



Human rights in focus

Met police to compensate child slavery victim arrested after reporting ordeal

Police ordered to pay £15,500 to man trafficked to UK from Vietnam as a boy who was detained and threatened with deportation

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Wed 9 Dec 2020 07.43 EST

The [Metropolitan police](#) is to pay £15,500 to a victim of slavery who tried to report his traffickers but was instead arrested for immigration offences and sent to a detention centre.

The man, referred to in court as KQT, was 15 when he was taken by traffickers from Vietnam through Russia to the UK in a refrigerated lorry. He was arrested on arrival and placed in foster care, but shortly after was collected by his traffickers and forced to work [on a cannabis farm](#), where he was locked inside a storeroom and only fed one meal a day. In January 2018, he escaped his captors and walked into a police station to report his ordeal.

Instead of treating him as a potential victim of child trafficking, police officers instead [detained him under immigration powers](#). He was then taken to Brook House immigration removal centre at Gatwick airport, where he was detained for 22 days until lawyers secured his release. KQT has since been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress syndrome and depression.

KQT launched legal action against the police for failing to refer him to the [National Referral Mechanism](#) (NRM), the framework for supporting and identifying trafficking victims in the UK. The case was settled out of court. Despite the settlement, the Metropolitan police has not admitted liability for negligence or the breach of duty of care to potential victims under the [2015 Modern Slavery Act](#).



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Lawyers from Duncan Lewis Solicitors, who represented KQT, said their client had come to the attention of police on three separate occasions.

“Despite clear trafficking indicators, the police failed to question our client on his history of exploitation or ask plainly pertinent questions in relation to some of the indicators,” said Primisha Chudasama, the lawyer acting on his behalf.

“Our client has recently been granted asylum and we are pleased that he can now seek to rebuild his life in the UK using the compensation he has been awarded by the police. We hope that others, in similar circumstances, do not have to go through this process to seek redress from the police,” Chudasama added.

The Metropolitan police said it did not comment on individual cases, but a spokesperson confirmed that a civil claim was brought against it in June 2019, relating to the “alleged failure to refer an individual, KQT, to the National Referral Mechanism and to investigate his trafficking”.

The spokesperson added: “The Metropolitan **Police** Service has a dedicated vulnerability investigations unit which targets organised criminal groups involved in modern slavery. This unit works closely with national and international partners and supports local MPS officers, providing advice and assistance to ensure victims are correctly identified and the appropriate safeguarding action is taken, including referrals to the NRM where appropriate.”

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