

Summary notes of the West Midlands Region Churches Forum
held in Coventry on Thursday 3 November

***HUMAN TRAFFICKING:
and its implications for Christian mission in the West Midlands
during Olympic year 2012***

Definition of Human Trafficking: People being transported from the community in which they live through use of violence, deception or coercion, they are exploited or forced to work against their will, for someone else's gain.

Trafficking regards humans as a commodity that can be exploited for profit and is not the same as smuggling which involves the individual choosing to pay someone to transport them across a border, where the agreement ends.

Human Trafficking is a hidden crime. It can affect any community, anywhere across the West Midlands, for example where traffickers rent property in more affluent neighbourhoods.

In the West Midlands, trafficking can take the following forms:

Labour trafficking: on farms, factories, building sites, restaurants, etc

Forced criminality – begging, street theft, benefit fraud, cannabis farming, producing/selling counterfeit goods

Domestic servitude

Sexual exploitation; of men women and children brought into the UK from other countries, and of UK Nationals (internal trafficking)

Formal UK statistics of c1500 cases each year, only touch the surface of the problem.

The level of trafficking may increase around the Olympics through an increased production of counterfeit goods, increased demand for prostitution, presence of large crowds (forced begging / pick pocketing) and traffickers taking opportunity to take advantage of visa allowances for travellers to the Games.

The faith community has a presence in every neighbourhood across the region and is well placed to notice the signs of human trafficking, e.g. on the high street, around their community, including houses that are rented for this purpose, such as unusual patterns of entry and exit movements into houses. Victims of trafficking may see church premises (including drop ins, cafes, etc) as places of safe sanctuary; or may chose to disclose some of their story to volunteers or outreach teams, seeing them as people they can trust. **Adavu offers training to help churches recognise these signs and to know what to do if they have concerns. Contact details are in the presentation.**

Your assistance in creating opportunities for training will be appreciated, in particular to be aware of the importance of such training alongside support of vulnerable adults and child protection.

Thanks to the Adavu project for presenting this issue to the Forum.

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