

Modern Slavery in Sussex in September 2020

Fact: It's closer than you think! Modern Slavery is widespread in Sussex. Recent newspaper stories have highlighted examples. It takes a variety of forms. Sussex being a coastal county examples are widespread across the south coast.

In Uckfield, in September, Police raided a nail bar in Uckfield High Street, where the owner was accused of using forced labour.

'County lines' is a term used by police and partner agencies to refer to drug networks, both gangs and organised crime groups, from large urban areas such as London, who use children and young people and vulnerable adults to carry out illegal activity on their behalf.

The areas in Sussex most effected by the County Lines drug trade from London are the larger coastal towns, with established drugs markets that can be exploited locally, including Hastings, Eastbourne, Worthing, Bognor, and Brighton, but also towns such as Crawley.

From September 14 to September 19, officers in Sussex made 29 arrests and seized more than £15,000 worth of drugs, 47 mobile phones and 13 weapons, mainly knives.

In the same week, local officers visited 68 addresses where people were at risk of being 'cuckooed' to check on their safety. They also identified and took safeguarding action for five particularly vulnerable people who needed extra help and support from the police and local services.

In St Leonard's and Hastings arrests were made when a locally-based employment agency had been employing mainly Romanian workers who had been charged for inadequate training and been charged excessive rent for poor accommodation and placed as staff in local care homes, where they were not paid the legal minimum wage.

Another St Leonard's-based human trafficking gang, uncovered by the SE Regional Organised Crime Unit, was ordered by Woolwich Crown Court to pay back £326,000 for smuggling people from Iraq and Kurdistan into Britain. The thirteen-member gang were convicted of unlawful immigration and money laundering and received combined sentences of 45 years.

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