

# Combating Human Trafficking

## Case Study Five

**Victim:** Osama, 35- year old Bangladeshi male in the UK

**Type of Trafficking:** bonded labour



### Osama's Story:

I thought things were really looking up for me when I heard from a good friend that a businessman he knew in Scotland was looking for men to work for him in his Highlands hotel. The wages I was earning in Bangladesh hardly covered day-to-day living costs so this promise of a new start in life in the beautiful Highlands of Scotland was so attractive to me and my family. The hotel owner requested a deposit of £18,000 in exchange for a job as a chef and a good salary. I managed to take out a loan from a local money lender and to scrimp and save what I could from my wages. My wife even sold her jewellery and her family lent me some of the savings they had accrued. With my deposit in hand and enough money for a flight to Scotland, I left Bangladesh excited for my future and dreaming of one day building up my own business just like the hotel owner I was to work for.

I was forced to work really long hours at the Stewart Hotel – sometimes starting at 5am and not finishing until after midnight- and on tasks not just as a chef. In the first month of being in Scotland, as well as working in the kitchen I had to paint the hotel, clean some of the bedrooms and I even spent two days cutting and moving logs in the hotel grounds when it was below freezing outside. Arefin barely paid me – sometimes not at all, and I had to live in a broken caravan with four or five other men. There was no water or heating and it was damp as the window was broken. I was terrified working for him. He was like a master and we were like the slaves. He had a terrible temper and would throw plates. Once, when someone was a few minutes late, he threw a pot of hot oil on the floor at our feet. He had control over us. He said he would send us back to Bangladesh. He has important relatives and I was very scared what would happen if we were sent back.

My meagre salary left me struggling to clear my debt at home (a burden that continues even today). The people that I had loaned money from in Bangladesh even threatened to remove one of my kidneys to sell it for cash as a repayment. The whole experience has left me so emotionally scarred, I missed my family so badly all the time I was in Scotland and I feel that I have let them down so badly. I was on anti-depressants and now I have counselling. I don't know if I'll ever get back to normal.