

# Modern-day slavery is here on our doorstep

## The Medaille Trust provides safe housing and a psychological refuge for men, women and children

**The Medaille Trust is a charity founded to help men, women and children who have been freed from human trafficking.**

It helps them to recover from their horrific experience and regain their dignity and self-worth by giving them safe housing and help to heal, both physically and psychologically.

It also raises awareness of the plight of those who are enslaved and exploited by going out into the community to talk about trafficking to organisations, schools, universities and church groups and by highlighting issues in its magazine.

The Trust was founded in 2006 by a number of religious groups in response to the plight of thousands of people who are being trafficked into the UK each year.

It was established as a charity and opened its first safe house in January 2007 giving support and high standard accommodation.

It is helped by some Government funding and by other charitable donations and now has six safe houses throughout the country able to support up to 75 people at any one time. But numbers of victims are increasing dramatically and, while there is a need to support around 600 victims a year in the UK at the present time, this figure is rising. The Medaille Trust looks after about a third of these cases at any one time.

### How victims are helped

Once they reach a safe house – the nearest to us are two in Greater Manchester – they are supported in their recovery from the trauma of their ordeal but also encouraged to reflect on how they can help to bring the perpetrators of the crimes to justice by providing evidence and witness statements. This way they are helping themselves and helping the traffickers to be brought to justice.

Staff experience has shown that they need to carry out a comprehensive assessment interview, critically within 12 hours of a victim accessing one of their services. This is then followed up by a holistic (body, mind and spirit) approach to care and support



during their stay.

They can then go on to access support, both in the safe house and outside, to assist them to move on from their traumatic experience, to educate them in preventing them being re-trafficked at a later date and to encourage them to help bring the traffickers to justice. This innovative holistic model has been copied by other voluntary organisations working with trafficking victims.

The Medaille Trust is one of 11 bodies contracted by the Home Office to work with trafficked people in the UK, but so far it has cared for 32% of all victims, which is evidence of the huge success its holistic care approach. The Metropolitan Police said: "Without the Medaille Trust our work would be much more difficult and our success rate much lower". This demonstrates that its work not only cares for victims of crime but is also successful in helping bring criminals to justice.

The charity is successful in helping to prevent victims being re-trafficked, partly

due to its network of international contacts who provide support on repatriation and also because of its education of victims. Research at a London safe house in 2012 showed that 98% of clients did not return to exploitative situations.

But the most important evidence of success comes from the victims themselves, with 72% saying there was a positive change in their lives as a result of The Trust's work. One Albanian girl recently said of the team: "They feel like family to me, I don't know how I would have coped without them".

A spokesman for the charity said: "As an organisation the Medaille Trust wants to make a difference to the life experience of victims of human trafficking. We are working with those at the margins of society, the most vulnerable and preyed upon, disadvantaged individuals."

### One woman's story

A 22-year old Eastern European woman who came to the UK on the promise of a good job in a hotel and an income to send back to her poverty

stricken grandparents, is typical of the people the Medaille Trust helps.

Instead of her promised job and an income, she was locked in a basement and told that her family back home would be killed unless she worked as a prostitute, receiving up to 40 clients a day. She had to earn her captors £300 a day to pay off the debt of £20,000 she had allegedly incurred on the journey to Britain. She was subjected to a fine if she refused to have anal or unprotected sex, or if a client did not find her attractive. She was regularly gang raped and beaten to prevent her from escaping.

She said: "I am from India, a Punjabi girl. My heart was

broken by the traffickers. I felt that everyone hated me and I started to hate myself. I felt very weak in my heart. I was in a dark place, lonely, without hope and no love. What hurt me the most was the fact that my own people were my traffickers.

"Since my experience, I've lost my father's respect and love, and my sister subsequently died. I feel I have paid a big price for what has happened to me. When I was rescued, I stayed with my family and during those months I did not have any money, not even one penny. I was threatened by them and I started to hate myself again. I decided to take my life one day. But God heard

my prayers, I had been crying out to him.

"Through other people I came to The Medaille Trust. It has a small name but in this name it held a big meaning for me. It meant at last I had hope. They gave me love and my respect back, and taught me how to respect myself again.

"They gave me clothes and money, and gave me my life back. To them I need to say thank you. God bless them."

**● NEXT FRIDAY: How the police in East Lancashire are working to stop trafficking and how another charity helps the vulnerable victims of modern day slavery.**

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## Cloudy2Clear Windows – Service With A Smile!

It's been a crazy few months for Cloudy2Clear Windows. The company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up, broken or damaged by replacing the panes – not the frames has grown rapidly as homeowners take advantage of their services.

Branch Manager Paul Aspin feels that it's all about service. "Our product is simple. If your double glazing is misted up we can replace the glass at a fraction of the cost of a new window, in any type of frame, and with a new 5 year guarantee. But it's not just about saving

people money, although that obviously helps. Many tradespeople have struggled since last year and I honestly feel that during the good times a minority perhaps didn't focus on customer care as much as they should have done. We make sure we turn up when we say we will, do the job the customer requires and leave their house as clean as a whistle. I often get comments back from customers on how they really didn't expect that sort of service which, in a way, is very sad for the service industry as a whole."

Cloudy2Clear service the Burnley, Padiham, Nelson & Colne areas

and Paul is finding that his approach is a major factor in his success. "The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family

of people I've done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated."

So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give Paul a call for a free quotation on 0800 61 21 118 and he'll be happy to help!



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