

Diocese of Arundel and Brighton

Presentation and discussion on Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery hosted by the Santa Marta Group

On Saturday June 29th 2024, the Catholic parish of St. Peter in Shoreham, West Sussex, hosted parishioners and guests to participate in the discussions engendered by the Santa Marta Group's presentation on human trafficking and modern slavery. Below are some facts and figures that pertain to this cruel phenomenon, both internationally and within the UK.

- On average, there are approximately 50 million people globally who are the victims of modern slavery and human trafficking. This number is now higher than the number of people abused during the Transatlantic Slave Trade.
- After the illegal drugs trade, the trade in people is a close second, generating approximately £236 billion p.a.
- Started in 2014, the Santa Marta group, with the blessing and approval of Pope Francis, started to challenge human slavery and trafficking, aiming to find solutions by working with the police, the judiciary and politicians in many countries.
- Agricultural work and hand car washes are places where victims of human trafficking can be found. Nail bars and even the care home industry may have workers who have been brought to their employers either under duress or under false pretences. Brexit has resulted in a number of non-EU nationals being brought into the UK through deception.
- A number of hotels may unwittingly employ cleaners through a sub-contractor that has not carried out the requisite background checks on their employees. One victim was given a five hour daily contract but told that is she did not clean an extra eight rooms a day (£2 for each room cleaned) then she would lose all the money that she had earned in her five hours standard work.
- The Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authorities will help to liberate victims who may have been duped into working in hand car washes. For instance, if the workers are working in flip flops and lack decent work clothes.
- There is training available annually for council-registered taxi drivers, hotel staff and airline staff to be equipped to respond to human trafficking. This training does not extend to Uber drivers.
- If a young person has run away from home and arrives at your presbytery, they may stay with you whilst you contact Centrepoin, the housing charity for young people. The young person should not try to reach Centrepoin in case (s)he is abducted on the way. Centrepoin should come to collect the young person.
- Young British boys are the group most likely to fall victim to modern slavery as they are more likely to fall victim to criminal gangs operating 'county lines'.
- In this country, gangmasters will recruit illegal cockle pickers. Apart from the issue of health and hygiene – cockles picked from rivers in W. Sussex may have been contaminated from raw sewage- there is the added difficulty of knowing which authority to approach for a prosecution as the river may be controlled by different authorities or groups.
- Fruit picking in Spain and Italy may involve workers having little or no protection from pesticides, no protection from a legal Health & Safety protection and no safety net of social security should they fall ill. Illness will lead to dismissal by the criminal gangs. Fruit pickers in southern Italy may earn as little as 20 Euros for a ten hour working day.

- Sadly young children are affected within their countries of origin. For example, the global hunger for lithium, used in information technology, has driven human slavery to new depths in Congo.

Please visit <https://santamartagroup.org/resources/guidance-and-awareness-handbook> for key tips to help you become more aware of where slavery is taking place and how you can report your concerns safely and effectively. The website also contains exemplar letters for you to adapt to send to your prospective members of parliament in the run up to the General Election in July.