 Email: nhw@cbnwa.com

Website: www.cbnwa.com

Welcome to the Croydon Neighbourhood Watch page. We’re here to help you protect yourself and others.

**No one to hear him cry**

There can be few people who were not moved to tears by the tragic account of a two-year old boy discovered lifeless next to his father who had suffered a fatal heart attack. He had been left alone in their home for 14 days without care or sustenance. His father’s ultimate demise meant there was no one left to provide for the young child. The circumstances were truly awful. We cannot imagine the horror faced by that tiny child in the last hours of his life - all alone, in the dark and unable to communicate with anyone. I would bet parents everywhere listening to the story immediately gave their children a reassuring hug. I won’t try to second-guess the outcome of the enquiry or to be wise-after-the-event. What I will do is reiterate some of the advice from National Neighbourhood Watch.

If ever there was a case which underlined the need to reach out to family, neighbours and the community, this was it. A single parent living alone with a very young child are extremely vulnerable. Daily contact, even if it’s only to say “*Hi, how are you*” maintains a lifeline to reassure everyone. It’s not being intrusive or nosey. It has an important purpose and one that helps build communities which, particularly in the case of flatted properties, can be difficult to maintain. Social connectedness can also help create trust and resilience.

Is anyone in your family or someone that you know in these sorts of vulnerable circumstances? Have you had the *what if* conversation to make sure that if the worst happens, the situation is detected early and they have someone to turn to, unlike that little boy. Have a conversation with your neighbour. Perhaps agree to share with them a contact name or number of someone who has a spare key in case of emergencies (or repeated no response to the doorbell). Even if you don’t know someone that well, if things seem unusual in any way, don’t ignore it, don’t think it’s someone else’s problem. Be suspicious and share your concerns. If necessary, tell someone in authority. Looking out for each other is not a difficult task and it might just save a life one day.

**Modern Slavery**

The Croydon Community Against Trafficking (CCAT) website says that Croydon as a London Borough, has the highest number of Modern Slavery cases (30%) reported to the *National Referral Mechanism*. This grassroots charity was formed 15 years ago and is a voluntary coalition of people from all walks of life who work to campaign against human trafficking, oppression and the enslavement of people that exists in their own community. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 aims to combat modern slavery in the UK and abroad. CCAT has compiled a list of signs to look out for. If you feel something is amiss, please report it.

* Substandard accommodation may also work at the same address.
* Faces at windows looking stressed and never smiling.
* Signs of physical or psychological abuse.
* Do not travel alone or interact with others.
* Do not have freedom of movement and have no ID/travel documents.
* Few or no personal possessions.
* Have no days off or holiday time.
* Appear nervous around ‘family member’ or ‘interpreter’.
* May be transported to and from work every day.

You can also be mindful of modern slavery in your own community through the following signs:

* House or flat curtains closed during much of the day.
* Frequent visitors to residential premises, often men arriving and leaving at unusual times.
* Home delivery meals that result in excessive packaging left outside.
* Places where ‘special services’ are offered at a low price and/or advertised as having particular ethnicity.
* “Workers” appear underage and/or speak no or little English.
* Teenage girls who seem unhappy, living with older, unrelated males.
* Commercial premises that survive despite a clear lack of regular business.
* Low price deals offered at the door involving cheap labour and invariably for cash.

Many victims are unaware of their rights to protection in the UK including laws around the minimum wage, holidays and health and Safety. They do not know who to trust or where to seek help. Often, they are living under the threat of violence to themselves or their loved ones.

**How you can help**

* **Do not** approach the person directly as this can compromise their safety as well as yours.
* Call the Police on 999 to report you suspicions if you think the person is in immediate danger.
* Contact the Modern Slavery and Exploitation helpline on 0800 0121 700.
* For suspicions relating to child trafficking call Croydon Children Social Services on 0208 726 6400.

Want to know more, join Neighbourhood Watch - it’s free. Julian Roche