

## **Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee Scrutiny Committee Inquiry into Human Trafficking**

### **Supporting Evidence of Lesley Griffiths, AM, Minister for Local Government and Government Business**

#### **1. The Welsh Government's strategic direction in relation to human trafficking**

1.1 As the Minister for Local Government and Government Business, my aim is to deliver our Programme for Government commitment to make Wales a hostile place to slavery and to co-ordinate the best possible support for survivors of this heinous crime. In doing so, we will make our communities safer.

1.2 Tackling slavery requires a strategic co-ordinated approach, cutting across the boundaries of the four Governments in the UK. Our response in Wales has been bolstered by the appointment of an Anti-Slavery Co-ordinator.

1.3 The Welsh Government is the only Government within the UK to appoint an Anti-Slavery Coordinator. The post was a commitment in the Welsh Government's Programme for Government and has been in existence since 4 April 2011. Stephen Chapman is the second Co-ordinator and took up post in November 2012.

1.4 From a strategic position, I am a member of the UK's Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Modern Slavery. The Group is chaired by the Home Office Minister for Modern Slavery and Organised Crime and comprises Ministers from other Whitehall Government Departments, the Wales Office, the Scotland Office, the Welsh Government, the Scottish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive. This Group has oversight of the UK's efforts to combat slavery.

1.6 On 17 October 2013, I attended an Extraordinary Meeting of the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Modern Slavery at 10 Downing Street chaired by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister set out the UK Government's plans for a Modern Slavery Bill proposed to be introduced in May 2014. The proposed contents of the Bill include:

- Consolidation of existing legislation
- Introduction of an Anti-Slavery Commissioner
- Introduction of trafficking prevention orders
- Increasing Police powers to board, intervene and instruct vessels on the high seas

Other non-legislative considerations to strengthen the UK commitment to tackling slavery include:

- Transparency in company supply chains
- Using assets confiscated from traffickers to support anti-human trafficking activities
- Overhaul the Anti-Slavery governance by looking at the feasibility of introducing a network of regional co-ordinators to support the Commissioner
- Setting up a virtual task force to support local and regional anti-human trafficking operations

1.7 The Welsh Government is working with the UK Government on the introduction of these proposed new measures, building on the work we have already achieved in Wales.

1.8 Within Wales, the Welsh Government also works closely with all four Welsh Police Forces, the National Crime Agency and other law enforcement agencies. I regularly meet the Welsh Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners and, at my most recent meetings with them, I asked them to prioritise their anti-slavery operations.

1.9 Also of note, is our liaison with the England and Wales Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Strategic Lead for Migration Crime and Related Matters, Shaun Sawyer, the Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall Police, and with Jeff Farrar, Chief Constable of Gwent Police, who leads in Wales to ensure all four Welsh Police Forces work in collaboration in addressing slavery.

1.10 To raise awareness of slavery and engage more Police activity in tackling the crime, in March 2013 ACPO launched 'Operation Eagle', an ongoing initiative to improve the response to tackling slavery trafficking and organised immigration crime. The objective of this operation is to raise awareness, increase the amount of information received and improve co-ordination and operational activities of all Police Forces across England and Wales. All four Welsh Police Forces are engaged in preventative, pro-active anti-slavery operations. Strategic and Single Points of Contact in all Police Forces have been identified to take a lead to improve the Police response to slavery. On my behalf the Anti-Slavery Coordinator is working closely with these Single Points of Contact to ensure good practice is being shared.

1.11 In response to the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings Report '*Concerning the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings by the United Kingdom 2012*' we have worked with partners to introduce and build on the recommendations.

1.12 In January 2014, I issued a Written Statement to Assembly Members to highlight the Annual Report of the Welsh Government's Anti-Slavery Coordinator. The report details the considerable work delivered in Wales to date and I have provided a copy to this Committee.

1.13 In my Written Statement, I also noted the change in the terminology we use in this area to ensure the work we undertake is fully understood by the public and our partners. The Anti-Human Trafficking Coordinator is now known as the Anti-Slavery Coordinator, victims of modern slavery as survivors and those who traffic are

referred to, quite simply, as criminals. These terms will become widely accepted and recognised as a result of the forthcoming Modern Slavery Bill and are already being used to some extent by the media. I believe they are more meaningful and give people a clearer understanding of the issue. In particular, this will clearly differentiate between people smuggling and asylum seekers where there is often confusion around these terms.

## **2. The position, remit and capacity of the Anti Slavery Co-ordinator**

2.1 Since being appointed, the current Anti-Slavery Coordinator has formed strong links with a wide range of individuals and organisations, from both statutory and non-statutory devolved organisations and Non Governmental Organisations across the UK, to raise awareness and co-ordinate joined up activities to tackle slavery in Wales. This includes meeting regularly with Officials from the Home Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Justice, the Scottish Government, Northern Ireland Executive and other UK partners to discuss and share good practice.

2.2 A Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group has been established to provide strategic leadership. A Delivery Plan has been developed to support the Welsh Government's commitment to tackle slavery. I have chaired the Leadership Group, which consists of senior representation from devolved and non-devolved partners and Non Government Organisations. This is the only such group in the UK. Again, Wales is leading the way.

2.3 The Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group Delivery Plan has developed the following strategic objectives in order to direct their work:

- Build an evidence base using primary and secondary data sets to better inform the Leadership Group on the scale of slavery in Wales
- Scope a Training Needs Analysis to ensure future training is consistent across Wales
- Develop Intelligence/Information sharing protocols
- Develop a Communications Engagement Plan
- Develop a Survivor Care Pathway for Wales

2.4 To underpin delivery of the Delivery Plan Strategic Objectives and building on the success of the Gwent Consultation Group on Anti-Slavery, Anti-Slavery Fora have been established for Cardiff, South Wales and Western Bay. The purpose of these Fora is to share good practice on information/intelligence and deliver local initiatives. Anti-Slavery Fora are currently being developed for North Wales and the Dyfed-Powys areas.

2.5 In the first annual report by the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group presented to Parliament in 2012, it was pointed out both data capture and intelligence sharing were key areas for improvement and future work in order to understand the level of slavery in the UK. As stated earlier, I am a member of this Group. The Group has oversight of the UK approach to tackling slavery. This includes the UK Government's Human Trafficking Strategy and the UK's compliance with EU and international requirements. My Anti-Slavery Coordinator has also been co-opted onto the Home

Office Joint Strategy Group's 'Task and Finish Data Group' which is developing the evidence base for the UK.

2.6 As set out in para 2.3 above, the need for a robust evidence base has been recognised and prioritised in Wales. The current figure of 50 referrals recorded in 2013 by the UK Human Trafficking Centre National Referral Mechanism (NRM) data is thought to significantly underestimate the scale of the problem in Wales. However, the 2013 data represents a 47% increase from 34 referrals in 2012 which is likely to be attributed to better awareness raising and the Police becoming more pro-active in their investigations into slavery.

2.7 In March 2013, my Anti-Slavery the Coordinator made a case and secured agreement from the Home Office's NRM Review Group, for the Welsh Non Government Organisations, Bawso and New Pathways, to be recognised as First Responder organisations. The intention is by giving this role to two Non Government Organisations, survivors of slavery will have the confidence to refer themselves to the NRM.

2.8 As well as providing these survivors with support secured through the NRM process, the data obtained from these cases will provide intelligence which may be used to bring the criminals to justice and also assist in building the evidence base. Of the 50 NRM reported cases in 2013, Bawso referred nine cases and New Pathways two cases. Considering both organisations did not begin to make referrals until April 2013, it is clear they have had an early and notable impact. Their involvement has surely contributed to giving survivors the confidence to refer themselves into the NRM process and their ongoing support will be vital.

2.9 Slavery, is seen by many to be a 'hidden crime'. The numbers of cases referred to the NRM process and the Criminal Justice System are the only primary data sets in use in the UK. Building an evidence base on the scale of slavery trafficking in Wales is one of the strategic objectives of the Leadership Group. The Anti-Slavery Coordinator is working with partners to produce primary and secondary data sets to better inform the level of slavery in Wales.

2.10 The Anti-Slavery Coordinator represents the Welsh Government on a range of UK Government Groups, the UK Threat Reduction Board, the UK Human Trafficking Strategy Board, the Home Office Joint Strategy Group (Non Government Organisations), Home Office NRM Oversight Review Group and the Home Office Child Trafficking Information Sharing Forum.

2.11 The Police have recognised cases of slavery are complex to investigate and the Anti-Slavery Coordinator has worked with the Police, the Crown Prosecution Service and other partner organisations to develop a training programme for Senior Investigating Officers (SIOs). The two-day programme, which is delivered from the 'Hydra Centre' at South Wales Police HQ, is being rolled out to SIOs, initially in South Wales Police, and then across the other three Forces in Wales. The first course was attended by 12 candidates. The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has recognised the training programme to be good practice and will be made available for cascading across the UK.

2.12 The Anti-Slavery Coordinator is also working with colleagues on an initiative, led by the Crown Prosecution Service, on the introduction of Joint Investigation Teams for cases of slavery. Other partners include the National Crime Agency, Police, Home Office Immigration, Department of Work and Pensions, Gang Masters Licensing Authority, Bawso and New Pathways. The aim is to direct the investigation of cases by ensuring early engagement with the Crown Prosecution Service. The benefits also include identifying opportunities for confiscation of assets under the Proceeds of Crime Act, witness support and protection and sharing good practice.

2.13 In December 2013, the Cardiff Anti-Slavery Forum piloted their first Anti-Slavery Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and, following positive feedback, this process is being used for all future cases involving potential victims of slavery in the Cardiff area. The MARAC is led by Bawso and involves a number of multi agency partners. This good practice will be cascaded across Wales.

### **3. Local Authorities' role in identifying human trafficking**

3.1 Local Authorities on a daily basis have a significant leadership role to play in their communities in respect of slavery and in many instances are best placed to identify the signs of slavery where they are taking place. Our training awareness programme is being rolled out across Wales and this will equip frontline practitioners with the understanding and the confidence to deal and report incidents of slavery.

3.2 At a strategic level, the Chief Executive of Denbighshire County Council, Mohammed Mehmet, is the Public Services Leadership Group (PSLG) lead on Anti-Slavery. Mr Mehmet is promoting the work underway on Anglesey to Chief Executives of the North Wales Local Authorities and this will be cascaded to his fellow Chief Executives across Wales. This 'Champion' role includes reinforcing the awareness of the 2009 SOLACE report *'The role of Local Authorities in addressing human trafficking'* to the other Chief Executives of Welsh Local Authorities.

3.3 Mr Mehmet supported the Chief Executive of Anglesey County Council, Mr Richard Parry-Jones, on a successful bid to the Welsh Government Regional Collaboration Fund, to fund a North Wales Regional Anti-Slavery Coordinator. The North Wales Coordinator, Jim Coy, was appointed in November 2013. I would like to see Regional Anti-Slavery Coordinators being appointed across Wales, through partnerships between Local Authorities, the Police and other stakeholders. Utilising the Proceeds of Crime Act to fund these posts or using the profits made through slavery, seems only right and just.

3.4 The Anti-Slavery Coordinator, in collaboration with the Welsh Government Community Cohesion Coordinators based in the 22 Welsh Local Authorities is delivering training to raise awareness of slavery, explain how to report incidents and how to refer survivors to the UK Human Trafficking Centre using the National Referral Mechanism. This training is being delivered to frontline practitioners from Social Services, Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults, Trading Standards, Environmental Health and other key frontline Departments. I am contributing £50,000 per annum for the next two years (2014-15 and 2015-16) to the overall

funding of the 9 Community Cohesion Co-ordinator posts to take forward work to support tackling slavery and honour based violence in Wales.

#### **4. Awareness raising**

4.1 It is currently estimated 21 million people across the world are held in slavery and it is the world's fastest growing criminal industry valued at £45 billion.

4.2 Slavery is often described as a 'hidden crime' and there is a widely held perception it does not take place here in Wales. However, we know slavery is happening here - in our cities, towns and rural areas. I have met survivors in Wales and I have listened to their horrific experiences and heard of their suffering.

4.3 Raising awareness is one of the priorities of the Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group Delivery Plan. The strategic objectives include initiatives ranging from public awareness campaigns to specific training for our frontline practitioners and professionals. Our current priorities include:

- Last month our successful national TV Advertising Campaign on ITV Wales, S4C and ON Demand. This is a UK first and interest has been shown by other Administrations in taking forward such significant campaigns
- National poster campaign on buses and bus shelters. The posters are also being displayed in Police stations and other public places
- The Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group have produced an awareness raising DVD which has been widely circulated and is on the Welsh Government website
- A half day "Introduction to Anti-Slavery" Course and full day "Anti-Slavery Practitioner" training being delivered across Wales. This training is one of the Leadership Groups Strategic Objectives and is being delivered by our partner organisations across Wales
- A two day "Senior Investigating Officer" training programme – another UK first which is intended will roll out to all UK Police Forces
- Anti-Slavery conferences and seminars – including marking Anti-Slavery Day (18<sup>th</sup> October)
- We are working with Swansea University to introduce a postgraduate training course and to have our training courses accredited
- I have given various TV, radio, newspaper interviews. The Anti-Slavery Co-ordinator also regularly engages with the media on my behalf to raise awareness
- The Welsh Government's Anti-Slavery webpage has been reviewed and updated and is now a source of vital information for practitioners, professionals, academics and the public
- As you will know, on Tuesday evening I hosted an awareness raising event at Ty Hywel for Cabinet Members, Assembly Members, Chief Constables, Crime and Police Commissioners, members of the Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group and other invited guests. The event centred on a production of the play "SOLD" which the Welsh Government has funded to produce the version

performed. I have also approved funding for a DVD of the play which will be used for awareness raising purposes.

- I will be visiting Cardiff Airport on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> April to see the security arrangements in place for tackling slavery and meeting frontline staff from the Airport Management, Police, UK Border Force and carriers who are engaged in this work. I will also be meeting frontline staff who will be attending an anti-slavery training awareness course being held at the Airport.

## **5. Funding for victim support services**

5.1 Funding for victim support services is provided by the Ministry of Justice. The Salvation Army are contracted to provide the service for Wales and England.

5.2 In Wales, the Salvation Army has sub-contracted Bawso to provide such services. Bawso have regional offices throughout Wales and, being an NRM First Responder organisation has experience in providing support to survivors.

5.3 It should be noted to access this support, survivors have to voluntarily refer themselves and be accepted into the NRM process. Survivors are then entitled to a minimum recovery and reflection period of 45 day which includes:

- Finding temporary safe accommodation
- Medical treatment
- Counselling
- Interpretation to assist communicating in English
- Protection – assisting with the criminal investigation may require witness protection and ongoing support until the criminal case is resolved
- Providing legal advice
- Assistance to return to home country
- Non British or European Economic Area Nations will not be removed during the 45 days and, if identified to be a survivor, may be considered for a temporary residence permit
- If the survivor is not British or from the European Economic Area and they do not have a right to remain in the UK, then assisted return to their home country, if safe to do so, will be provided

5.5 If the survivor's situation is not resolved after 45 days they are then referred to the relevant Local Authority for continuing support.

5.6 The Welsh Government have been funding Bawso's 'Diogel Project' in North Wales since 2010, which provides safe accommodation and support to survivors of slavery. More recently the project has been expanded to support more women in North Wales and South East Wales. The project now provides 13 units of secure accommodation and 20 outreach units across Wales. In addition to funding the start up costs of the project including capital funding of £164,484 for the purchase of the building, ongoing revenue funding of £74,000 is provided.

