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New approach to tackling modern slavery in Gravesham

Working with our partners Kent Police and Porchlight, Kent's largest charity working on behalf of homeless and vulnerable people, we recently launched Unhidden: Addressing Modern Slavery in Gravesham.

It sets out our approach to tackling modern slavery and human trafficking by being proactive in identifying and referring victims for help; safeguarding children and adults by helping to address their support needs; working with partners to disrupt perpetrators and bring them to justice; and ensuring that supply chains linked to council services are free from modern slavery.

The most common forms of exploitation in Kent Police's North Division, which includes Gravesham, (in order) are forced criminality, labour and sexual exploitation. However, when forced criminality linked to county lines is removed from these statistics (as there are separate and dedicated teams tackling this issue), labour and sexual exploitation are the predominant types of exploitation;

In North Division, the top five nationalities of victims (in order) are: British, Albanian, Romanian, Polish and Vietnamese.

Launching the strategy, Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox, Gravesham Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure, said: "We recognise that, sadly, slavery, trafficking and exploitation are not issues of the past but very present in areas across the country including our own Borough.

"The scale of this largely hidden crime is significant and that is why we need an approach that raises the awareness of it across the board."

Unhidden: Addressing Modern Slavery in Gravesham can be downloaded via www.gravesham.gov.uk/msht-strategy

How to spot the signs

Someone who is in slavery might:

- Appear to be under the control of someone else and reluctant to interact with others;
- Not have any personal identification;
- Have few personal belongings or wear the same clothes every day;
- Not be able to move around freely;
- Appear reluctant to talk to strangers or the authorities;
- Appear frightened or withdrawn;
- Be dropped off and collected for work always in the same way, especially at unusual times of the day or night.

How to report offences:

- Call the Modern Slavery Helpline on 08000 121700 or complete an online form;
- Visit www.kent.police.uk/report or call 101;
- You can also contact a number of other organisations including Crimestoppers, the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority and Anti-Slavery International.

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