cultural awareness project. Through sessions with partner agencies, we have been able to improve our cultural awareness in the support that we provide at SafePlace. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the partner organisations who have been involved in this project.

SafePlace volunteers have taken on new responsibilities, leading on innovative and practical projects. Keep an eye on our WMASN social media pages for more updates on these! WMASN hosted a volunteer for a week of virtual shadowing in February, this was a different way of hosting a volunteer for WMASN and both staff and the volunteer agreed that it was a huge success.

In this update we would like to thank Wates for their continued building maintenance support at SafePlace and David Moore for the donation of a beautiful bespoke piece of artwork for SafePlace (see photo on the right). We would also like to put a call out for donations of small/medium men's clothes and non-perishable food items. Please get in contact if you are able to help us.

Thank you to our referral partners, West Midlands Police, Warwickshire Police, and GLAA for signposting survivors to us and facilitating vital support. Thank you to the organisations that we have worked with to ensure that survivors get the multi-agency support that they need, your collaboration has been fundamental to securing positive outcomes for our service users.

Hebe Lawson, Advice and Advocacy Coordinator  
[hebe.lawson@westmidlandsantislavery.org](mailto:hebe.lawson@westmidlandsantislavery.org)



## Hope at Home – Partnership in Practice!

One of our guests has been living in Coventry with his Hope at Home host. He is from Hungary and was desperate to work rather than 'scrounge' but didn't know how to go about finding employment. When he first moved in with our host, he was supported by BCWA and they contacted Jericho project to enquire about work placements. He was exited from BCWA after his CG decision and began to be supported by Coventry Refugee & Migrant Centre, but Jericho were still on the case! He met Louise Gore from Jericho to discuss a work placement at their Wood Shack and was accepted onto their scheme. His host accommodation was too far for him to travel to his placement, so Louise referred him into Spring Housing. Last week he signed a tenancy with them and moves into his supported housing this weekend. He now has employment, a home near his job, and great support!

The collaborative working within the network for his best interests has been amazing to witness and has once again shown that working together for the people we serve is what makes the difference.

Helen Hodgson, Operations Director  
[Helen@hopeathome.org.uk](mailto:Helen@hopeathome.org.uk)



## Introducing Morgan Mead, Birmingham City Council Modern Slavery Coordinator

Morgan Mead has recently started in post as the new Modern Slavery Coordinator at Birmingham City Council, taking over from John Hunter who retired last year. The Community Safety Team at BCC commissions this role from the West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network, so it has the benefit of being able to connect with partners across Birmingham. Some of the key focuses this year at BCC will be:

- Continuing to develop the BCC Modern Slavery Champions role – these are staff embedded in different teams across the local authority who have agreed to undergo additional training to allow them to perform First Responder duties.
- Reviewing Birmingham's internal victim care pathways and ensuring that these are effective and come with training for local authority staff.
- Partnering with third sector organisations to support the development of their victim pathways, particularly where there is already partnership work with the Local Authority. This is currently being developed at SIFA Fireside and we will look to develop this approach more widely with other partners who see lots of modern slavery in their work.
- Working in partnership across the region, including supporting the new Adult Slavery Safeguarding Case Conference Model.
- Working with other Local Authority leads, the Salvation Army, and local subcontractors to model best practice, raise challenges, and share learning across the West Midlands.



If you would like to get in contact, please do: [morgan.mead@birmingham.gov.uk](mailto:morgan.mead@birmingham.gov.uk)

## Labour Shortages Within Food Production

Shayne Tyler, Compliance Director at the Fresca Group, and also a WMASN board member, reported the following in relation to labour shortages during the daffodil harvest and concerns about labour availability in the coming year. This has implications for increased levels of labour exploitation.

Labour providers reported the following issues as contributory to the labour shortages of February 2021:

- Covid related issues are hampering travel and some staff have been charged £250 for covid tests they are exempt from.
- In country recruitment is recording a 40% drop in interest to work in the UK.
- UK based workers have reduced appetite to work in the sector and recruitment is down.
- EUSS and EUPSS returnees are down. The registered workers have not all returned. The numbers are significant.

The above issues have resulted in recruitment agents giving guarantees to workers for working hours and have supported transport costs for around 50% of the value.

On a positive note, they report that the increased hours to the workers (which may breach 60-hour rules) is helping to increase on-assignment retention.

The labour providers reported significant concern for labour availability later in the year and cited concern at the impact of covid worker displacement being a serious unknown. Any recruitment area outside of edible horticulture on farm is expected to experience significant recruitment challenges.

**Shayne Tyler, Compliance Director, Fresca Group**

## Modern Slavery Awareness Sessions – Transforming Communities Together



Together we can make a difference and help bring an END to exploitation during this session I will let you know how, each and EVERY one of us CAN do something.

Modern Slavery is present in every major town and city.

We want to create communities that are safe for all and where everyone can thrive and flourish.

### WHO ARE THESE SESSIONS FOR?

Community residents, including churches, faith groups, charities, volunteer groups dealing with the public who ALL play a key role in safeguarding their members and residents.

### WHAT WILL THE SESSIONS DO?

These sessions will equip, empower, and encourage all attendees to know how to recognise and spot the signs of Modern Slavery in their community and how to respond and report suspicions in a way that safeguards them and those exploited by this horrific crime.

### WHO LEADS THE SESSIONS?

This training will be led by Debbie Huxton. She is a Modern Slavery Campaigner, employed by Transforming Communities Together and funded by Lichfield Diocese Mothers' Union.

**Dates available in April and May – to book through Eventbrite click:**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/hidden-in-plain-sight-modern-slavery-awareness-tickets-137401931877>

## County Lines Intensification Week

Jade Hibbert, Exploitation Lead, Violence Reduction Unit, provided the following information regarding the WMP county lines intensification weeks which took place in February. Amazing work!

### Operational Highlights

- Across the Force, there has been in **excess of 400 wraps of Class A drugs confiscated**, and over **500 Cannabis plants** and **90 bags of dealer sized Cannabis bags**.
- **Cash seized** across the Force was estimated to be a minimum of **£285,868** which includes **£162,000** from one address in the Mailbox, Birmingham.
- During the course of the fortnight, **27 knives were recovered** during arrests, warrants and weapons sweeps, as well as **1 viable firearm** and **1 imitation firearm**.
- A total of **40 warrants** have been executed across the week directly pertaining to County Lines, where **8 of them resulted in arrests** and **20 of them resulted in the seizure** of illegal commodities.
- **99 subjects have been arrested** over the week (12 being Cannabis referrals), with **41 of these being RPI'd** and **15 being bailed**. **5 nominals have been remanded** and **2 were recalled to prison**.
- Of the 99 arrests, **28% resulted from Traffic Operations**, **26% resulted from officers on both plain-clothes and uniformed patrols** and **17% resulted from warrants**.

- There were **12 ANPR operations** in force across the region, with 3 each in Dudley and Sandwell, 2 in both Birmingham East and Coventry and 1 each in Birmingham West and Wolverhampton. Over 28 vehicles have been seized, 9 of those being stolen vehicles.
- **93 weapons sweeps** have been conducted across the Force, along with **10 knife arches**.
- **18 vulnerable people have been safeguarded** by West Midlands Police; 17 of these were juveniles and 1 an adult.
- At least **38 vulnerable juveniles have been engaged with** across the Force.
- Over **100 County Lines sessions have been held at schools and online** across the region. Due to the pandemic, more sessions have been held in online forums this time compared to the previous CLIW.
- Officers have visited the home addresses or schools of at least 190 subjects of those at risk of exploitation, or those who have a recent Possession with Intent to Supply arrest.
- More than **12 taxi firms** have been visited by the NPU where officers have delivered training and advice in regard to spotting vulnerable victims.

There were in excess of **15 operations in conjunction with British Transport Police and Safer Travel** on trains and buses across the region, and officers have patrolled train stations and transport hubs on over 70 occasions.

**Jade Hibbert, Exploitation Lead, WM VRU**  
[j.hibbert@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk](mailto:j.hibbert@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk)

## ATLEU Training

ATLEU is running a new series of online training sessions for people working with survivors of slavery and trafficking.

They are running a series of courses for support providers, and other professionals supporting survivors, which combine introductory sessions, to give an overview of the key issues, with in-depth, interactive sessions covering legal representation, evidence, legal challenges, support and accommodation, safeguarding, and compensation. There are also two overview courses for legal advisors on modern slavery law and immigration and they have created a tailored programme of training and mentoring for legal aid providers with public law or immigration contracts.

The next session is an overview of modern slavery law and process for support providers on 14<sup>th</sup> April at 2.30pm. There is an immigration overview for support professionals on 28<sup>th</sup> April at 2.30pm. Prices start at £25 per session, per person.

For more information on prices, dates and how to book, visit: [atleu.org.uk/training](https://atleu.org.uk/training)

Their training and capacity building work for the sector is funded by The Legal Education Foundation and The Baring Foundation, whose generous support allows them to offer these courses at a highly discounted rate.

# ATLEU

ANTI TRAFFICKING AND  
LABOUR EXPLOITATION UNIT



## Barnardo's Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship (ICTG) Service



Throughout the pandemic, the team have continued to be creative in meeting the needs of the children we support. The exploitation of children has not stopped however the operating models have adapted which has culminated in children being at more risk than ever. Our service continues to advocate for children who have been or are at risk of trafficking.

Here are some examples of what we have been doing to support children and professionals recently:





Counter Trafficking  
@Barnardos\_NCTS

One of the young people supported by our WMids #ICTG has been accepted onto the @SophieHayesFndn employability programme as she turns 18yrs. Very important for her to enable her to exercise her treaty rights to get EU settled status in 2 years.



Counter Trafficking  
@Barnardos\_NCTS

Great news for a child supported by Jackie from our EMids #ICTG team, who has been granted 5years leave to remain this week. This will remove some of the stress, anxiety and fear, and enable her to start to recover from her #trafficking #exploitation



Counter Trafficking  
@Barnardos\_NCTS

Lots of welcome packs going out to newly referred children this week. Children tell us that these packages mean so much to them as they show that we understand how they feel and what they need #ICTG



**Rachel Hopper**

**Children's Services Manager, Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship (ICTG) Service**

[rachel.hopper@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:rachel.hopper@barnardos.org.uk)

## Free Thinking Programme at Fircroft College

We are delighted to announce we will be running another **Free Thinking** course for survivors of modern slavery and trafficking starting **Monday 19<sup>th</sup> April to 23<sup>rd</sup> June**. This is a residential course consisting of 3 days and 2 nights each week, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. The course is funded by the West Midlands Combined Authority so is available to men and women living in Birmingham and the wider area at a wide range of postcodes.

The course was a great success in 2019. See the links below to see how the students benefited. The course can really help to boost the students' confidence, English language skills, knowledge of different cultures and of course they also gain great benefit from working together as a likeminded group. A number of Free Thinking students subsequently progressed onto further learning at the college and other places. See the links below for more information:

<https://www.fircroft.ac.uk/free-thinking>

<https://www.fircroft.ac.uk/free-thinking-student-journeys>



We have put all recommended COVID-19 health and safety measures in place and are currently going through the process of a phased return to residential learning from next week. We have 2 **Free Thinking only** Open Day sessions for partners and potential students – one online session on 23<sup>rd</sup> March and one session at the college on 6<sup>th</sup> April.

This course is **FREE** to all students who are enrolled onto the course including accommodation and meals.

## Criminal Cases Review Commission Update

The Criminal Cases Review Commission (“CCRC”) is the national statutory body set up in 1997 by Parliament to investigate possible miscarriages of criminal justice in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The CCRC has the power to send, or refer, a case back to an appeal court if it considers that there is a real possibility the court will quash the conviction.

That real possibility must usually be based on new evidence not heard at trial or at any earlier appeal. That could include a post-conviction finding by the SCA that the convicted person is a trafficking victim and so could be significant for the victims and survivors supported by your organisations.

The CCRC was set up to deal with potential miscarriages of justice for people who have already lost an appeal, but many of the victims your organisations support may not have that opportunity. As you all know, many people are accepted to be a trafficking victim by the SCA only after being convicted of an offence directly linked to their exploitation. If they pleaded guilty in the magistrates’ or youth court on legal advice that failed to take account of the possibility of a Modern Slavery Act defence, they will have no ordinary route of appeal. This has been confirmed in January 2021 in a judgment by the High Court. An application to the CCRC may well be the only way such a trafficked person can try to challenge that conviction.

The CCRC has already referred cases where the applicant pleaded guilty and neither the defence representative nor the prosecutor had considered properly (or at all) the possibility that the applicant was a trafficked person. So far, all those cases have involved foreign nationals. However, we have been looking at county lines and other similar types of cases, the kinds of cases you will all probably be familiar with, to establish if the criminal exploitation can provide a defence.

There have been some significant judgments in the Court of Appeal over the last two years which impact upon the way cases involving trafficked persons should be approached, including: -

- Guidance on whether SCA decisions are admissible in criminal proceedings.
- An indication that the decisions of the SCA are not necessarily conclusive in criminal proceedings; compulsion attributable to the exploitation must be shown.
- Confirmation that the burden of proof is on the prosecution where a MSA defence is raised.

There has also been a ruling by the European Court in February (not yet published) in two cases involving trafficking victims which found the UK in breach of its obligations under the Trafficking Convention and may impact upon the current approach of the CPS and the courts.

As many of you will know this is a developing and challenging area of law but it is not necessary to make complex legal submissions to the CCRC for a review to be carried out. If your organisation is assisting a convicted person who has been found to be trafficked by the SCA where there seems to be a clear link between their exploitation and the offence, please consider making an application.

The CCRC is completely independent. We do not work for the courts, the police, the prosecution or for the people who apply for a review of their cases. We have special legal powers to obtain information from public bodies such as the police, the Crown Prosecution Service, social services, local councils, and the NHS. It does not cost anything to apply for a review of a case by the CCRC and it is not necessary to have a lawyer.

We also operate a Helpline for potential applicants, or their representatives, where the calls are dealt with by colleagues like me who deal with the investigations.

Please also visit our website for more information. <https://ccrc.gov.uk/>

Celia Sohpal, Case Review Manager  
[SohpalC@ccrc.gov.uk](mailto:SohpalC@ccrc.gov.uk)



## European Court of Human Rights Judgement

The European Court of Human Rights handed down its judgement in the case of ***V.C.L. and A.N. v the UK*** on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021, which relates to decisions made by the CPS to prosecute those who have perpetrated crimes while being a victim of trafficking or slavery.

The case concerned two youths who were prosecuted for their work on cannabis farms despite the Single Competent Authority concluding that they had both been victims of trafficking. After reviewing all relevant legislation, including the relatively new Modern Slavery Act 2015, the Court concluded that under certain circumstances, prosecutions like these will be in breach of fundamental human rights. Namely, the right to freedom from slavery and forced labour and the right to a fair trial (respectively, Articles 4 & 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998).

While prosecutions may still be brought against individuals who commit offences which do not relate to their status as a victim of trafficking or slavery, the judgement is clear that potential victims are entitled to two key elements:

1. **A fully reasoned written decision from the Single Competent Authority, including what material it has considered in coming to a decision on whether a person is a victim.** The SCA must conduct a full and proper assessment in a timely manner and a failure to do so may now amount to a breach of Articles 4 & 6 HRA 1998.
2. **Request that the CPS to provide in clear and detailed terms the basis for any rejection of the specific elements of that SCA decision.** Where a positive SCA decision has been made but the CPS decide to pursue a prosecution, they must provide clear, focused, and adequate reasoning for doing so. Merely pointing out the seriousness of the offence(s) or highlighting a lack of clear evidence that the individual has been a victim will no longer be sufficient.

<https://www.carmelitechambers.co.uk/blog/blog-vcl-and-v-uk>

## West Midlands Anti Slavery Network Meeting Dates for 2021:

For more information, please contact: [donna.pryor@westmidlandsantislavery.org](mailto:donna.pryor@westmidlandsantislavery.org)

- ❖ 13<sup>th</sup> May
- ❖ 15<sup>th</sup> July
- ❖ 16<sup>th</sup> September
- ❖ 18<sup>th</sup> November



## USEFUL LINKS

Modern Slavery Helpline: 08000 121 700

Force Intelligence Bureau (FIB): [fib@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk](mailto:fib@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk)

[National Referral Mechanism Guidance](#)

[Digital NRM Form](#)

[Modern Slavery Act Duty to Notify](#)

[Home Office: 2020 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery](#)

[Human Trafficking Foundation Trafficking Survivor Care Standards](#)

[Recovery Needs Assessment](#)

## CONTACTS

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Wates



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