

Think globally, act locally

We're continuing our series on the fight against modern day human slavery

NEWS FEATURE

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Every day, the Caritas network supports refugees, asylum seekers and destitute migrant workers from all over the world who are now living among us.

Caritas – which in Latin means both love and charity – is the name taken by the independent charitable arm of the Diocese of Salford, and covers an area from the Ribble Valley through to Manchester.

Clitheroe man Mark Wiggin (pictured) is chief executive of Caritas Salford and says we should think globally but act

locally. To do this the charity's Social Action Network enables a network of 45 Catholic charities to work together to build an effective and practical response

to poverty and need. He said: "Many of the people supported have been trafficked into Britain and many are the victims of exploitation and modern day slavery. Today, Fortress Europe has

thousands of migrants and refugees knocking on the gates pleading to be given entrance into the European Union where even those on the

minimum wage are in the top 10% of the world's richest people. As a charity working with homeless people, migrant workers and refugees, Caritas and its partner

organisations are working with people who are desperate for any help and support our communities can offer.

"The charitable cause is not always the most popular one as the

benefits system is already strained and the safety net of the welfare state is no longer wide enough to catch everyone who needs it.

"My vision for Caritas is that in time all the works of the diocese concerned with social justice will come under the umbrella of Caritas so

'Caritas and its partner organisations are working with people who are desperate for any help and support our communities can offer...'

we have one vision and one purpose but different ways in which we bring our mission about. Caritas must provide professional support to allow local initiatives to grow."

The local Combating Human Trafficking Group based at SS Michael and John Church in Clitheroe is one initiative which Caritas is happy to support. And so impressed with the number of locals willing to take on the fight against human trafficking, the Parish Priest in Clitheroe, Mgr John Corcoran, has decided that the 25 parishes in the East Lancashire Catholic Deanery will have trafficking as the theme for the 2015/2016 "Year of Mercy" which begins in December.

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT TRAFFICKING?

In 2014, 2,340 people were identified by the National Referral Mechanism as

potential victims. Many are referred to charities like the Medaille Trust who provide safe houses. The NRM grants a minimum 45-day reflection and recovery period for victims, after which case workers decide whether they should be considered victims of trafficking according to the definition in the Council of Europe Convention. For many, the end of this 45 day period means the end of statutory support and the only option is to become homeless and depend on charities like Caritas Salford.

Mark believes that it is up to all of us to help as much as we can.

"We can find our nearest asylum and refugee centres, places often run on shoestring budgets that struggle to meet unprecedented demands. We can go and meet the asylum seekers and refugees who are living in

our communities. People who have been 'processed, dispatched and dispersed', to use the official language of the Home Office, all need to see a friendly face. We can counter the prevailing policy of non-integration, which segregates and marginalises people by welcoming them, befriending them, donating cloths, food, money and above all, time to help our distant neighbours.

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS RAISING

There is still a lack of awareness about the reality of trafficking and modern day slavery and a lack of awareness of practical help available to victims. On the other hand there are many charities and organisations, nationally and internationally, whose mission is solely to combat human trafficking in one way or another.

Many more like Caritas Salford either have a subsidiary trafficking agenda or are working to establish one.

At first sight, anti-trafficking strategies might appear to be the job of the police, the authorities and others – not something for individuals who are not professionals in these matters.

But this is not a job only for the experts and we can all play a part in bringing this terrible trade to an end through raising awareness and knowing how to report concerns.

How to tackle trafficking

Mark says the key to the success of an effective anti-trafficking force to stop the exploitation of vulnerable people is the 5 Ps strategy – the theme of the East Lancashire Combating Human Trafficking Group.

● **Prevention** – through raising awareness of the issues and knowing what signs to look for we can safeguard vulnerable people from trafficking or sexual exploitation.

● **Protection** – supporting those charities and organisations such as the Salvation Army and the Medaille Trust that provide after-care to people rescued from traffickers.

● **Prosecution** – by working with

the police the group can report concerns and if needs be become good witnesses to assist bring people to justice.

● **Partnership** – by working with charities, organisations and authorities, the group is building an effective network that creates momentum.

● **Prayer** – be inspired by the life of Roman Catholic St Josephine Bakhita, herself a victim of trafficking and slavery.

