



# A NEW COURSE FOR LENT 2022

## #CHILDRENINTHESHADOWS

Worldwide, there are about 10 million children living in modern slavery. In the UK, it is harder to gather exact numbers but we know that in 2021, 41% of cases reported to the UK Modern Slavery Helpline related to child victims.

To help shine a light on the suffering of children, The Clewer Initiative has launched **Children in the Shadows**, a new Lent course for churches, community groups and individuals.

Many thanks to those who have contributed to this resource – we are grateful for their time, insight and support.

### PARTICULAR THANKS GO TO:

Hestia [www.hestia.org](http://www.hestia.org)

Ben Lindsay, the founder of Power The Fight [www.powerthefight.org.uk](http://www.powerthefight.org.uk)

Becky Lewis, the Strategic Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager at Bristol City Council

Bill Crooks and Fiona Kendall of FCEI-Mediterranean Hope [www.mediterraneanhope.com/en\\_en](http://www.mediterraneanhope.com/en_en)

And the team at The Clewer Initiative: Bishop Alastair Redfern; Caroline Virgo; Myles Dunnett;

Amy Bishop; Sabina Ford and Claire Walford



# AN IN-DEPTH AND REFLECTIVE LOOK AT CHILDREN AND MODERN SLAVERY

## FOREWORD BY BISHOP ALASTAIR REDFERN, CHAIR OF THE CLEWER INITIATIVE

In Children in the Shadows, we invite you to consider the various forms of child exploitation, the scale of the abuse, and the need for us all to increase our awareness and effective response. There is a particular focus upon county lines – one of the fastest expanding areas of child exploitation in the UK. In the final week, we provide a global perspective and consider our responsibilities as privileged citizens in a fragile world.

Each session contains definitions, statistics, examples of current good practice, a bible reflection and ways in which individuals and churches can make a significant contribution to extending care and strengthening resilience and resistance in their communities.

We conclude each session with the words of two new hymns, written for The Clewer Initiative by Sheena Evans and Simon Hancock.

## WHY CHILDREN IN THE SHADOWS FOR LENT 2022?

Lent is a time of year when the Christian community pauses to reflect on what we have and how we can help others as well as remembering our Saviour's journey to the cross. Over the last couple of years, The Clewer Initiative has produced a Lent Resource

which has been widely used by churches and individuals. In 2020, we launched the County Lines Lent Resource and in 2021, the Women in the Shadows Lent resource.

There are many reasons why we have chosen to reflect upon Children in the Shadows. Firstly, when people consider modern slavery, they might not usually picture children and young people.

The general public is usually more familiar with the concept of adults labouring in car washes or

fields, women being sexually exploited or adults being smuggled across the Channel in lorries.

Secondly, the data shows that child exploitation, particularly county lines, is rocketing in the UK and the pandemic has not, in any way, slowed its growth. As a society, we need to get to grips with this terrible phenomenon and

begin to make strides in tackling it and protecting vulnerable children.

Finally, the subject is relevant to everyone. We all have a part to play in the protection of children.

This is not just the responsibility of parents – a community response is required.

We hope that many people use Children in the Shadows throughout the season of Lent and, as a result, see the urgent priority of reaching out to and protecting children in our communities from exploitation.



*To be a child is to be, by definition, vulnerable. Sadly, many unscrupulous and criminal people deliberately take advantage of this susceptibility and exploit children for financial gain. The damage done to children abused in this way never goes away.*



# AN IN-DEPTH AND REFLECTIVE LOOK AT **CHILDREN** AND **MODERN SLAVERY**

## NOTES FOR GROUP LEADERS

The resource has been designed to help explore the realities of child exploitation and encourage people to consider making an appropriate and effective response. Through the Lenten discipline, we pray it will help us refine our priorities and practices in discipleship.

*“There is an urgent need for churches to support the creation of more resilient and healthy communities where all children can grow and develop in safety. The church also has a key role in identifying children in its orbit that are being exploited or who may be susceptible to exploitation.”*

Each session begins by providing some information, and it would be useful to invite participants to share their reactions, and any other insights or experiences from their own knowledge and contacts.

At the heart of each session is a Bible study. Why not try reading the passage out loud, perhaps inviting people to go round the group, each reading successive verses. There is a small section suggesting how the passage might provide a helpful

perspective, and then a few questions which seek to open up reflection and prayer. We hope that by exploring the details and dynamics of the scripture text in relation to the issues, challenges and possible responses will arise.

The Bible study is followed by a prayer for the week. You could ask someone to read the prayer aloud, and then give the group a few minutes of silence for further prayer and reflection.

The last section introduces further resources in terms of ideas and actions that could be pursued. You could suggest that participants report back next week on their progress and reflections.

At the end of the session, we recommend:

- Summarising any important ideas and actions that participants could consider taking away for further prayer and as possible follow up
- A second reading of the prayer which follows the Bible study, and then closing with the Lord's prayer, and the Grace.
- Depending upon musical abilities and inclinations, you could invite people to sing the hymn for the week! Or you could simply listen to the YouTube link. One of the hymns has been specially written for us.



# AN IN-DEPTH AND REFLECTIVE LOOK AT **CHILDREN** AND **MODERN SLAVERY**



## CARING FOR YOURSELF

This resource is about a subject which is emotive and upsetting. Before you start, think about how you will care for yourself and others. If you are distressed by the subject matter or it has triggered painful memories, we would urge you to share your concerns with others who might understand. Alongside the children who suffer, each of us needs grace and healing and the opportunity to recognise and process our own vulnerabilities.

## ABOUT THE CLEWER INITIATIVE

The Clewer Initiative was launched in 2016 as the Church of England's response to modern slavery. We work to mobilise the Church and communities to take action against modern slavery and aim to share learning, signpost best practice amongst our partners and contribute to policymaking and more effective legislation.

The Clewer Initiative works with the Church of England's 42 dioceses as well as with other denominations, faith groups and community organisations. We share learning and knowledge through our network and help support community-based projects.

The Clewer Initiative is funded by the Clewer Sisters, an Anglican order of Augustinian nuns founded in 1852 to help marginalised, young women who found themselves homeless and drawn into the sex trade.



### HELPFUL NUMBERS:

**Modern Slavery Helpline:**  
08000 121 700

**Local police:**  
101  
or 999 in an emergency

**Crimestoppers:**  
0800 555 111  
(if you would prefer to remain anonymous)

**Childline:**  
0800 1111

# HYMNS FOR LENT 2022

These new hymns could help to bring together your thoughts and prayers.  
Care for the Hidden has been especially written for The Clewer Initiative this year.  
To listen to the hymns, visit The Clewer Initiative's YouTube channel.

To access the music, go to [www.theclewerinitiative.org](http://www.theclewerinitiative.org)



## We are called to welcome strangers

We are called to welcome strangers,  
offer shelter, food and rest;  
heal the wounds of mind and body,  
showing love with true respect.  
Those who flee from war-torn homelands  
or fear death for their beliefs,  
those who run from flood or famine:  
will we meet them in their grief?

Here we see our brothers, sisters,  
each the image of our God.  
If we turn our faces from them,  
we deny his living word.  
He would have us feed the hungry,  
free the captive, tend the weak,  
care for all who now are helpless,  
offer respite to the meek.

If we fail to challenge falsehood,  
if we bow to unjust laws,  
then the stranger's eyes will show us  
God's own eyes which weep for us.  
Let us pray as Jesus taught us,  
"Father, let your kingdom come,"  
and with Christ-like loving kindness  
we will welcome strangers home.

*Words: Sheena Evans  
Music: Simon Hancock*

The author and composer give full permission  
for these hymns to be used in church services.



## Care for the hidden

Each one of us is neighbour to all of humankind,  
To friend and foe and stranger  
– to none can we be blind.  
Our loving Father calls us to make  
a world that's fair  
By seeking out the captives, and showing  
them his care.  
We are all God's children, all in his image made,  
In every place we see his face,  
and wonder at his grace.

The signs are there around us,  
where people fear to speak,  
With faces pale and shadowed,  
and bodies thin and weak.  
In overcrowded shelters, in life that is no life,  
Abuse and lies deprive them of  
all that made them thrive.  
We are all God's children, all in his  
image made, In every place we see his face,  
and wonder at his grace.

God mourns for these his children,  
now made to serve as slaves,  
And we who are Christ's body must  
love them as they crave:  
Bring light to darkest places, expose this evil trade,  
And, guided by his Spirit, give hope to the betrayed.  
We are all God's children, all in his image made,  
In every place we see his face,  
and wonder at his grace.



<https://www.jubilate.co.uk/songs/we-are-called-to-welcome-strangers>

# WEEK BY WEEK GUIDE

Children in the Shadows is a five-week, pop-up Lent resource.

Each week includes definitions, statistics, insight from frontline experts (both written and on film), examples of current good practice, and suggestions of how individuals and churches can make a significant contribution to extending care and strengthening resilience and resistance in their communities.

Through the course, we work through Luke 18 and discuss how Jesus' interactions and parables can inspire our response. Each session closes with a prayer to draw our reflections together and the words of two new hymns, written for The Clewer Initiative by Sheena Evans and Simon Hancock.

## WEEK 1

### THE SHOCKING TRUTH ABOUT CHILDREN & MODERN SLAVERY IN THE UK

Week 1 explores the different forms of child exploitation and the scale of the issue in the UK. It also explores how Ely Cathedral is raising awareness of modern slavery amongst school children and the different ways we can all join the fight to end slavery.

## WEEK 2

### THE PRICE THE FAMILY PAYS

Week 2 shines a light on the suffering and isolation faced by the children of modern slavery victims and the parents of child victims. Each group is affected by the trauma and exploitation in different ways and requires specialised care and support.

## WEEK 3

### COUNTY LINES – THE DOMINANT FORM OF MODERN SLAVERY AFFECTING CHILDREN IN THE UK

Week 3 focuses on county lines – one of the fastest expanding areas of child exploitation in the UK. It shares a story of hope from Bridgwater and introduces the various training courses The Clewer Initiative runs to inform people about county lines.

# CHILDREN IN THE SHADOWS WEEK BY WEEK GUIDE

## WEEK 4

### THE PUSH FACTORS FOR COUNTY LINES

Week 4 continues the focus on county lines but this time exploring some of the push factors. It looks at the school to exclusion to prison pipeline and how this disproportionately affects children from Black and Brown communities.

## WEEK 5

### THE GLOBAL SCENE - CHILDREN & MODERN SLAVERY ACROSS THE WORLD

Week 5 provides a global perspective on children and modern slavery and considers our responsibilities as privileged citizens in a vulnerable world.



[www.facebook.com/theclewerinitiative](https://www.facebook.com/theclewerinitiative)



[www.instagram.com/theclewerinitiative](https://www.instagram.com/theclewerinitiative)



[www.theclewerinitiative.org](https://www.theclewerinitiative.org)



[www.twitter.com/theclewer](https://www.twitter.com/theclewer)

**CHILDREN IN THE SHADOWS**

resource: [www.theclewerinitiative.org/childrenintheshadows](https://www.theclewerinitiative.org/childrenintheshadows)





## THE SCALE OF THE ISSUE



In the UK in Q3 2021, just under  
**HALF OF REFERRALS**  
to the National Referral Mechanism  
(NRM) were individuals who claimed  
they were exploited as children.



Of the child potential victims  
referred to the NRM

**79%**

were male

&

**21%**

were female



## DIG DEEPER

Modern slavery is the illegal exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain. Victims of modern slavery can be any gender, nationality and ethnicity and unfortunately, children are not immune to this dreadful scourge. The main forms of exploitation that affect children are labour exploitation; sexual exploitation; domestic servitude and criminal exploitation.

### 1 Labour exploitation

Victims work for offenders in businesses or sites that offenders directly control. In more organised examples, offenders act as gangmasters, controlling teams of victims on single or across multiple sites. Victims often live in a single overcrowded residence. In the **Home Office's case file**, the majority of child victims experiencing this type of slavery in the UK were Vietnamese or Chinese. They tended to be recruited in person in their country of origin. They often worked in nail bars, fairground rides and the cleaning and catering sector.

### 2 Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

Vulnerable child victims are targeted for grooming either in person or online. Offenders sexually exploit the children for personal gratification and sometimes force them into sex work in fixed or changing locations. Victims may already be known to the authorities for other reasons. Almost all

victims in the Home Office's casefile were female and British, aged 13 or older (although the youngest victim was 3.) A large proportion of CSE victims have an unstable home life, mental or physical health issues or alcohol and drug use.

### 3 Domestic servitude

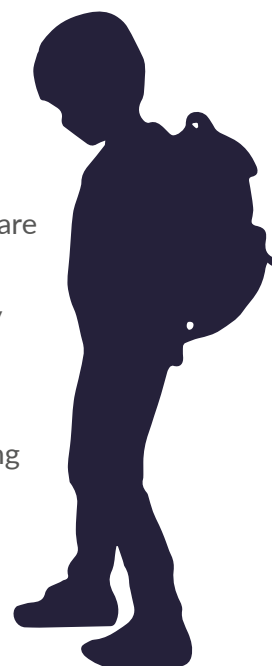
Victims live with offenders and are forced to undertake household chores. There is generally one victim per household. Some victims are even specifically trafficked for work in diplomatic households. In a third of the Home Office's case files, the victims were children. The vast majority were from non- EEA countries such as Benin, Nigeria, Pakistan and Vietnam. Victims usually lead very isolated lives with little or no unsupervised freedom. They may, however, attend school. Their own privacy and comfort will be minimal, often sleeping on a mattress on the floor, hidden in a cellar or locked room.

### 4 Child criminal exploitation (CCE)

Victims are forced to take part in gangrelated criminality. This could be county lines drug trafficking, cannabis cultivation, shoplifting, pickpocketing or forced begging. Each of these different types of criminal activities may affect different types of children. For example, most children involved in cannabis cultivation are Vietnamese children who speak no or minimal English. Recruitment commonly occurs in person in the country of origin of the victims. In some cases, the victims' families approach an agent in the hope of giving their child a better life. In contrast, most county lines' victims are from the UK.

Often, one form of exploitation may make a child vulnerable to other types of abuse and exploitation. For example, a child trafficked for domestic servitude may end up being sexually abused by the adults in the household too.

(Definitions and insight taken from  
A Typology of Modern Slavery Offences  
in the UK, October 2017)







## REFLECTION

Read Luke 18 v1-8



Faced with the scale and horror of child exploitation, it is easy to feel powerless and miserable. Jesus tells his disciples this parable to show them that when faced with suffering and injustice they should always pray and not give up. It is a beautiful parable about the power of persistent prayer and a message we need to hear every day. Of course, we shouldn't, in any way, think that our God is like the unjust and reluctant judge. Rather, we can feel encouraged that if this is what an unjust judge is like, how much more will our good and merciful God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?

- What cries do you think children in slavery are making from their hearts?
- What cries should we persist in making –
  - To God the giver of the kingdom?
  - To human systems and structures that might be changed to enable right living for those excluded and exploited?
  - To our churches and fellowships?

*"However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on Earth?"*

- What can we do in our daily lives to nourish and express the faith that Jesus is looking for?



## PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, as you long to give grace and justice to your children, may we learn better to recognise marks of exploitation and abuse, so that our voices can be raised to you for mercy. Teach us to cry out to all in positions of power who could do more to stop such suffering and help us seek your guidance that we may better learn to play our part in the coming of your kingdom.*

*We pray in faith and hope.*

*Amen.*





**SPOTLIGHT - RAISING AWARENESS  
AMONGST SCHOOL CHILDREN IN ELY**

The team at Ely Cathedral is working to find innovative and highly contextualised ways of spreading knowledge about modern slavery. In partnership with The Clewer Initiative, the Cathedral's Education and Learning Centre is piloting a pioneering education project, led by Jessica Martin, Canon Residentiary, and Philippa Stevens, Director of Learning.

The project is designed to teach children and young people about modern slavery by expounding on Ely's unique history and using it as a jumping-off point to help students think about slavery and refugees in the modern world. The educational material centres around an engaging and high-quality historical film called 'Sanctuary', which explores the role of Ely as a place of refuge during the Norman Conquest.

On Anti-Slavery Day in 2021, Year 5 and 6 students from more than 20 schools took part in an online Schools Day. The day included an assembly, a screening of 'Sanctuary', and three structured workshops covering an analysis of the film, the experience of refugees today and Christian attitudes towards helping the vulnerable.

For Key Stage 3 students, a series of three interactive humanities lessons were prepared. The lessons raise awareness of slavery as a modern issue (History), the relationship between migration, slavery and the local area (Geography), and slavery as a social justice issue (Religious Studies).

Philippa Stevens, Director of Learning, explains: "Engaging with examples of British refugees and slaves in the past before expanding out into the modern day allowed the children to see connections and similarities in experiences. When the young people involved in the schools day saw the ways in which we are all the same, it seemed to help promote a real sense of community cohesion and solidarity, something that we believe is essential in combatting modern slavery and social justice in all its forms."

Following the success of the pilot, the team at Ely and The Clewer Initiative is hoping to develop the education work further so we can teach more children and young people about modern slavery.





## ACTION 1 – JOIN THE FIGHT

There are many ways in which you can join the fight against child exploitation:

1

A first step is to increase your own awareness and understanding of child exploitation. You could do this by attending The Clewer Initiative's **Breaking County Lines** course or **Women in the Shadows**.

2

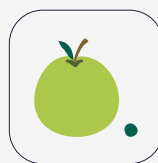
You could also commit to raising awareness amongst your networks and in your local area:

Why not follow The Clewer Initiative on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or LinkedIn and share our awareness raising campaigns with your friends and networks?

Why not download posters from The Clewer Initiative's website about the signs of exploitation to look out for and display them in local community halls? You can request translated versions of some of our posters if you wish to reach a particular foreign language community.

3

Finally, consider downloading our **Safe Car Wash** and **Farm Work Welfare** app so you know the signs of exploitation to look out for and what to do if you have suspicions.



Farm Work Welfare App (FWWA)



Safe Car Wash App



<https://theclewerinitiative.org/resources/awareness-downloads>





## THE SCALE OF THE ISSUE



Women make up about

**A THIRD OF ALL VICTIMS**

of modern slavery in the UK and their exploitation can often result in pregnancy



According to the crisis charity, Hestia, there are at least

**5000** children of modern slavery victims in the UK<sup>1</sup>



## DIG DEEPER

Very little is known about the children of modern slavery victims and the intergenerational impact of the trauma they and their mothers have been through. To help fill the knowledge gap, London-based charity Hestia commissioned research into the needs and experiences of mothers who are survivors of modern slavery and the potential impact of their trafficking experiences on their children. The report 'Forgotten Children' outlines the deep and lasting impact on the lives of these children.

The Hestia researchers observed that some children of modern slavery victims were forced into premature responsibility or became hyper-vigilant to their mother's needs as a reaction to the challenging circumstances they were living in. Several women told researchers that if they got sad their children would sense it and get upset. If they cried the child would cry too, or if they were experiencing low mood the child would try to protect them by bringing a book or some other comforter.

Low self-esteem was common, often affecting both mother and child. For example, the daughter of one survivor was no longer speaking at school following a period where her mother experienced low self-esteem.

Many of the women faced difficulties in setting boundaries and managing the behaviour of their

children, especially as they got older. A member of the Hestia Modern Slavery Response Team explains: "The children push at the boundaries, but the mothers feel guilty if they say no."

Several children were being investigated or supported for developmental delay, particularly speech delay. Other health needs of children included autism, eating difficulties and low self-esteem.

Older children had either been direct victims of violence and abuse by the traffickers or witnessed their mothers being hurt.



## WHAT IS IT LIKE BEING THE PARENT OF A MODERN SLAVERY VICTIM?

The trauma of modern slavery not only impacts the children of victims, it also has a devastating impact on the parents of victims. Listen to Becky Lewis, the Strategic Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager at Bristol City Council explain the stigma and isolation faced by many parents of children who are exploited.



Scan me or go to The Clewer Initiative's YouTube channel and search for Becky Lewis' clips



<sup>1</sup> Hestia, Underground Lives: Forgotten Children: The Intergenerational Impact of Modern Slavery, 2021





## REFLECTION

Read Luke 18 v9-14

The Pharisee thought he was an upright citizen, deeply religious and well equipped with rules and values to deal with the complexities of human living. In our world today, there are many people who claim to know the answers to life's challenges, including the brutality of modern slavery, and the damage it does to children and families. Jesus contrasts the self-righteous prayer of the Pharisee with the tax collector. Our response needs to be modelled on the tax collector who was humble and aware of his own weakness and culpability. This is our starting point when we approach God in prayer and petition.

- When are you tempted to be proud or self-righteous or to feel good about yourself because of your good works?
- Reflect upon the danger of self-righteousness and how it can infiltrate our hearts and even our acts of kindness and mercy
- How can our interactions with other people be characterised by humility?
- What might such humility and solidarity look like in your church, or in the work of organisations like The Clewer Initiative?



## PRAYER

*Holy God, help us to recognise the pain of all who feel inadequate and excluded, especially in the face of possible exploitation and abuse. May we own our own failings and shortcomings and our tendency to put ourselves first. We ask for your guidance and blessing through Him who sets all captives free, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*





## A STORY OF HOPE - VIKI'S STORY

## A story of hope - Viki's story

"I have two children – a son aged five and a daughter aged three. I love them both so much, they give me a different life and I am very happy. My son was born after I had escaped slavery and even though I had health issues during the pregnancy, things went well at first. But then we had to move cities and I didn't have anyone around me, not many friends and no family. I was isolated.

"When you feel so alone it's so hard to cope. I was very concerned about my son and the delays in his speech, so I went to the GP and asked the Health Visitor for help, but they just told me not to worry. But I said, 'look my son was talking and now he has stopped – something is wrong'. But they didn't see the gap between his age and his development.

"It was very difficult when they gave him the diagnosis of Autism because I was not aware of it and didn't know what it meant or how to help him. I didn't know what to do next – he was being sent home from school all the time and I didn't know how to help him at home.



"My Hestia case worker chased up speech and language therapy and found funding for me to see a psychologist over Zoom. The therapist was able to show me what I was doing well and what I had to change. She showed me how playing together could help change his behaviour.

"Now I'm more confident with him – she's taught me how to deal with his behaviour and how to make my life more normal. It's a long way to get there because he is very delayed and needs lots of support, but it's helping me. My son has special needs but he is a lovely boy. He is amazing and I am so proud of him."

SPOTLIGHT ON HESTIA  
[WWW.HESTIA.ORG](http://WWW.HESTIA.ORG)

Hestia provides services for victims of modern slavery and their children across London and Kent, each year supporting more than 2,200 adult victims and 1,200 dependent children. Hestia's Modern Slavery Response Team (MSRT) provides support to victims referred into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the national framework that ensures victims of modern slavery and trafficking are identified and receive appropriate early support. Hestia supports victims in safe houses in London and Kent, and through a pan-London outreach service working in every London borough.





## ACTION 2 – LOVING FAMILIES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

What have you learnt through this session and from the experience of Hestia about the needs of families affected by modern slavery?

Becky Lewis, the Strategic Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager at Bristol City Council outlines some of the ways that churches and communities can support vulnerable families and create a culture where exploitation does not thrive.

Take some time to watch each short clip and reflect on what might be possible in your context.



Scan me or go to The Clewer Initiative's YouTube channel and search for Becky Lewis' clips

- ▶ Be the eyes and ears of your community
- ▶ Community mentoring
- ▶ Creating a culture that does not allow exploitation to happen

Churches and faith groups can play a key role in providing safe spaces for parents and children of modern slavery victims to process their trauma and receive solace, support and companionship.

- *Do you have access to a community space that could be offered to parents or children of modern slavery victims?*
- *Could you find out about local organisations that are already working alongside victims of modern slavery and get involved befriending individuals?*







## THE SCALE OF THE ISSUE

An estimated **27,000** children in England identified as a gang member (Children's Commissioner, 2019)



Of the child victims who went through the National Referral Mechanism in Q3 2021, the biggest group was for criminal exploitation

**(47%)**

This reflects the growth in 'county lines' cases.

According to the National Crime Agency (NCA),



of those involved in County Lines are male.

During COVID-19,

**CRIMINAL GANGS DRESSED CHILDREN AS KEYWORKERS**

(for example, Deliveroo workers) to deliver drugs (Children's Society, 2020).



In Q3 2021,

**515**

county lines referrals were flagged, accounting for 15 per cent of all modern slavery referrals received in the quarter. This, however, is only the tip of the iceberg.

There are **1000**

different County Lines operating in the UK.

The majority originate from London, West Midlands and Merseyside.



The profit per line is more than **£800,000** a year.

This results in an overall profit annually of more than

**£800,000,000**



## DIG DEEPER

County lines is a form of criminal exploitation where urban gangs persuade, coerce or force children and young people to store drugs and money and/or transport them to suburban areas, market towns and coastal towns. County lines gangs are organised criminal networks who are constantly refining their operations to avoid detection resulting in the signs of exploitation changing and becoming increasingly subtle.

They may, for example:

- target victims who do not fit existing stereotypes such as young people from more affluent backgrounds and girls, who are less likely to be picked up by the police
- use platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram and TikTok to target victims
- use holiday accommodation, including airbnbs, caravans and hotels, as a base for their operations so that they are more difficult to detect.

County lines can also involve cuckooing, where dealers take over a local property, usually belonging to a vulnerable person, to use as a base for their criminal activity.





**WHY AND HOW DO CHILDREN AND YOUNG  
PEOPLE GET DRAWN INTO COUNTY LINES?**

It's important to understand that the criminals behind county lines are ruthless but organised gangs. They use sophisticated techniques to coerce children and shocking levels of violence to keep them compliant.

**Targeted**

In broad terms, young people are targeted and chosen - the exploiter usually seeks out those that are marginalised and vulnerable.

**Coerced**

Coercion may involve glamorising their lifestyle while developing the young person's trust by including them and making them feel wanted and protected. Often, a gang member will befriend the young person, buying them gifts like branded clothing and trainers, mobile phones and food. They will spend a lot of time making them feel special - as much as is needed to build trust. The young person will gradually be drawn into their lifestyle, introduced to other members of the gang and trained up in what they are doing.

**Hooked and trapped**

The young person will begin to feel a sense of belonging - as though they are a member of the gang with a sense of identity within the group, possibly being given more responsibility and a bigger role - which can become dependence. But ultimately, their treatment at the hands of their exploiters usually starts to become unpleasant for example with threatening behaviour, blackmail, violence and sexual assaults.

Physical and mental abuse are common, along with threats of violence or death to their family members if they try to leave the gang. Despite this, child victims may not even realise that they are being exploited. They may believe that the members of the gang are their friends and that they are being looked after.





## REFLECTION

Read Luke 18 v15-17

A litmus test for understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ and the coming of the kingdom He proclaims, is our attitude towards children. In this passage, people bring children to Jesus to be blessed. We can all identify with wanting to recognise the preciousness of the child and the precariousness of its future. Yet the disciples tell people to stop – they see the kingdom as being about bigger things such as justice, worship and fellowship. Jesus reminds them that these larger signs of the kingdom only operate by recognising and celebrating the most vulnerable people. Let the children come to me – to such as these belong to the kingdom of God.

- Why is our response to the exploitation and abuse of children so fundamental to understanding the true nature of God's kingdom?
- What can we do better to ensure all our efforts to enable this coming kingdom – worship, fellowship, witness – can pass this key measure of how children are recognised, received and celebrated?
- Make some resolutions of how you can better recognise and witness to the miracle that the kingdom of God belongs to children.



## PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, as you call us to receive your coming kingdom, help us to recognise the priority you give to the most vulnerable – especially to children. Teach us to order our worship, our witness, and our fellowship in ways that extend this invitation, so that those who most desperately desire your blessing may be noticed and embraced in the common life of grace and mercy. We pray through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*





**A STORY OF HOPE  
- SIAN OWEN, “THE COUNTY LINES LADY”**

Sian Owen is an ordinary activist who has worked tirelessly to fight modern slavery and county lines in Bridgwater. Having attended The Clewer Initiative’s Hidden Voices course, Sian became the voluntary coordinator of the local action group, leading a “toilet door” sticker campaign and organising a public event to mark Anti-Slavery Day. After this, Sian became the project worker for a pilot Victim Support project, “Hidden Voices Somerset” and began to work fulltime at a safehouse.

During lockdown, Sian trained village agents online which not only built good relationships, but also resulted in village agents being comfortable to come to her with concerns, which she was then able to take to the police or GLAA.

She also started a community initiative to build resilience against County Lines in the most deprived communities in Bridgwater. The small group, led with the support of council leaders and police, reached around 800 people. She is now working on a major diversionary project aimed at young people on the key housing estates.

Sian is an amazing networker and her face is so well-known locally that she is often called the “county lines lady” by people who see her out and about. There are many volunteers that have played a key role in this work, but Sian has led, inspired and kept beating the drum for county lines awareness in very difficult circumstances.



**SPOTLIGHT ON THE CLEWER INITIATIVE’S  
BREAKING COUNTY LINES COURSE**

Breaking County Lines was designed to enable churches and communities to understand and raise awareness of county lines and spot the signs of its presence. It also looks at ways of building resilience in our communities with an emphasis on the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

**Train the Trainer online courses**

We also run Train the Trainer courses for those who want to take the Breaking County Lines course out to their own communities as well as practitioner forums for those who have already attended the county lines courses.

Courses are available for church groups and statutory organisations with adapted course materials for each type of group (both secular and faith materials are available).

**Breaking County Lines seminar for parents,  
grandparents and guardians**

We have recently pioneered a new County Lines resource for parents, grandparents and guardians. The seminar provides an introduction to county lines; how parents and grandparents should respond to the issue; the signs to look out for and how to talk to children about it.

If you would like to find out more about the courses and upcoming course dates, please email us at [clewerinitiative@churchofengland.org](mailto:clewerinitiative@churchofengland.org)







## ACTION 3 – TRAINING

A central part of The Clewer Initiative's mission is to provide training for individuals, churches and community groups. Our hope is that through providing up-to-date and relevant training, people will grow in their awareness of the issue, confidence to spot signs of modern slavery and know what to do with these suspicions.

We have courses on homelessness, county lines, women & exploitation, and modern slavery in general. We also have training written specifically for church wardens, people involved in Food Banks or people in rural communities.

Some of resources can be downloaded and used as the foundation for a bespoke seminar. Others are in the form of an online course, run centrally by The Clewer Initiative's expert trainers.

Visit



<https://theclewerinitiative.org/training-courses>

and consider what course you could put on for your friends and neighbours this year.



## THE COUNTY LINES PSALM

*The gang leader is my shepherd,  
I shall not ask.*

*He makes me lie down in unheated flats;  
He leads me beside needle-strewn stairwells;  
He enslaves my soul.*

*He leads me down windswept streets  
For his own profit.*

*As I walk down the darkest alley, I feel evil;  
For he is with me;*

*My phone and my stash, they cling to me.  
He prepares every deal for me in the presence of  
my enemies;*

*My head it drips with sweat;  
My water bottle is empty.  
Surely ruthlessness and cruelty shall stalk me  
All the days of my life,  
And I shall live in an unfurnished home  
My whole short life.*

*Rt Revd Simon Burton-Jones,  
the Bishop of Tonbridge*





## THE SCALE OF THE ISSUE

Recent research from the Department for Education reveals that between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021,

**12,720**

children assessed by children's social services in England were deemed to be

**AT RISK OF CRIMINAL  
EXPLOITATION BY GANGS.**



The figures also show there were

**16,830**

children where child sexual exploitation was a factor during their assessment and

**2,710**

children where trafficking was a factor.

In London in particular,

**3,500**

children were identified as being at risk because of involvement with gangs,

**2,650**

children were identified as being at risk as a result of child sexual exploitation.



It explains that "the exclusion of vulnerable young people from full time school, whether placing them on reduced timetables, putting in place home schooling arrangements, or removing them to PRUs exacerbates their vulnerability and increases the risk of being targeted by gangs for exploitation. In some areas, PRUs become the arena for gang rivalries which become dangerous for pupils and hard for staff to manage. PRUs are also viewed as the place where already vulnerable young people get first-hand exposure to and experience of crime (drug dealing /violence /intimidation/ recruitment for 'county lines'). There are growing numbers of excluded children in alternative provision and this clustering together is creating a recruiting arena for crime and anti-social behaviour."

Sometimes children deliberately get excluded from school in order to get allocated to a PRU so they can recruit more pupils into selling drugs. At other times, gang members wait outside PRU gates on the lookout for the most vulnerable children to target.

The school to exclusion to prison pipeline disproportionately affects children from Black and Brown communities. The Commission on Young Lives recently found that Black boys in care are more likely to enter the youth justice system, and this problem is worsening as the number of Black boys going into care rises.



## DIG DEEPER

While young people aged 14-17 are most likely to be recruited by county lines gangs, there are reports of children as young as seven being groomed. County lines gangs exist throughout the UK and can target children from any background. However, exploiters usually seek out young people who are marginalised and vulnerable and there is evidence of a strong link between children outside mainstream education and county lines.

According to the Home Office, "gangs wishing to exploit young people target them in arenas where they are likely to have reduced monitoring and supervision such as Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and Children's Homes."





## TIME TO LISTEN

Ben Lindsay, the founder of Power The Fight explains:



How children get targeted



Why children get drawn in



How children from Black and Brown communities are disproportionately affected by county lines



Scan me or go to The Clewer Initiative's YouTube channel and search for Ben Lindsay's clips



<https://www.powerthefight.org.uk>



## REFLECTION

Read Luke 18 v18-30

How hard it is for all of us who are comfortable, like the ruler in the story, to reach out to those who suffer. This is even more true when those who suffer are hidden in plain sight, and the most vulnerable of God's children. In the films above, Ben Lindsay provides a powerful challenge to move from comfort and convention to a new perspective and different priorities.

- Do you, like the ruler, place limits on your discipleship? Are there things that you are unwilling to do when it comes to loving your neighbour?
- What have you learned from Ben and the material this week that might point you to something lacking in your own learning and help you see new things and possibilities?
- Jesus says to the ruler 'give of yourself to help the vulnerable', and in this spirit follow Him. Can we identify new priorities in our following of Jesus, especially in the light of Suzanne's story (next page)?



## PRAYER

*Lord of all life, teach us to be honest about what our discipleship might lack, so that with your light we may better identify the needs of your children and adjust our witness and worship - since what might seem to be impossible for mortals is always possible for you. Guide and guard us to be better agents of your saving love – in Jesus' name we pray,*

*Amen.*







## A STORY OF HOPE - REACHING OUT TO VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE IN SHEFFIELD

Suzanne is a community pioneer, based at the Winn Gardens Estate in Sheffield. She is responsible for caring for and supporting the 375 households who live on the estate. She is employed by a nearby church, St John the Baptist, Owlerton and Zest, a Sheffield-based charity.

Winn Gardens Estate was built in the mid-1960s - 65 per cent of residents are White British and 35 per cent are from other nations. There are 16 different nationalities on the estate and some people speak no English.

Suzanne recently attended The Clewer Initiative's Breaking County Lines course to boost her knowledge of county lines and how children can be prevented from getting drawn into criminal gangs.

Since moving on to the estate in 2020, she has connected with around 80 - 90 children and young people through detached youth nights and 75 - 80 households via their foodbank and clothing recycle project.

As she lives and works on the estate, she has spent a lot of time connecting with the children and young people from the estate by hanging out at the shared spaces such as the basketball courts and playing fields. She spends many hours chatting to young people and offering them hot chocolate and snacks. This sort of detached youthwork is the only thing that has been possible when COVID-19 restrictions have forbidden indoor gatherings and has been a wonderful way to start forming relationships with local families.

Suzanne explains: "Most days, there are 8-12 kids waiting on my doorstep when I go out or come back from somewhere. The children love meeting my dog, Poppy - she has been a wonderful asset. Everyone knows her and is drawn to her! Wonderfully, we have had people queuing to come to our community church on a Sunday."

During Covid, Suzanne and her team created food packs and daily activities for families so that they had healthy holiday provision. During May half term, 83 children from the Estate received holiday packs and attended organised events such as a treasure hunt and pizza making evening. These sorts of initiatives are just the beginning of trying to build community on the estate.



## SPOTLIGHT ON POWER THE FIGHT

Launched in 2019, Power The Fight is an award winning charity that tackles violence that affects young people. It creates long term solutions for sustainable change and acts as a link between the community and policy makers. Most of its work is with families, churches, faith groups and community organisations who want to be equipped to engage with youth violence issues in their context. This happens through training and events, resources, building connections between community groups, local authorities, services and other partners to promote mutuality, improve cohesion and effect change and also supporting families impacted by youth violence. It provides access to culturally competent therapeutic, financial and legal support.

To find out more, visit



[www.powerthefight.org.uk](http://www.powerthefight.org.uk)





## ACTION 4 – GROUND AND AIR ENGAGEMENT

Churches and individuals can get involved at a ground or tactical level and also at an air or strategic level.

Listen to Ben Lindsay, founder of **Power The Fight** define



Ground Engagement



Air Engagement



Cultural humility and sensitivity



Scan me or go to The Clewer Initiative's YouTube channel and search for Ben Lindsay's clips

### Reflect on Ben's challenges

- Do you feel equipped to engage with the children in your communities or would you like to seek out further training on issues such as county lines or mental health issues?
- Do you know your local MP, councillors, headteachers and Police Commander?
- How well do you understand the community you are serving? Is there a way you could engage your community better and listen to what it needs / struggles/successes?
- How can you adopt a posture of cultural humility and sensitivity?

# POWER THE FIGHT





## THE SCALE OF THE ISSUE



## DIG DEEPER

An incredible 160 million children aged between 5 and 17 are engaged in child labour. This is the sort of statistic that feels impossible to process. Each one of these children is an individual, made in the image of God, with a unique personality, skills, and aspirations. Yet when you read a figure like 160 million or 13 million teenage girls experiencing forced sex, it is easier to hold these individuals at a distance and view them as an anonymous group rather than allow your heart and mind to grasp the awful reality that they are people, just like yourself, with hopes and dreams and potential that will never be realised.

The key driver behind child labour is poverty – children are sent out to work and deprived of an education, keeping them in the cycle of poverty and

exploitation. It is estimated that children who have to work instead of going to school increase their likelihood of being poor in later life by as much as 30 per cent. That's why education and empowering children and families to know their rights is a key tool in fighting child labour.

Child labour is concentrated in the world's poorest countries or fragile contexts where there is insecurity or armed conflict. However, child labour is not confined to low-income countries – 1.6 million child labourers live in high-income countries.

According to the ILO, 70 per cent of child labourers work in agriculture. The rest are trapped in factories, domestic service, the commercial sex trade or forced to work as child soldiers.

As well as child labour, children are often recruited and transported for the purpose of exploitation – this is called **child trafficking**. Many children are trafficked into the UK from overseas, but children can also be trafficked from one part of the UK to another.

Traffickers use grooming techniques to gain the trust of a child, family or community. Child trafficking can involve a network of organised criminals, or individuals or even a child's own family. Some people might not be directly involved in trafficking a child but may play a part in other ways such as falsifying documents, bribery, owning or renting premises, or money laundering.

Migrant and refugee children – many of whom have already been uprooted by conflict, disaster or poverty – are at high risk of being forced into work and trafficked, especially if they are migrating alone or taking irregular routes with their families.





## REFLECTION

Read Luke 18 v31-34

Jesus tells His disciples about the way of the cross – a journey involving challenge, conflict and opposition. Yet on the third day He will rise again. The mystery of Easter for which we prepare in Lent. The global picture of child exploitation is a scene inviting challenge, conflict and opposition – our witness is to be part of this way of the cross. Of course, the disciples could not grasp His message. But now we ask for guidance to perceive this miracle of salvation and to play our part.

- What are the large-scale issues that allow this global exploitation to flourish?
- How should these complex challenges inform our prayers and our public witness?
- How can we support each other to better know the faith that trusts in God's victory and glory?



## PRAYER

*Father of all, inspire us to trust that in our own worship and witness, we can face the huge and mysterious challenges which allow so many of your children to suffer. Inspire us to trust in your power, witness to your love, and know that in Jesus crucified and risen there is always new life and new possibilities. May our journey towards the day of resurrection deepen this faith and this confidence so that our ministries may evermore bring hope and healing. We ask in His most holy name.*

Amen.







**A STORY OF HOPE - USING ART TO CONNECT  
WITH REFUGEE CHILDREN IN ITALY**

The Clewer Initiative's trainer and facilitator, Bill Crooks, is currently based in Italy running art workshops with refugee and migrant communities. Previously he helped develop The Clewer Initiative's Hidden Voices and Breaking County Lines courses.

In collaboration with The Clewer Initiative's partner FCEI-Mediterranean Hope, he has started work on a number of projects including one for children in Calabria in Southern Italy.

He explains: "I am exploring the use of art to help children express their feelings and experiences of being part of a refugee resettlement project. Camini is a unique place as it is an Italian community that not only welcomes refugees but helps them rebuild their lives by either starting up their own small businesses or by being a part of the town's cooperative. This helps the refugees grow in resilience and reduce their risk of being exploited

by gangs and other groups who look for vulnerable refugees and migrant labourers to use and exploit in construction projects or agricultural business.

"I am particularly working with refugee children who have fled with their families from war-torn places such as Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan and Eritrea. We are creating art together with local Italian children. The mix and integration with local Italian families is really important and the art is a way of having fun together and sharing ideas as a diverse community. Our art project is being integrated into the after-school programme which is run by local volunteers. Making colourful kites together has been a wonderful experience."



[www.mediterraneanhope.com](http://www.mediterraneanhope.com)





## SPOTLIGHT ON MEDITERRANEAN HOPE

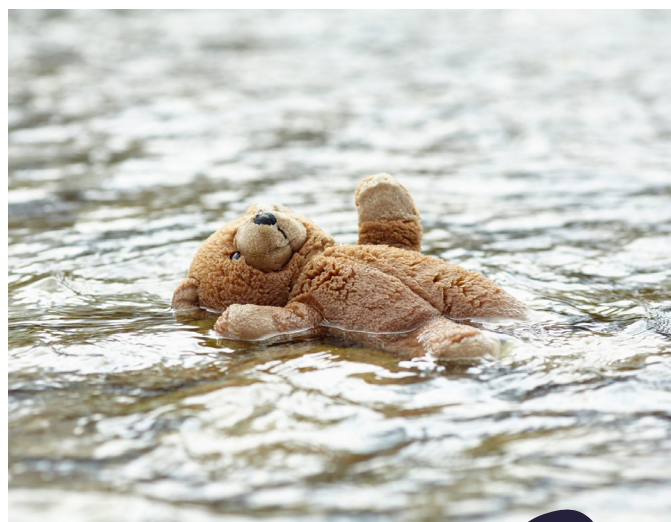
On 3rd October 2013, 368 people drowned in the waters off the coast of Lampedusa, a tiny Italian outpost around 70 miles from Tunisia.

For the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy (FCEI), already active for some years in supporting displaced people, it was the trigger for diverting resources and energy to a project whose focus would be the plight of those at the border. That project would be called Mediterranean Hope.

In the intervening years, the project has expanded significantly. A team still lives and works on Lampedusa welcoming those who arrive at the docks and beaches, gathering statistics and stories, reporting developments and curating the memories of those lost at sea. Another team, based in Calabria, supports exploited workers, through practical and educational projects which seek to address the rights deficit and to equip those affected to live and work in dignity. A third team works on Croatia's border with Bosnia to ease the appalling situation of the many displaced people trapped at that frontier.

Practical support for the most vulnerable is at the heart of FCEI-Mediterranean Hope's work. The Rome office has, since 2015, coordinated a large-scale reception programme called "humanitarian corridors". Through it, FCEI has welcomed more than two thousand refugees, primarily of Syrian origin, identified by its team in Beirut, and several legacy corridors now bring refugees from and to a number of other countries. This award-winning programme enables families, unaccompanied minors and individuals who are in need of international protection to begin a new life in Europe, supported to integrate and reach autonomy within a period of eighteen months.

Some of the most vulnerable are hosted at the Casa delle Culture, FCEI's reception centre in Scicli, Sicily. Currently, the centre is hosting individuals and families who have arrived through the Lebanese and Libyan corridors. The centre, a hub not only for its residents but for the local community, is a place of welcome for all. Staff and volunteers work together to accompany residents in learning Italian, navigating the asylum process, coming to terms with trauma they suffered, dealing with inevitable cultural challenges and taking up opportunities to advance education and find work. It's a process which enriches everyone involved.



[www.mediterraneanhope.com](http://www.mediterraneanhope.com)





## ACTION 5 – A CALL TO PRAY

Listen to Ben Lindsay, founder of Power The Fight underline the importance of prayer.



Scan me or go to The Clewer Initiative's YouTube channel and search for Ben Lindsay's clips

- Take some time to pray for the many child victims of slavery in the world today
  - pray for child victims and their families
  - pray for justice to come for child victims and the perpetrators of the crime to be thwarted
  - pray for churches and communities to grow in awareness of child exploitation
  - pray for churches and communities to notice victims in their midst
- Pray about your response to child exploitation – ask God to give you wisdom about what you could do in your community
- Pray for God's Kingdom to come soon.







## CONCLUSION – BY CAROLINE VIRGO, THE DIRECTOR OF THE CLEWER INITIATIVE

Thank you for taking the time, during Lent, to consider the plight of children caught up in slavery in the UK and across the world. We know that many of these reflections will have been deeply troubling. It is because of these dreadful statistics and growing trends that we, at The Clewer Initiative, press on in our work.

*Because the Church of England is present in all neighbourhoods and at the heart of many, we believe we have a unique opportunity to help strengthen communities, support families and protect vulnerable children from getting drawn into exploitation in the first place. This is the preventative work that we are so passionate about.*

Unfortunately, for many children, it is too late and they have already fallen prey to criminal gangs. That is why spotting the signs of exploitation is so critical.

*Anecdotally we know that some victims of modern slavery access services such as food banks, refugee and homeless services, many of which are on church premises.*

This means that there is a high chance that church members and project volunteers will meet victims or potential victims of exploitation and be well-placed to take action, if only they know what to do.

For this reason, The Clewer Initiative has just launched Project SEE (Supporting and Engaging the Exploited) to help churches recognise potential victims of modern slavery, provide clear and effective ways to safeguard potential victims and know what to do with their suspicions of modern slavery.

Through Project SEE, The Clewer Initiative provides training and resources to equip churches and individuals to understand the 'nuanced behaviours' around modern slavery and know how to engage, offer support, advice, signposting and advocacy to potential victims.

We have worked closely with The Church of England's Diocesan Safeguarding Officers and Diocesan Leads to develop the project and provide preliminary training so that everyone is on board with the vision to support and walk alongside victims of modern slavery in our parishes.

If you have been stirred by the material in Children in the Shadows and are keen to think further about how you can support victims of modern slavery in your existing social action projects or in future initiatives, please get in touch with us by emailing [clewerinitiative@churchofengland.org](mailto:clewerinitiative@churchofengland.org)

We can connect you with your diocesan lead for modern slavery who will let you know about other projects in your area and support you as you explore the best way forward. If several parishes in your area are interested in getting involved in Project SEE, we can provide additional volunteer training and specialist support.

It may be that you are only just beginning to find out about modern slavery and are unsure how to respond or what capacity you have to help. If this is the case, please don't despair or feel powerless! The best thing any of us can do, is to pray and this is something we can all do, no matter how old or young or busy or isolated.

# CONCLUSION – BY CAROLINE VIRGO, THE DIRECTOR OF THE CLEWER INITIATIVE

When I don't know how to pray, I often turn to the Psalms. Psalm 10 is a particularly fitting Psalm for our ministry and one we use regularly on our County Lines course:



*Arise, Lord! Lift up your hand, O God.  
Do not forget the helpless.*

*Why does the wicked man revile God?  
Why does he say to himself,  
“He won’t call me to account”?*

*But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted;  
you consider their grief and take it in hand.*

*The victims commit themselves to you;  
you are the helper of the fatherless.*

*Break the arm of the wicked man;  
call the evildoer to account for his wickedness  
that would not otherwise be found out.*

*The Lord is King for ever and ever;  
the nations will perish from his land.*

*You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted;  
you encourage them, and you listen to their cry,  
defending the fatherless and the oppressed,  
so that mere earthly mortals will never again  
strike terror.*



Psalm 10



## WHAT TO DO IF YOU SPOT THE SIGNS OR ARE WORRIED THAT SOMEONE MIGHT BE TRAPPED IN MODERN SLAVERY

As with other crimes, it is important you report any suspicions of modern slavery to the police. Do not attempt to intervene yourself, as you may put yourself and those around you – including the potential victim – in danger.



## WHO TO CONTACT

If there is an emergency and someone is in immediate danger, call **999**.

If you would like to report any non-emergency suspicious activity in your local area then call your local police on **101** or go to your local police station.

If you need advice or support on modern slavery, please call the Modern Slavery Helpline on **08000 121 700**.

It operates 24 hour a day,  
365 days a year.