

Minutes of Cross Party Group on Human Trafficking

Meeting – 2nd February 2016 – 12:30-13:15

Dining Room 1, Ty Hywel, Cardiff Bay

Attendees

Joyce Watson AM (JW)

Nitesh Patel (NP) – Communications Officer, Joyce Watson AM

Dr Mwenya Chimba (MC) – BAWSO

Stephen Chapman (SC) – Welsh Government

Dan Boucher (DB) – CARE

Emmy Chater (EC) - Newport City Council

Robin Davies (RD) – IJM UK

Item 1 - Apologies

Simon Thomas AM

Kirsty Williams AM

Item 2 and 3 - Introduction & Election of Chair/Secretary

JW started the meeting by introducing herself as AM for Mid & West Wales and the Chair of the Cross Party Group on Human Trafficking. JW and BAWSO confirmed as Chair and Secretariat of the group by members of the group in attendance.

Item 4 and 5

Members of the meeting began discussions of the progress made in tackling Human Trafficking and recent developments in this area.

EC raised her concerns on 'age assessments' and a failure by authority's to properly assess a potential victim's age. EM also raised her concerns about experience being lost in Cardiff, with many professionals doing age assessments moving on to other local authorities across Wales.

JW raised her concerns of age assessments being weighted upwards in some cases and a failure to properly identify vulnerable children.

JW said that the recent migrant crisis has increased the numbers of potentially vulnerable children entering the UK from, for example, Italy. JW said that she had raised this issue on a number of occasions within the Welsh Assembly and plenary debates.

JW said that it is vital that measures are put in place to properly deal with the migrant crisis and to protect victims that could fall prey to traffickers.

EC raised her concerns of a lack of Home Office resources for full screenings and the use of biometric technology. EC said she is aware of cases where a child is picked up by authorities, taken into care but then goes missing soon after, with only their name and description being taken. Cardiff does not have the resources to deal sufficiently with these types of cases.

EC said that being a minor is not itself a significant factor to be classified as 'vulnerable'.

DB said that the Northern Ireland model with dealing with Trafficking does take consideration of both unaccompanied and trafficked children.

During the passage of the Modern Slavery Bill, SC said that he had asked the Home Office and the Government in Westminster if Wales could be a part of the Guardianship pilot schemes currently taking place in England. At the time they said no and said that the number of cases in Wales was too low. SC said that he then asked for Wales to be considered during round 2 of the pilots. The Home Office/ Government in Westminster has agreed. SC said that he took part in a recent meeting with the Home Office, with around 10 other people, and at the meeting they convinced them of the need for pilots to also take place in Wales. SC and BAWSO took officials from the Home Office to the 'Newport Hub' to see the work being done there to tackle Trafficking. Officials from Scotland have also visited the hub.

Concerns were raised that the round 2 pilot schemes would still fall short as only for trafficking children, and not also for unaccompanied asylum children.

DB raised concerns that the Child advocates may not be taken seriously by authorities as they do not have statutory authority. In CARE's point of view the further pilots planned are not required and the Westminster government should just implement section 48 of the Modern Slavery Act.

DB said that Karen Bradley MP could be lobbied in Westminster and to act on this issue.

SC also highlighted the problems with further trials and their need, given the system of advocate's works well in Scotland.

EC said that further training needs to be provided for foster carers dealing with trafficked children.

JW said that section 48 of the Modern Slavery Act should be formalised and brought into force.

SC provided an update of recent development from the Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group (report provided to JW).

SC said that the Newport hub and practices in Gwent to help victims of trafficking are recognised as best practice across the UK. It is the only hub of its kind in the UK.

SC confirmed to NP that Wales would have pilot schemes for Child advocates in the round 2 of the trials.

JW said that she had information to suggest that boats were waiting at the departure and arrival destinations for vulnerable victims and some were falling victim to traffickers. SC said that this problem was now being taken seriously at the ports and by the Home Office/ Border authorities.

SC went through in detail the training that is being provided to professionals across Wales in trafficking relates issues, including first responders and to the police.

SC said that a trial was currently going through in the courts in Wales for a case of slavery.

SC said that a large number of people had been rescued in North Wales last year for a case of slavery. A successful civil case has been brought against the perpetrators.

SC finished by saying that training was being provided to the hospitality sector to identify victims of trafficking.

Item 6

Minutes of the meeting of the 26th Jan 2015 agreed.

Item 7

No other business.

Item 8

Next meeting TBC in the next Assembly.