



April 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Comment from POPPY Project regarding involvement in CO14 trafficking operation: Operation Gibb

“Identifying and supporting women who have been trafficked into prostitution is a very specialist task and we are pleased to have been given the opportunity to work closely with CO14 tonight.

“Being involved immediately after the operation, rather than simply taking referrals afterwards, has enabled us to ensure that all women are given the appropriate support and information they need on rescue. We can also reassure them that they will not be treated as criminals and will have access to longer-term support if they wish.”

What will happen to the women rescued tonight?

“The women rescued tonight will be briefed by the police and asked if they want to access support services. Those that do will be taken straight to a reception centre where a team of POPPY senior support workers is on stand-by. They will then be offered accommodation at the POPPY Project and at another un-named partner agency.

“Trafficking is a major problem throughout the UK, and as the capital city, London is a major trafficking centre. The Home Office now estimates that there could be as many as 4,000 women and children in a trafficking situation in the UK at any one time. We are pleased to see CO14 working to combat this crime in a sensitive manner.”

How can we combat trafficking?

“While combating trafficking in this way is positive, we would also like to see the Government take the next step towards eliminating trafficking through tackling the demand for prostitution.

“Legalising prostitution is not the answer to combating trafficking or exploitation. In areas where prostitution has already been legalised, for example Amsterdam or the state of Victoria in Australia, women are still under the control of pimps and still do not have control of their money. Violence against women working in the commercialised sex industry is still rife. It is still the poorest and most dispossessed women who end up

working as prostitutes; and sex trafficking – and other forms of organised crime – are huge problems.

“Women who work in prostitution do not do so out of choice but out of desperation and coercion. Legalising this industry would make the vast majority of women even more vulnerable. Those with a drug habit – 80% of all women in prostitution – would not be employed by legalised brothels. They would be forced to undercut those brothels and be at greater risk of violence from violent men who were refused entry to legal venues.”

All comments attributable to Denise Marshall OBE, Eaves chief executive.

NOTES TO EDITORS

We are unavailable to offer journalists interviews with women at this time, but there are case studies available in the press section of the Eaves website (www.eaves4women.co.uk/press.php).

The POPPY Project is funded by the Ministry of Justice to provide accommodation and support to women trafficked into the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation. It is the only Government-funded service in the UK supporting women trafficked into prostitution. It has 35 bed spaces and an outreach team which works with women still involved in the sex industry. It also has a research and development unit, which specialises in counter-trafficking and exiting-prostitution work.

Eaves also runs Eaves Women’s Aid – a series of refuges for women and their children fleeing domestic violence – and a research department called the Lilith Project, which works to support the violence-against-women sector through research, education and training.

For further information about Eaves, contact Eaves’ communications officer Anna Bowden on 020 7840 7126 or at anna.bowden@eaveshousing.co.uk.