

Press Release

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Crimestoppers tackles sex trafficking with online film

Crimestoppers the national charity, has launched a new film online about the disturbing world of sex trafficking. The 'Traffic Signs' film aims to raise awareness of the increase in this exploitative trade and encourage anonymous calls to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

The film which was directed by David Baksh, aims to be non-judgmental and it is shot in a particularly voyeuristic format, in the style of an adult film. It has been distributed via a viral campaign and the strategy is to get men to look at the film online who would normally look at porn or escort websites. They will expect to see more graphic images of women, then view the film and get the message that they can call Crimestoppers anonymously to give information, which will be passed on to the police.

Mick Laurie, Crimestoppers CEO said: "These women who are victims of trafficking, travel to this country, usually under false pretences and suffer horrific abuse. They are held against their will and often forced to see up to 40 clients a day. The only other people who may know what is happening to them are the men who use their services, who would obviously not want to contact the police. We are appealing to them to give us information if they are suspicious about women they have seen in these circumstances on 0800 555 111. They will not have to give us their name, or any details about themselves, calls are not traced and they will not have to give evidence in court - we guarantee they will remain anonymous."

David Baksh, who wrote and directed the film, felt compelled to tackle this difficult subject after hearing a news report about an illegal brothel that had been raided. The officer in charge detailed how many girls were kept imprisoned in terrible conditions and the abuse they forced to endure. The police had no idea that the girls were being abused and although the brothel had numerous clients none of them had contacted the police.

David Baksh said: "Seeing prostitutes is not something most men would want to shout about - or stand up in court and testify to. The girls' best hope of rescue and the police's best source of intelligence slinks off and hopes that someone else has the guts to give information. The more I thought about it, the more it bothered me. Men aren't all bad. All they needed was to be reminded to do the right thing and be given the means to do it. Crimestoppers was the obvious solution - anybody calling their 0800 555 111 number has their anonymity guaranteed."

An estimated 1,420 women were trafficked to the UK in 2000. The exact scale of the problem in the UK, in 2006 is unknown. However, we do know that human trafficking is so common now, that it's the third most profitable criminal activity in the world, after illegal drugs and arms trafficking. In Europe we know that around 500,000 people are trafficked every year and the majority of these are women and children who are forced into a life of prostitution.

The issue of human trafficking is high up the government and police agenda. Operation Pentameter was launched in February as the first co-ordinated effort to tackle human trafficking on a national scale. It is a partnership between the police, SOCA (Serious and Organised Crime Agency), CPS, UK Immigration Service and several non-governmental organisations, including Crimestoppers.

Operation Pentameter has already resulted in 51 arrests in brothels, massage parlours and private residences across the UK. This led to the discovery of fourteen alleged victims who have come from the Ukraine, Brazil, Czech Republic, Poland and Zimbabwe. They range from 15 to 39 years of age. However, the police are convinced that there are many more trafficked women around the UK and are encouraging anyone with information to contact Crimestoppers anonymously.

CHASTE (Churches Alert to Sex Trafficking Across Europe) is an ecumenical organisation resisting trafficking for sexual exploitation into the UK and across Europe. It is involved in a range of activity including providing support and housing for women and children who have become victims of sex trafficking.

Dr Carrie Pemberton, CHASTE CEO said: "CHASTE welcomes the Crimestoppers initiative against trafficking for sexual exploitation. This is a real contribution to addressing the punters who become involved in this evil trade. Without the demand for those who are sexually exploited in this way, trafficking of young women and men would be halted. The Crimestoppers film is a great way to get this message across."

Ends

For press enquiries relating to Crimestoppers contact Michele Harris, PR & Marketing Manager - Crimestoppers on 020 8254 3230 or michele.harris@crimestoppers-uk.org

Notes to Editors:

Crimestoppers is the only charity dedicated to solving crimes and taking criminals off the streets. Around 17 people are arrested and charged every day as a result of information given to Crimestoppers. One person is charged with murder every week, as a result of information given to Crimestoppers.

Since Crimestoppers began in 1988, it has received over 800,000 calls with useful information, resulting in over 70,000 arrests and charges. Over £92 million worth of property has been recovered and over £127 million worth of drugs.

Crimestoppers UK was founded by Lord Ashcroft KCMG, Chairman of Trustees. In 1988 he launched the Community Action Trust (CAT) in the Metropolitan Police area. CAT was renamed Crimestoppers in 1995 and required a three-way partnership between the business community, the police and the media.