WEEK 4: PROTECTING OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY PROJECTS

This week, we will reflect on how our church and community projects can be vulnerable to the manipulative ways of County Lines drug traffickers and consider how to protect them.

“Because the poor are plundered and the needy groan, I will now arise,” says the LORD.
“I will protect them from those who malign them.”

Psalm 12: 5

Each section of this course includes a short animation telling the story of an individual who has been impacted by County Lines. These films could be upsetting. Choices should be offered so participants can watch them or take a short break instead. Sources of emotional support should be signposted in case they trigger any distress – more details on this is available in the Introduction of the full course pack.

SEAN’S STORY

Watch the animation of Sean’s story and discuss:

How do we strike the right balance in building trust and rapport with vulnerable members of our community alongside robust safeguarding measures?

PASSAGE: PSALM 12

Help, LORD, for no one is faithful anymore;
those who are loyal have vanished from the human race.

2 Everyone lies to their neighbour;
they flatter with their lips
but harbour deception in their hearts.

3 May the LORD silence all flattering lips
and every boastful tongue -

4 those who say,
“By our tongues we will prevail;
our own lips will defend us - who is lord over us?”

5 “Because the poor are plundered and the needy groan,
I will now arise,” says the LORD.
“I will protect them from those who malign them.”

6 And the words of the LORD are flawless,
like silver purified in a crucible,
like gold refined seven times.

Produced and created by The Clewer Initiative/Mosaic Creative
Reflections and prayer from Rt Revd Dr Alastair Redfern
7 You, Lord, will keep the needy safe
   and will protect us forever from the wicked,
8 who freely strut about
   when what is vile is honoured by the human race.

REFLECTION AND PRAYER

Anyone who is vulnerable longs to be placed in safety, and to receive promises that are "pure" and trustworthy.

With so many predators looking for young people to exploit through a false promise – about work, status, companionship - we each need to read the signs that may seem to be "normal" at first glance, but on closer inspection show indications of other agendas.

Can we use the resources of this course to learn to be properly suspicious – for the sake of those susceptible to deception? And further, to see how together we can create safety and more fulfilling invitations for worthwhile tasks, for identity and for companionship?

PRAYER:

Lord of the poor and needy, help us to recognise and resist lies and flattering lips and double hearts. Teach us to look more deeply, to better discover your goodness, and to be saved from colluding with wickedness and exploitation – through Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Amen.

PRACTICAL ACTION:

See the practical action sheet and discuss what more we can do to protect our church and community projects.
WEEK 4: PRACTICAL ACTION

ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE TO ENSURE ALL PROJECTS ARE PROTECTED FROM MODERN SLAVERY AND COUNTY LINES

- Provide core training to volunteers on all aspects of modern slavery including County Lines, detecting the signs, understanding the steps for an appropriate response, and the link to safeguarding. Free online course on safeguarding and modern slavery can be found on this link: https://www.theclewerinitiative.org/safeguarding
- Ensure all volunteers have an opportunity to regularly feedback on concerns or issues they have come across.
- Include the risk of County Lines being connected with your project in your risk assessment.
- Ensure that the project’s leaders have a very good understanding of the steps to take in situations where County Lines activity is suspected.
- Set up strategic partnerships with the police, local authorities and frontline responders such as the Salvation Army.
- Make sure guests of the project can get the information they need if they are at risk of County Lines. This could include:
  - posters displayed in prominent places, for example on noticeboards and in the toilets
  - leaflets in different languages
  - if appropriate, you could host a brief awareness raising session for guests, using films, stories, and statistics to help them understand that they may be at risk.
WEEK 4: BACKGROUND READING – PROTECTING OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY PROJECTS

EXAMPLES OF PEOPLE AND PROJECTS VULNERABLE TO COUNTY LINES AND MODERN SLAVERY ACTIVITY

While many church and community projects seek to support and improve the lives of vulnerable individuals, they can become targets of criminal groups and traffickers. Therefore, the volunteers and staff need to be alert to this threat and to raise awareness with those who frequent such projects.

NIGHT SHELTERS

These are run by churches generally over the winter, to give homeless people a warm place to sleep as well as food and a bed. The risk for these people is that traffickers can identify where they are and contact them on the way to or from the night shelter.

HOMELESS HOSTELS AND DROP-INS

These are temporary accommodation options or places of contact where food and shelter can be provided throughout the year. These are often run by churches and/or local authorities. Similarly, traffickers can identify where these are and either get access or contact the residents/clients in a nearby location.

ROUGH SLEEPERS AND SOFA SURFERS

These are groups of people who have no permanent accommodation and resort to sleeping in sheltered, mostly urban, areas or sleeping on friends’ or relatives’ sofas. They are susceptible to the attraction of a ‘better’ offer.

USERS OF FOODBANKS

These are often people on very low incomes who need to supplement their household food stocks. Traffickers will offer them the opportunity of earning a good income to reduce their dependency on benefits and handouts.

Victims may also be using foodbanks because the traffickers do not pay them.
WEEK 4: BACKGROUND READING – PROTECTING OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY PROJECTS

CHURCH AND COMMUNITY DROP-IN CAFES

These places often attract vulnerable and marginalised members of the community because of the spirit of acceptance and welcome. However, staff of these cafes need to be alert to strangers who make contact with the more vulnerable users of the facility as there is the possibility they could be deceived into modern slavery.

REFUGEES/ASYLUM SEEKERS

These groups are often caught in a period where they can’t earn an income either because of their status, their lack of educational qualifications, or language skills. They are vulnerable to offers of easy work, paid in cash, which turn out to be exploitative.