

Modern slavery- a crime hidden in plain sight

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Preventing modern slavery is something I feel passionate about. Modern slavery has been described as a crime hidden in plain sight. The International Labour Organisation estimates modern slavery is a \$150billion worldwide industry, and the Global Slavery Index 2016 estimated that around 11,700 people in the UK are living in modern slavery. Earlier this week a group of Romanian men were rescued from a house in Edgware. It is incredible to think that this is even possible in today's society.

Construction has a fragmented supply chain with multiple layers of contracting and subcontracting. Despite sub-contracting agreements, a tier one contractor may have limited knowledge of the exact terms and conditions of the people working for subcontractors. Many of the roles are low skilled, labour intensive and filled by an immigrant workforce. This provides the perfect environment for modern slavery to exist unnoticed.

More than 1,400 people work directly for us, and we are supported by a very small supply chain. Because many of our resources are on client sites, it's our business to ensure their businesses are protected, as well as ours. That's why VGC worked extremely hard to gain the Ethical Labour Sourcing Standard last year. We all need to be aware of the risks vulnerable people face from criminal gangs; we all need to learn how to spot the signs and what to do if you suspect modern slavery. In the same way that safety is everyone's responsibility, every single one of us has a responsibility to protect the liberty of those around us. Find out more at SafeStart19 on 14th February 2019 at Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire. The event incorporates, safety training, safety demonstrations, inspirational key note speakers and exhibitors showcasing the latest products and services in safety and innovation.

Visitor registration is now open: <https://safestart.events/visitors/>

SafeStart19 is supported by: HS2, ORR, Rail Alliance, Track Safety Alliance, Rail Safety Week, Railway Industry Association, National College of High Speed Rail, RSSB, Rail Forum Midlands, Costain and Morgan Sindall

For visitor and exhibitor information visit www.safestart.events or email: liesa.coates@in2global.com

About the author:

Ciara Pryce, one of VGC Group's senior directors, is recognised as one of the LDC Top 50 Most Ambitious Business Leaders. She chairs the Recruitment and Employment Confederation Construction Sector Group and is a board member for the Career Ready city of Westminster local advisory board. Ciara is named as one of the UK's Top 100 Corporate Modern Slavery Influencers in the inaugural index last year. She will be presenting on this topic at UK's largest safety focused event for the industry - SafeStart19 on the 14th February.