



Philippa Southwell, Head of the Human Trafficking and modern slavery department at Birds Solicitors

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Forensic examination of anti-slavery laws

Laws to tackle human trafficking and modern-day slavery were examined in detail this week at an international conference organised and hosted by Northumbria University.

Human Trafficking: Criminal Law and Evidence explored the use of forensic science in identifying perpetrators and victims of modern-day slavery crimes. The event, organised by Dr Nicola Wake and Professors Tony Ward and Martin Evison from Northumbria, considered existing and potential safeguards and how forensics could be used to assist the police and other front-line responders in the fight against human trafficking.

Academics were joined by renowned experts including Philippa Southwell, a leading lawyer defending victims of trafficking at all levels of the criminal justice system, Pam Bowen, Operations Director of the Crown Prosecution Service and top prosecuting Barrister Caroline Haughey QC.

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Commenting on the conference, Dr Wake said: “This was a highly informative and insightful conference with leading experts from both professional and academic backgrounds. During the day we were able to explore criminal law, human rights, and socio-legal issues connected to the use of forensic science in human trafficking. We debated current methods used in the identification of perpetrators and victims of human trafficking and modern-day slavery. It was also an opportunity to identify current gaps and the considerable challenges these will pose.”

Philippa Southwell, Head of the Human Trafficking and modern slavery department at Birds Solicitors, and Managing Director of the Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery Expert Directory, added: “Seminars such as this are extremely important because they bring together academics and practitioners within the modern slavery sector. Without these conversations we can’t look at the areas where we can improve, or discuss the research needed to advance change.”

Northumbria was able to attract funding for the conference from the [Modern Law Review](#), which is seen as recognition of the University’s research quality and the significance of signature research areas, such as, the Northumbria

Centre for Evidence and Criminal Justice Studies ([NCECJS](#)), and [Science and Justice Research Interest Group](#).

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