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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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Christine Chapman AM
Chair - Communities, Equality and Local Government
Committee
Cardiff, CF99 1NA

25 July 2014

Dear Chair,

Human Trafficking in Wales

Thank you for your letter of 26 June requesting a response to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee's Report on Human Trafficking. Below is my response to the matters which arose from the Committee's evidence sessions.

1. Awareness and evidence

The Anti-Slavery Coordinator for Wales already works with the four Welsh Police forces and the respective Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs).

Examples of this close working include working with the Police to develop a specific three day training course for Senior Investigating Officers to give them the skills and confidence to investigate complex slavery cases. In addition, the Police Single Points of Contact in each Welsh Force have been included on the regional fora, where they are able to work together, to set up intelligence/information protocols and share good practice from recent operational activity.

I was, therefore, very disappointed with the comment made by the PCC for Dyfed Powys, saying he had not heard of the Anti-Slavery Coordinator. Whilst he had been unable to meet the Coordinator, at that time, I can confirm the role was discussed at a number of my regular meetings with the PCCs and their support was sought to work with the Coordinator to address slavery in their areas. I am pleased Mr Salmon was able to arrange to meet Steve Chapman in March. However, it is important to note prior to this there had been extensive contact between the Coordinator and

senior officers from Dyfed Powys Police, including presentations and the delivery of training, as well as direct assistance in establishing the Dyfed Powys Anti-Slavery fora.

In terms of Local Authority engagement, you are aware the Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group includes the Chief Executive of Denbighshire County Council, who is also the lead on anti-slavery for the Public Services Leadership Group. In addition, a Director of the Welsh Local Government Association also sits on the Group. They are actively engaged in driving forward the anti-slavery agenda and engaging with Local Authorities at Chief Executive and Cabinet levels. Local Authorities are also engaged with and are represented on all the regional anti-slavery fora established across Wales.

At its latest meeting in July, the Effective Services for Vulnerable Groups (ESVG) Delivery Board agreed to explore ways in which they can drive forward the Local Authority response to tackling slavery in Wales and the Coordinator will attend their next meeting in September to discuss this further.

I note your suggestion for each Local Authority to have a lead responsible officer for anti-slavery at Cabinet level and will bear this in mind as we develop the agenda further.

We have already engaged with health and education, providing structured awareness raising training for relevant staff. For the health sector, this includes training for frontline professionals, including community midwives, health visitors and staff working in Accident and Emergency Departments. Plans are also in hand to explore providing this training to student doctors and nurses as part of their first year course at Cardiff University. With regards to education, awareness training is being delivered to teachers in schools who have responsibility for safeguarding, to enable them to cascade the training to other members of staff and school governors. Training is also being delivered in schools to students through the All Wales Police School Liaison Programme.

Building these professional multi-agency relationships across Wales, takes time, however, we have ensured this has been a priority and, I believe, has been achieved quickly and effectively. The framework we have now put in place, whilst still evolving, has moved us into a strong position going forward. This is evidenced by the recent 'high profile' cases which our partners are responding to and the attention we are attracting from the rest of the UK to share our good practice.

Publicity campaign

The effectiveness of the Welsh Government's anti-slavery publicity campaign is being monitored by collating the numbers of incidents reported to the Police and other partners, the number of operations and criminals brought to justice and the referrals to the National Referral Mechanism. The Police reported increased intelligence reports during and following the campaign and there were 1,684 recorded 'hits' on the Welsh Government Anti-Slavery web-page over February in which the campaign ran.

The Home Office has acknowledged the success of our anti-slavery publicity campaign, which was the first to be run by any of the UK Governments. The Home Office plan to run a comprehensive awareness raising campaign starting in late July. The campaign will include a TV advertisement to be broadcast across the UK, including Wales.

As the provision of initial NRM support is the responsibility of the Home Office, and in view of their own extensive campaign, it is for the UK Government to respond to any possible increase in referrals which may result from such activity. The Coordinator is in regular contact with Home Office officials and will feedback any notable impact in Wales on First Responders.

Evidence base

Whilst I fully agree a stronger evidence base is crucial in order to target resources where they are most needed, this is not an issue specific to Wales. The Home Secretary herself recognised this issue at the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Slavery I attended in May. We must be realistic in our expectations of securing robust data in this area as slavery is a hidden and under-reported crime.

However, as my evidence to the Committee made clear, I have made improving the evidence base on the scale of slavery trafficking in Wales one of the strategic objectives of the Wales Anti-Slavery 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. NRM secondary data is now being collected from Bawso and New Pathways. A process is being put in place to collect this data from Local Authorities and other First Responder organisations. An example of the secondary data is for the first three months of 2014, New Pathways report having dealt with 11 adult women who clearly had been trafficked but did not wish to voluntarily refer themselves to the NRM process. We are also looking to incorporate data on intelligence/information and the number of people trained through our awareness raising and training courses.

I will be publishing the available secondary data for 2014-2015 in the Anti-Slavery Coordinators Annual Report for 2014. I trust this will reflect a better understanding of slavery in Wales and also assist in raising awareness.

2. The Wales Anti-Slavery Coordinator

The successes to date in this field, have been achieved with a relatively limited budget. I do not agree with the WLGA's suggestion this may have precluded progress. In fact, I would point to these very successes as evidence a large budget is not always required to make very real progress. The commitment and enthusiasm shown by all our partners in engaging in this agenda and the leadership shown by the Welsh Government is what underpins these achievements.

I am committed to the ongoing work required to tackle slavery and support victims in Wales. Where responsibility falls to the Welsh Government, my intention is to retain current resources which include the funding for the Coordinator.

To support the Anti-Slavery Coordinator I have funded the appointment of an Anti-Slavery Officer and, through the Regional Collaboration Fund, a 'Pathfinder' role of a Regional Anti-Slavery Coordinator based in North Wales. Both posts were filled in November 2013.

Since April, I have made a contribution of £50,000 per year for the next two years towards the overall funding of the Welsh Government Community Cohesion Coordinators to ensure awareness raising and tackling slavery is also part of their role. These Coordinators are out based in Local Authorities and part of their role will be to report any secondary data sets which will assist in building the evidence base.

The UK Government's Modern Slavery Bill

The Home Office is very aware of the pioneering role of the Welsh Government's Anti-Slavery Coordinator and the need for a working protocol to be in place with their own Anti-Slavery Commissioner when the role is established. However, the Bill is unlikely to become a statute before April 2015 and it is not envisaged the Commissioner will be in place until the Autumn of 2015.

The Home Secretary has written to me about the provisions of the Modern Slavery Bill and, in particular, acknowledged the need for the Anti-Slavery Commissioner to ensure effective working with the Welsh Government. Our ongoing liaison with the Home Office will, therefore, continue. Agreement on a working protocol will be a priority over the next few months. I will inform the Committee of progress on this.

We are liaising with our international agencies to adopt good practice. I recently met UNICEF to discuss working with them to tackle child exploitation. I plan to visit Brussels in the future to meet with the European Union Human Trafficking Commissioner and Coordinator to explore joint initiatives and any funding opportunities. Our engagement with international agencies will continue regardless of the introduction of the UK's Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

I will also be exploring any funding opportunities which may arise from the Modern Slavery Bill, however, as this is still at an early stage, I am awaiting any further announcements from the Home Office.

At this point in time, I am content there is no requirement to make the Anti-Slavery Coordinators role statutory.

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

The Home Office's Modern Slavery Team is currently reviewing the NRM process and is to report the findings to the Home Secretary in October. All Devolved Governments and First Responder organisations are being consulted during the review which is considering:

- identification of victims;
- access to support services provided by the Home Office;
- data;
- decision making – by the Competent Authorities, which are the UK Human Trafficking Centre and Home Office Visas and Immigration;
- level of support currently being provided; and
- governance of the NRM process.

The NRM Review Team visited Wales on 9 and 10 July to meet partner organisations from devolved, non-devolved organisations and NGOs in Wales, and to take their views into account, particularly the concerns about voluntary referrals and under-reporting. Also, importantly, one of the provisions in the Modern Slavery Bill is to make it a statutory duty for public bodies to report survivors of slavery. This will undoubtedly impact on the number of referrals being made.

The Anti-Slavery Coordinator is a member of the Home Office NRM Oversight Review Group. The purpose of this group is being reviewed by the NRM Review Team and its role is to be clearly defined for the future in operating the governance of the NRM process.

Training for our First Responder organisations on the NRM process, is included in the Anti-Slavery for Frontline Professionals/Practitioners 1 day course which is being delivered across Wales. This a first for Wales and the UK. From this awareness training, it is anticipated more victims will be identified and our First Responders will have the skills and confidence to make referrals. I will be happy to update the Committee on the training programme in the Coordinator's report which will be published by the end of the year.

3. The Welsh Government's Gender based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill

Whilst the Gender based Violence, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill is not specifically aimed at tackling slavery, some aspects of slavery would be captured by the Bill:

Sexual violence under the Bill includes sexual exploitation which is defined by reference to offences under Part 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and would include trafficking people for sexual exploitation.

Awareness raising and training to tackle slavery will be delivered, outside of this Bill, in line with the National Training Framework.

Clearly the provisions within the Modern Slavery Bill are intended to make significant in-roads into tackling the crime of slavery and, equally importantly, ensuring support to victims. The Bill will apply to England and Wales.

4. Victim support

To bring about geographical consistency, Regional Anti-Slavery fora have now been established, giving comprehensive cover across Wales. The Regional Fora have been set up to be flexible and to be able to respond to local issues. They are now operating in

Cardiff
Dyfed Powys
Gwent
Western Bay
North Wales

These fora are multi-agency and foster information sharing with their member organisations including local authorities. Some of the successes of the Regional Fora to date include developing the Survivor Care Pathway, introduction of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs), and the Sex Worker Projects being set up in Cardiff and Swansea.

I have also established the Wales Anti-Slavery Operational Delivery Group, which brings together the Chairs of the Regional Fora, to coordinate activities and ensure consistency across Wales.

Accommodation

Provision of safe accommodation for NRM survivors is the responsibility of the Home Office. It is contracted to The Salvation Army for delivery in England and Wales, with Bawso being sub-contracted to provide accommodation for females in Wales. The Home Office are reviewing the accommodation arrangements for survivors of slavery within the NRM process and are due to report later this year. I will await the outcome of the NRM Review before considering whether there is a case to be made to the Home Office on the need for separate male provision in Wales. Whilst I recognise funding has been provided to the Diogel project in north Wales, this should not be considered to set any precedent for future funding decisions.

Children and Young People

The provisions of the Modern Slavery Bill include creating Child Trafficking Advocates, in Wales and England, similar to the Guardian Scheme which is currently in operation in Scotland.

The Home Office will be introducing a trial of the child advocates scheme, due to commence in the summer 2014 and will report mid 2015. The learning from the trial will then be used when the scheme is introduced and cascaded across Wales and England.

To tackle child exploitation in Wales, the Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group has introduced a new Strategic Objective in the Delivery Plan to address this issue. This objective is being led by our partner organisation Barnardos Cymru.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lesley Griffiths". The signature is written in a light grey or blue ink on a white background.

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM

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