

Police Scotland's day of action to identify and protect potential victims of human trafficking



Police Scotland has identified and is ensuring the welfare of 11 potential victims of trafficking, following a national day of action which took place across Scotland yesterday – coinciding with Anti-Slavery Day – in a major initiative to identify and protect potential victims of human trafficking.

During the multi-agency operation six children aged under 18 and five adults were found working in Nail bars across Scotland who displayed indicators of trafficking. These potential victims of trafficking are receiving support from partner agencies.

One person has been detained for human trafficking offences and two others arrested for immigration offences by Police Scotland, with an additional 12 arrested by Immigration Enforcement.

In the first country-wide day of its kind, 430 Police Scotland officers across all 13 of the service's geographical divisions were supported by 50 colleagues from HM Revenue and Customs, Immigration Enforcement, British Transport Police and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority.

It featured visits to business premises across Scotland, including food production companies, agricultural firms, car washes and beauty bars. Officers were also involved with awareness raising work in transport hubs, ports and railway stations in Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Detective Chief Inspector Stuart Houston of Police Scotland said: "Human Trafficking is a sickening trade in vulnerable people. It is happening now, in Scotland, to adults and children. Victims are being trafficked into and around the country, usually for the purposes of labour or sexual exploitation.

"Police Scotland is committed to targeting those who seek to profit from exploiting others. Yesterday's efforts are the latest stage in the fight to keep people safe from this type of criminal activity.

"We have a dedicated National Human Trafficking Unit which brings a high level of expertise and robust investigative techniques to allow us to identify both victims and perpetrators. We will ensure Scotland is a hostile environment to this kind of exploitation.

"Trafficking is a challenging and complex issue to investigate, with most cases being protracted and involving law enforcement in more than one country, both in the UK, Europe and internationally. Trafficking is often a hidden crime and its victims frequently don't see themselves as such, therefore we proactively look for victims.

"Police Scotland encourages reporting and would ask the public and businesses to be socially and ethically aware – if you suspect someone is being exploited and may have been trafficked, please contact us on 101."

Police Scotland is working closely with partners to assist people who are discovered as a result of anti-slavery and human trafficking work. They are victims, and regardless of whether they see themselves as such, are at risk and will be provided with help and support. The service is committed to using all the tactics at its disposal to tackle trafficking and those who target vulnerable individuals.

A British Transport Police spokesman said, "We provide a

crucial role in helping to protect and safeguard passengers, staff and others who use and operate the nation's railways. BTP is committed to reducing personal harm and helping to protect and safeguard children, vulnerable adults and all those with particular needs or who may be at risk of harm in railway environments.

"This includes working to identify and do all we reasonably can to protect those who are being exploited or are at risk of trafficking or slavery.

"Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, we work closely with Police Scotland and also have dedicated specialist resources to assist our work with all partners and stakeholders both within and beyond the rail network."

Ian Tyldesley, Assistant Director for Immigration Enforcement in Scotland, said: "Modern slavery is a barbaric crime which destroys the lives of some of the most vulnerable and law enforcement has an essential role to play in eradicating this abuse from our society.

"We regularly work with our partners to identify and visit organisations and businesses where intelligence leads us to believe somebody is being exploited or at risk of slavery."