

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

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Human Trafficking

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee's Scrutiny on Human Trafficking

The Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA) was set up in 2005 following the Morecambe Bay disaster in and the subsequent passing of the Gangmasters (Licensing) Act in 2004.

The Act required the GLA to implement a licensing regime for businesses and individuals who supply workers, either permanent or temporary workers, into the agricultural, forestry, horticultural and shellfish gathering industries. This included the packing and processing of agricultural produce. The Act applies to the provision of workers into these sectors throughout and into the UK.

Any business or individual who supplies workers to those sectors requires a GLA Licence. Supply of workers to those sectors without holding a GLA Licence is an offence against s12 of the Act, entering into an arrangement for the supply of workers with an unlicensed gangmaster (also referred to as a labour provider) is an offence against s13.

The first licences were issued from April 2006 and since that date there have been between 1100 and 1200 licences in issue at any given time. There are currently 22 licence holders based in Wales. 221 licence holders have stated that they supply into Wales, although this is not verified by the GLA.

Licence holders are required to be, and remain, compliant with the Licensing Standards introduced by the GLA, failure to comply with the standards can lead to revocation of a licence. The Standards cover a number of areas ranging from the payment of wages, statutory deductions, treatment of workers, provision of accommodation, working hours, the right to work, health and safety and contracts.

To support the regulatory requirements set by the Act the GLA has a number of Compliance and Enforcement Officers. These officers conduct inspection of businesses to assess whether it is being operated in a manner which is compliant. Officers are also required to investigate offences created by the Act. The GLA currently has 33 Compliance/Enforcement Officers. They are based at home and throughout the UK. There are currently no officers based in Wales but a number are based in close proximity.

Although the Act applies to the provision of workers, regardless of nationality, a significant proportion of workers are migrant workers.

In May 2012 the Government Minister with responsibility for the GLA stated that the GLA should target areas of non compliance. The Ministerial Statement referred to a number of key areas including:

- Target serious and organised crime working closely with SOCA and other law enforcement agencies
- Ensure that our evidence of worker exploitation contributes effectively to prosecution of organised crime and those engaged in human trafficking
- Reduce the burden on compliant labour providers and labour uses and focus on gross abuse of workers

The GLA has the Strategic Aim of “Working in Partnership to Prevent the Exploitation of Vulnerable and Exploited Workers”.

The GLA has seen an increase in the number of cases of Human Trafficking and Forced Labour within the regulated sector. This requires working alongside the Police, National Crime Agency and other partners, including the voluntary sector, to identify and tackle the gross exploitation of workers. These have included multi agency operations in Wales.

In 2012 the GLA joined the Wales Anti Trafficking Leadership Group. The GLA sits on the Joint Investigation Team Development Board and also attends a number of local and regional meetings to promote the work of the Leadership Group in order to develop and forge links with partner agencies.

The GLA has contributed to the development of the Delivery Plan and subsequently training plans for frontline officers working within the agencies represented within the Leadership Group. This piece of work is ongoing and includes contributing to the training for Senior Investigation Officers within Wales Police.

Through a programme of intelligence development with partner agencies the GLA will continue to work alongside partners in Wales to meet the strategic aim.

Mark Heath
Head of Business Change and Development
Gangmasters Licensing Authority

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