

In Plain Sight  
Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery Conference  
October 15, 2019

### Summary

Experts and practitioners from within the Catholic Church of England and Wales came together for the first time as the domestic church to share experience and good practice in tackling human trafficking and modern day slavery. The conference 'In Plain Sight' created the unique opportunity to bring together charities and organisations committed to the fight against human trafficking through awareness raising, support to the victims of trafficking and preventative work.

### Aims

- Share learning and good practice from Anti -Trafficking and Modern Day Slavery organisations and practitioners
- Identify key areas for future activity using the Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking developed by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development
- Agree effective action that contributes to the eradication of Modern Day Slavery
- Evaluate the conference with a view to developing a national strategy

### Representation

The conference focused on action and initiatives within the Catholic Church in England and Wales. Inspired by Caritas Salford, convened by CSAN and hosted by CCLA, the full capacity of 76 places were taken by delegates from Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales (CBCEW), religious congregations, dioceses, charities, organisations, representatives from parishes and individuals:

- CBCEW, led by Cardinal Vincent Nichols, was represented by the Santa Marta Group and the Office for Migration Policy. Fifteen dioceses were represented: Arundel and Brighton, Birmingham, Cardiff, East Anglia, Hallam, Leeds, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Northampton, Nottingham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Salford, Southwark and Westminster.
- Twelve Congregations and organisations of Religious: The Cenacle Sisters, Congregation of the Sisters of St Joseph of Peace, Daughters of Charity, Holy Cross Sisters, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Sisters at Blessed Sacrament Church, Sisters of Holy Family of Bordeaux/Women around Kings Cross, Sisters of St Louis, Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary, Society of the Holy Child Jesus, Religious Sisters of Charity, and TRAC.
- Seventeen other charities and organisations: Arise Foundation, Caritas Diocese of Salford, Caritas Westminster, Caritas Social Action Network (CSAN), Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service (CSAS), CCLA, Creative Performance Lab, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Medaille Trust - Look Up project, National Board of Catholic Women, National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN), Pan-Lancashire Anti-Trafficking Unit, Parallel Lives Project, East of England Local Government Association, Prison Advice and Care Trust (PACT), St Vincent de Paul Society (SVP), and women@thewell.

The format of the conference was drawn from the Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking. Approved by Pope Francis, Pastoral Orientations is a handbook that reflects current Catholic thinking and courageous ministry that came out of the Pastoral Orientations, International Conference on Human Trafficking in Sacrofano (Rome), in April 2019.

## Conference inputs

In introducing the conference Peter Hugh Smith, Chief Executive of CCLA focused on the mission of CCLA as “good investment” and catalyst to investing ethically and humanely in people and recognise the difference they can make to eradicate modern day slavery.

The first independent government commissioner Kevin Hyland, now Senior Advisor to the Santa Marta Group of CBCEW, spoke of the 150 million children today in positions of exploitation many of them Integrated into business models. It is estimated that 20,000 children die every year through slavery. With little action taken against organisations, 99.98% of human trafficking goes without criminal prosecution. *“The Santa Marta Group is developing strategies to reset the moral compass within the Church to make sure we are not complicit by indifference to this massive global crime. It’s events like today that will help make this change from words into action.”*

Anthony Brown, Caritas Diocese of Salford, spoke of parish initiatives and involvement and how the resources within a parish when harnessed in partnerships can lead to awareness raising. He focused on work in schools, churches and invitations from organisations and spoke of how awareness raising can be achieved via the media and prayer cards. A key feature of this parish initiative was working with the Police and their anti-trafficking units.

Beatrice Grasso, Detention Outreach Manager for the Jesuit Refugee Service UK described the supporting work of JRS in detention centres. Not part of the criminal justice system, but operating much like prisons, detention centres hold asylum seekers, in some cases for over four years, who have committed no crime. The UK is the only country to have no statutory time limit for detention and the main role of JRS is to accompany people and stand in solidarity with them in detention. Of the 24,200 in detention last year many have been trafficked and when eventually released often back into the hands of their traffickers.

Karen Anstiss, Service Manager of Caritas Bakhita House, spoke of how from twenty-two religious congregations and over seventy volunteers with many relevant skills including languages and therapy skills have made their work possible. Giving voice to individuals’ experiences, she spoke of the struggles of women held in slavery and prevented from escaping whilst enduring terrible hardships. Common to all its work is the ethos: *“Don’t judge, don’t promise and believe the unbelievable”* - the bywords that Bakhita House operate by.

Marc Pearson, the Community Engagement Coordinator and Zoe Smith, Director of Communications and Advocacy spoke of the work the Medaille Trust. Supported by the Archbishop the Look Up project is a six-year partnership between the Medaille Trust and the Archdiocese of Birmingham to raise awareness in every parish of the Archdiocese.

Caro Hattersley, Director: women@thewell, shared stories of women exploited in the sex trade, the brutality in brothels and escape to the security and recovery supported by the charity. Caro said, *“Consent cannot be purchased,”* and *“decriminalising women caught up in forced exploitation is an important way forward to address the wider issues of modern-day slavery.”*

Sion Hall, formerly the DCI heading the East Lancashire Police Anti-Trafficking Unit and now Pan Lancashire Anti-Slavery Partnership Lead, reminded the conference that the latest figures from the Global Slavery Index gives an estimate of 136,000 people caught up in trafficking and modern-day slavery in the UK. The business model of supply and demand means that organised crime is the driving force behind forced labour and prostitution. He

said, *“Partnership between statutory services, police, NHS, probation, prison services, NGO’s and voluntary organisations is the way forward in tackling slavery. Public awareness is the starting point for preventative work.”*

Andrew Adams from CCLA gave an investor’s perspective on modern slavery and the supply chains to which investors need to be sensitive. The everyday products that are part of our everyday lives mean that practically everything we purchase has a direct or indirect connection to slavery. He said, “CCLA will be working with other investors to develop strategies to help companies keep their supply chains clean.”

### **Concluding remarks**

Luke de Pulford of the Arise Foundation led the workshops that followed and brought the conference to its conclusion by asking questions about the obstacles to collaboration and partnership working. Building trust rarely fits into measured outcomes but is vital to address the problem of slavery. In a hard-hitting assessment of the barriers he had experienced, he named money, ego and institutional self-interest. He gathered the key points from the focus groups to form the basis of a future strategic plan. Partnership, working together and sharing resources and platforms will be fundamental.

Summing up the day, Philip McCarthy CEO of CSAN said, *“Partnership, Presence, Hope, Trust and Encounter are the words that have resonated throughout the conference.”*

Cardinal Vincent Nichols thanked the organisers for the conference: Caritas Salford, CSAN and CCLA for bringing together so many charities and organisations committed to the fight against human trafficking. He said: *“We need a detailed public account of the good work of the Catholic Church in this field,”* and, *“difference and diversity in approaches properly used creates harmony.”*

He concluded by saying that the conference opened the door to the next phase, holding a great deal of promise and called for a non-competitive, deeply respectful and shared vision of what we do now. “An overall picture needs to be assembled as a starting point for the next phase of development, to give a clear public account of the contribution we make in this area from which we can develop clear and shared objectives around which we build effective partnerships, apply the perspectives of faith and Catholic Social Teaching and be more strategic.”

### **Next steps**

The evaluation and feedback from delegates confirmed the conference achieved its aims and paved the way for the next steps that will include:

- Bringing together the conference findings in the light of Pastoral Orientations and producing a discussion document for consultation on the best way of combating human trafficking via effective partnership working.
- Producing a consultation document with a view to achieving a declaration by all Catholic dioceses, Catholic congregations of religious, Catholic organisations. The document will outline a common approach on advocacy, awareness raising and encouraging slavery-free supply and consumption and emphasise the development of shared resources and the pursuit of joint programmes and projects. The declaration would commit to working together, with common aims and unified practices, to bring an end to human trafficking and modern day slavery in England and Wales.