

CHASTE Press Release

Safe Housing for Women who have been Trafficked for Sexual Exploitation

CHASTE welcomes the opening of the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC).

We are delighted at this commitment from the Government to the serious challenges which trafficking for sexual exploitation poses for the UK. CHASTE has worked with dozens of young women who have been trafficked into the margins of the sex industry in the UK, and we welcome this action from the government to put the human rights and welfare of the victims of this awful crime at the heart of its response.

CHASTE has been at the centre of co-ordinating the development of further provision of safe housing for those who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation, through the formation of a network of providers representing several UK Christian denominations. Among those working in the sector are Roman Catholic religious congregations and the Salvation Army. With the opening of two 'safe' houses and a third expected later this autumn, this will enable more places of safety for women who are seeking refuge and a safe place to heal.

This is an amazing contribution from churches which so many believe are on the decline in their influence in our society. Women who are trafficked for sexual exploitation do not always have recourse to public funds in order to have the safety they require provided for them. The Salvation Army and the Roman Catholic Religious Congregations have committed funds, personnel and support over the next three years, an extraordinary commitment to those who have been trafficked and are seeking a place of sanctuary and recovery.

The Chief Executive of CHASTE, the Revd Dr Carrie Pemberton said, "The opening of these safe houses and the continuing work of supporting trafficked women places the churches at the heart of a compassionate commitment by those determined to stamp out this contemporary slave trade. We call upon all churches and people of faith to bring their resources and energy to engage in bringing hope, healing and justice to these women. To further this work we call upon the Government to sign the European Convention Against Trafficking which will enable us to help the many thousands of women still awaiting rescue."

Notes to Editors

1. CHASTE is the interdenominational forum for the development of engaged response to the misery of human trafficking in the form of sexual exploitation. Initiated by Revd Dr Carrie Pemberton in 2003, the charity now works to develop cooperation across European churches for the prevention of sex trafficking. CHASTE is working:

- to form supportive networks with churches and faith communities in countries of origin and destination
- to develop a network of safe housing to secure the safety of women who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation
- to provide training for immigration and police personnel, chaplaincy teams and churches
- to research the moral and socio-economic conditions that result in trafficking with a view to promoting cultural and legislative change

2. Some facts and figures:

- The average age of women entering into prostitution is 13 or 14; there is no evidence to suggest that this age is decreasing.
- Data provided by the British Medical Journal on the experience of client violence against women prostitutes indicates that 93 % of women had an experience of client violence.
- Around 80 % of women in prostitution have been sexually abused in their childhood.
- Approximately 500,000 women are annually trafficked into Western Europe according to UN sources

3. The location of the safe houses are kept entirely confidential and will not be disclosed in order to protect the lives of the women concerned. It is not possible to allow access to women in the safe houses for interviews.

4 For further information of CHASTE please see our web page at www.chaste.org.uk

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