

COLLECTIVE THINKING

TASC Diaries

APRIL 2026

TASC JOINS
INTERPOL'S
GLOBAL
EXPERTS
GROUP

THE
ANTI-SLAVERY
COLLECTIVE

Fake Fashion: A Human Rights Scandal

How counterfeit fashion intersects with
organised crime & labour exploitation

THE
ANTI-SLAVERY
COLLECTIVE

From our CEO



Fake fashion doesn't harm anyone. It's not a serious crime. Everyone does it. I can't afford the real thing - does it really matter? These are common refrains we hear about fake fashion.

The demand for fakes has never been higher, but do people really know what they're getting when they buy a fake? It all seems so easy, so harmless, but the people making and selling fakes are criminals. And the profits they are generating are enormous.

Fake trainers, football shirts and handbags are cheap because someone along the way paid the price. Working alongside experts from the police, law enforcement, trading standards, Intellectual Property professionals, and brands, we found a problem that is growing at an alarming scale.

The counterfeit market in the UK is worth £9 billion. For organised crime groups, counterfeiting is more than twice as lucrative as the drug trade. In the UK, £2.55 billion is lost in tax revenue every year, which could fund 47,000 new police officers or 51,000 nurses.

Fake fashion directly contributes to organised crime and human exploitation. When you buy a fake at a local market, you are inviting organised crime groups onto your high street. Even more dangerous, when you buy a fake online, you're giving your credit card details and address to criminal gangs.

We were delighted that Sky News picked up this important story and made a new short film about the scale of the counterfeiting industry which was picked up for a live lunchtime news broadcast. I was also invited to join veteran broadcaster Niall Paterson on his This is Why podcast to talk about the reality of fakes.

Conversations like this matter. It's so easy to brush off fakes as being harmless - in fact the organised criminals who made these products are relying on that. Our report calls for a more coordinated response across governments, law enforcement, businesses and civil society, and for counterfeit fashion to be recognised for what it truly is: a serious form of organised crime, inextricably linked to forced labour and exploitation.

Sarah Woodcock

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Policy Roundtable

In partnership with ACG (the UK's leading anti-counterfeiting umbrella organisation representing 3000+ businesses) TASC co-hosted a high level roundtable in London in January.

The event brought together senior enforcement and policy leaders from key government bodies including the City of London Police, Intellectual Property Office, and Trading Standards.

The roundtable objective was to review existing legislation and its ability to effectively tackle counterfeiting (touching on the proven links to serious organised crime and forced labour and considering evolving consumer behaviour etc.) and to identify ways to strengthen enforcement capabilities and impact.



TASC Diaries

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January New Research

TASC was proud to contribute as a technical expert to a new OECD & EUIPO report - *From Fakes to Forced Labour* - launched in January. For the first time, this report makes an empirical connection between counterfeiting and forced labour.



Illicit Trade

From Fakes to Forced Labour

Evidence of Correlation Between Illicit Trade in Counterfeits and Labour Exploitation



February What is Fair Work?



TASC launched a workshop series, 'What is Fair Work?', in partnership with ECPAT UK, as part of our Fair Work Futures education programme. Workshops have been delivered to boys and young men with lived experience of forced labour and exploitation (ages 18-22). Each participatory workshop focuses on a core area of work rights, combining factual guidance with case studies to build attendees' knowledge, confidence and situational awareness on accessing fair work in the UK.

March Home Affairs Inquiry

TASC submitted written evidence to the Home Affairs Committee on the impact of serious and organised crime on local neighbourhoods. We made the case that counterfeiting needs to be taken seriously as a form of serious crime that drives forced labour and exploitation and poses a significant threat to UK high streets.



March

OECD Illicit Trade Forum

TASC was invited to present our research with senior economists from the OECD and EUIPO.



March

Lesson Plan Series

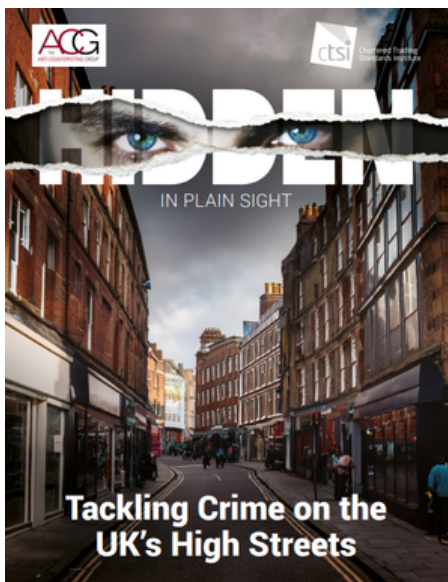
Over the last 8 months TASC, as part of our Fair Work Futures education programme, has been collaborating with behavioural science agency Social Change Ltd to develop new educational resources on labour abuse and exploitation. An extensive participatory research project, including focus group discussions with young people and teachers, has now concluded. Social Change has written a report outlining the attitudes and knowledge of young people in the UK on labour exploitation. Alongside this, a lesson plan series has been developed and is ready for piloting with our education partners in the summer term.

March

Home Affairs Select Committee

After submitting written evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, we were extremely proud that The Anti-Slavery Collective was called as one of two key witnesses in their first inquiry. Dame Karen Bradley MP, chaired a parliamentary Select Committee on "The Impact of Serious and Organised Crime on Local Neighbourhoods".

Home Affairs Committee
Monday 20 April 2026 Meeting started at 4.35pm



April

Trading Standards Report

TASC has contributed as a key expert to a new report from the Chartered Trading Standard Institute and Anti-Counterfeiting Group; 'Hidden in Plain Sight: Tackling crime on the UK's high streets'. The report outlines the link between counterfeiting and serious and organised crime on UK high streets. TASC was able to speak to a growing body of evidence on fakes and forced labour.

Media Coverage

Our counterfeiting work was picked up organically by a Sky News investigative team who worked for 8 weeks on the story with TASC's support.



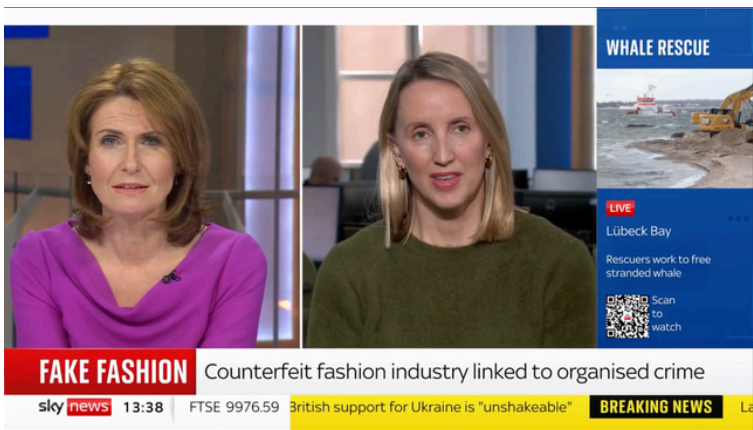
Investigative film

The Sky team developed a 16 minute short film featuring our CEO, TASC's technical advisor Mike Ellis (a former Director at Interpol), and footage from a raid in Wolverhampton where indicators of forced labour were observed.



This is Why - Podcast

Niall Paterson who hosts the This is Why Sky podcast invited our CEO onto his show to discuss this overlooked story.



Live news segment

The story was also picked up for a Sky news lunchtime broadcast featuring a live interview with our CEO.



ANNOUNCEMENT

TASC invited to join INTERPOL's global Human Trafficking Expert Group



INTERPOL

TASC is very proud to announce that it has been invited to join INTERPOL's global Human Trafficking Expert Group, strengthening its commitment to tackling forced labour and human trafficking.

The group convenes leading organisations including the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Women and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), forming a powerful network of expertise, intelligence and collaboration.

As the only organisation connecting police forces across 194 countries, Interpol plays a unique role in enabling coordinated operations, intelligence-sharing and targeted interventions against trafficking networks.

Engagement with INTERPOL will strengthen TASC's ability to translate research and advocacy into tangible enforcement outcomes, helping to bridge the gap between awareness and action. It will be an opportunity for TASC to share insights on forced labour and patterns of exploitation in fake fashion and illicit trade.

Through this collaboration, TASC will support global efforts to combat trafficking and forced labour, while continuing to advocate for greater accountability across industries where exploitation often goes unseen.



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