

Police visit 16 addresses as part of major human trafficking awareness-raising initiative.



Police in Edinburgh have visited 16 addresses in the area as part of a major human trafficking awareness-raising initiative.

Officers from across the country took part in the national day of action yesterday to highlight the exploitation of vulnerable people, how to report concerns and the support available to victims.

Visits were made to businesses and other addresses in the city, and officers also spoke to travellers at Edinburgh Airport and Haymarket and Waverley railway stations to make people aware of the issue of human trafficking.

A teenage boy was discovered working in one nail bar and an illegal immigrant was also found working in another, the child is being cared for by Social Work. A Latvian man was arrested for drugs offences under an International Arrest Warrant. From speaking to those within the addresses, information was able to be gathered to assist partners with their work as well as giving out details of support and advice available.

Detective Chief Inspector Alwyn Bell said: "Human Trafficking is very much hidden but is happening within Edinburgh. Individuals often don't see themselves as victims which is why we will proactively seek to identify them through visits like yesterday's.

“The day of action focused on awareness raising. We spoke to business owners and managers, urging them to think about the people they employ and serve, and encouraging anyone with concerns about exploitation in any form to report it.

“We are determined to improve the intelligence picture in order to gain a better understanding of trafficking in Scotland and the organised crime groups who are involved, and the work we have carried out will inform the next steps we take.”

Local officers were supported in the visits by partner agencies as well as Police Scotland’s National Human Trafficking Unit, a dedicated team which deals with this complex issue and liaise with partners and law enforcement both in the UK, Europe and internationally.

DCI Bell continued: “We were joined by colleagues from HMRC and the Home Office – their expertise is vital in being able to provide support and help to anyone who we find has been trafficked into the country for the purposes of labour or sexual exploitation, and take appropriate action.

“Trafficking is unacceptable. We will target those who control, abuse and exploit others by working collaboratively with partners to ensure that Scotland is a hostile environment to this sickening trade.”