

Police arrest 24 members of gang suspected of human trafficking

Twenty-four people have been arrested during a Police Scotland led, internationally co-ordinated operation targeting an organised crime gang suspected of human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

Ten individuals were arrested in the UK in connection with offences related to serious and organised crime and human trafficking. Fourteen suspects are being held by Romanian police.



A number of potential trafficking victims were also recovered from several of the addresses in the UK and Romania.

Various locations were targeted in the early hours of this morning (Wednesday 9 September) in a joint day of enforcement involving simultaneous deployments across Scotland, England and Romania.

Officers from Police Scotland's National Human Trafficking Unit worked with the National Crime Agency and Romanian Police's Directorate for Countering Organized Crime – Trafficking in Human Beings Department. Further support was provided by officers from Leicestershire, West Midlands and Northamptonshire police forces.

During the operation police attended four premises in

Scotland, five in England (Leicester, Coventry and Northampton) as well as 23 addresses across Romania.

Detective Inspector Adrian Wallis, who led the operation, said: "Today's enforcement action was the result of a lengthy investigation, with Police Scotland working alongside our counterparts in Romania.

"The arrests made today are the result of working closely with our partners in the NCA and officers in Romania over the last 12 months, to identify those involved in this exploitation.

"The investigation isn't over yet, however, today's action should send a very clear message: trafficking won't be tolerated in Scotland, and we will continue to work with partners, nationally and internationally, to identify those involved in slavery and exploitation and to bring them to justice."

Detective Superintendent Fil Capaldi, Head of Police Scotland's National Human Trafficking Unit said: "Human trafficking, exploitation and modern slavery has no place in Scotland. Organised Crime Groups who enslave and traffic people do it for no other reason than financial gain. People are treated as a commodity that can be bought and sold, and the traffickers have no thought or consideration for the impact of their actions on their victims or for the communities in which the victims are exploited.

"Borders are meaningless to traffickers. Their illegal trade has a global reach and crosses national and international boundaries which is why our response has to be co-ordinated across agencies and through international co-operation.

"We continue to build our relationships with law enforcement agencies in other jurisdictions such as the Romanian Authorities and we continue to develop these partnerships through the National Crime Agency. International co-operation has never been more important to allow us to tackle

trafficking gangs wherever they are and wherever our investigation leads us.”

Rob Richardson, head of the NCA’s Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Unit, said: “Combating modern slavery and human trafficking is one of the NCA’s highest priorities. Our aim is to try and break the traffickers’ business model – making it harder for them to operate, harder for them to advertise their victims online and working with the financial sector to make it harder for them to launder the profits of their crimes.

“We work with partners in the UK and overseas to pursue offenders and safeguard victims at home and abroad and today’s activity demonstrates that in action.

“But we still need the public’s help. Modern slavery victims are often hidden in plain sight, and we need the public to recognise the signs and report any suspicions they might have to the Modern Slavery Helpline or the police.”

His Excellency Dan Mihalache, the ambassador of Romania in the UK, said: “It is a great pleasure to record today another major success in the field of police work in times when crime sees no borders and its sophistication increases day by day.

“Another long investigation reached fruition as a result of the combined efforts of Police Scotland and Romanian Police and serious charges have been brought against the members of a criminal network operating in Scotland and Romania.

“May I congratulate the men and women of the two services for their hard work and dedication, say how much we appreciate the results and reassure our partners of our continuous cooperation.

“We look forward to seeing new barriers against justice being brought down, more victims receiving the reparations they deserve and more culprits taken off our cities’ streets.”