Detective Superintendent Susannah Cawley is Head of Public Protection at Lancashire Constabulary with the lead on domestic abuse, human trafficking and prostitution. She is Chair of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference Steering Group (MARAC), Chair of Pan Lancashire Strategic Domestic Abuse Board and Vice Chair of the Lancashire forced marriage, honour based abuse and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) strategic group.

We talked about the overall Lancashire Constabulary perspective on human trafficking and Sue's views on the nature of the problem and how the Police are tackling it. I referred to what Sion Hall had already put out on the subject and explained that we were broadly aware of the problem and what the Police were doing in East Lancashire. I commented that at the Trafficking Workshop in Preston on 19 June. Sue had been very open about current Police investigations and Sue said it was her aim to make the public as aware as possible within the limits of what could be said without giving too much away to the perpetrators. The Police are having increasing success and there has been another recent arrest in Preston following the one in July - another Romanian girl rescued who would be taken back to the law enforcement authorities in Romania with whom the Lancashire Police are working.

The problem in trying to track down the traffickers is that the girls are moved on very quickly even if the brothels stay a little longer before they too move on. Sue has spoken to girls in brothels who say they are OK but some are appear very young, and in one case, noticeably overawed by an "alpha female". We discussed alerting the men who use either street sex workers or massage parlours to potential trafficking and how notices in parlours might influence them to inform the Police if they suspected anything - something the Police have used in some parts of the County. However the public can be critical of the Police for tolerating prostitution and undertaking safeguarding visits when they should be making arrests. Locally the police take in to account the risk, threat and vulnerability of ALL involved. This includes communities where sex work may be happening as well as safeguarding vulnerable trafficked people. It is this approach that has lead to the recent rescue of victims in the recent Romanian rescues and arrests.

Sue talked about combating other forms of trafficking and in particular the action days, visiting establishments that sometimes use trafficked labour. An employer isn't always complicit in the crime and Sue referred to an example of a current employee turning up with a "cousin" who is then taken on. The firm would have no idea that the individual concerned is held in some form of debt bondage and loses the bulk of his earnings to his trafficker. Such are the subtleties of the ways traffickers work the problems of detection are huge.

Educating the entire Lancashire Constabulary Police Force and Working with groups of front line staff from different agencies is paying off because many trafficked people do come into the public eye. The solution is getting people to recognise the signs. The Police run training sessions and work closely with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Revenue and Customs (HMRC), Border Force, Heath Authorities and so on. Midwives for example will sometimes come across a pregnant woman without a history and with a man with "reasons" why he needs to stay with her during consultations. In training days, staff from outside agencies are shocked at what they hear and even experienced Police Sergeants can be taken completely by surprise.

We talked about our Anti-Slavery week activities - October 18 to October 24. Anti-Slavery Day is October 18 every year. I'm not sure if there is an official "Anti-Slavery Week" but we are having a week of activities locally and we are pushing for school activities throughout the dioceses of Salford, Lancaster and Middlesbrough. 2015 will be the fourth Anti-Slavery Day
and Sue said that Lancashire Police would again extend their activities throughout the week.

Sue has already said she will be very pleased to join our Question Time event at St Michael and St John’s Parish Hall on October 23rd. As it stands, Mark Wiggin, CEO Caritas Salford will chair and in addition to Sue we have Mike Emberson, Project Director Medaille, Hannah Flint, Regional Development Executive, North of England, for the International Justice Mission, and Lord Alton. Baroness Cox provisionally agreed but needs to be in the Lords on that day.

If we can arrange it, Sue also said she would also be pleased to speak on City Beat Radio for their Working Lunch programme - along the lines of what I did with Sam Baxendale of Medaille on 6 July.

We talked about our aspirations in schools and our aim to link the Caritas in Action Curriculum with the Medaille Education Pack and activities for Anti-Slavery Week. Sue said she could assist with officers to speak in schools around the time of anti-slavery day. This would obviously be on a demand led basis from the schools.

I talked about the poster and “signs” leaflet which following our meeting with Bishop John on July 23rd we hope to put in 25 Catholic churches in our Deanery as well as elsewhere. The poster and leaflet will be a joint Medaille, Caritas Salford initiative with joint logo but a Lancashire Constabulary logo could be added too. Fr John will be writing to Deanery priests about this and other things for Year of Mercy. It would probably be unrealistic to aim for Anti-Trafficking week but Lancashire Constabulary have a poster which they will amend for this year and Sue will let me have a sight of it. The Lancashire Constabulary poster will influence ours. Clearly we need to work together rather than in isolation and certainly not in competition.

Mike Emberson provided me with some intelligence data on Albanian women rescued from trafficking which I passed onto Sue with the message from Mike that he could provide similar data for other nationalities from Medaille records.

During our discussions it was clear that we share a common vision on the importance of networking and collaborating. The Human Trafficking Foundation is a charity with the sole aim of charities working together to combat human trafficking and in the spirit of that our group is linked firmly with the Medaille Trust, Caritas Salford and East Lancashire Police. Within those groups we are networking with schools and Education Advisers and beyond those groups we have links in other dioceses, with Stop the Traffik, International Justice Mission and Clitheroe’s Lancaster Foundation. We ran out of time before getting into any detail about how Lancashire Constabulary work with other charities such as Hope for Justice but Sue’s willingness to engage and support what we are doing, and for further dialogue is very encouraging and sure to bear fruit. I am sure we will learn more.

Anthony Brown
21 August 2015