Minutes of the CPG Meeting on Human Trafficking

Date: Tuesday, 17th October 2017
Time: 08:15am
Venue: Conference Room B (Ground Floor), Tŷ Hywel, Cardiff Bay

Attendees

- Joyce Watson AM (JW)
- Stephen Chapman, Anti-Slavery Co-ordinator, Welsh Government (SC)
- Sukaina Kadhum, Anti-slavery Support Officer, Welsh Government (SK)
- Dan Michel, Detective Inspector, South Wales Police (DM)
- Nici Evans, Partnerships & Citizen Focus, Cardiff Council (NE)
- Helena Hunt, Policy Team Leader, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (HH)
- Angelina Rodrigues, Deputy Chief Executive, BAWSO (AR)
- Rachel Allen, Police & Crime Commissioner, Jeff Cuthbert’s, Office (RA)
- Ryland Doyle, Researcher for Mike Hedges AM (RD)
- David Rowlands AM, South Wale East (DR)
- Madeleine Rees (MR)
- Barbara Natasegara MBE – Co-Chief Executive Officer, Safer Wales Ltd (BN)
- Simon Borja, Director of Project Development, Safer Wales Ltd (SB)
- Mutale Merrill OBE, Chief Executive, BAWSO (MM)
- Nitesh Patel, Communications Officer for Joyce Watson AM (NP)
Minutes of meeting

ITEM 1 – Apologies

ITEM 2 – Election of Chair and Secretary of Cross Party Group

Attendees confirmed the re-election of JW as the Chair of the Cross Party Group, with no objections, and BAWSO confirmed as the secretariat of the CPG, with no objections.

ITEM 3 - 6

JW began the meeting by asking everyone in attendance at the meeting to introduce themselves.

JW said that all stakeholders and experts in the meeting would be vital in setting the agenda and priorities for the group in the year ahead.

JW thanked MR for compiling a report on Human Trafficking and asked for it to be shared with attendees.

JW said credit is owed to Carl Sargeant AM in driving the anti-human trafficking agenda in Wales and supporting action being taken.

JW highlighted issues around a central hub, in the form of a website, still not being in place, despite the original Human Trafficking report in 2009 recommending it.

NE said the gateway into the modern slavery agenda should come through the multi-agency safeguarding hubs. The focus in Cardiff is that this must be the first port of call and working very closely with the modern slavery unit, with the regional co-ordinator and analyst covering the South Wales region.

NE said the approach taken in areas where there is no multi-agency safeguarding hub may be different. The multi-agency safeguarding hub has led to more buy in from social services and children services after 7 years of progress. 7 years ago there was nothing and no acknowledgment that this was an issue. NE said she would like other areas to have similar hubs and for it to be embedded for longevity into safeguarding approach.

SC said that there are 6 safeguarding boards across Wales, with the South Wales & Vale being very advanced. Gwent is concentrating on becoming a hub, North Wales has 2 hubs, and West Wales has a hub in the making and also Cym Taff. They are coming. The independent board on safeguarding is influencing this. There are 6 members of the independent board, and each of those members looks after each of those hubs. Jan Pickles looks after the Gwent one. Gwent is advanced in that it has
a missing children hub. SC said he wants those pushed across Wales, with Ministers looking at this.

SC said the ICTA’s have already started. Initially, the UK Government said no to Wales ICTA’s. Barnardo’s Cymru is running the ICTA service. Last year, in the whole of Wales only 4 children were referred by Local Authorities into the NRM. Since 30th Jan 2017, when ICTA’s started working in Wales, they’d referred 30 children from 22 LA’s. Cardiff have referred 17 and Wrexham 9. The children being referred to the NRM range from years 2, 3, 5, 10 and others in their teens. Wales is a part of 3 pilot areas: Greater Manchester; Hampshire and Isle of Wight.

SC said Wales is bucking the trend – in the other two pilot areas the majority of children are male, in Wales the majority are female. In Wales the biggest exploitation criteria is sexual. SC said that KA has pushed training out across Wales. KA leads on training right across Wales. The Modern Slavery unit in the Home Office, looked at the training in Wales and asked KA to push it out across Wales.

KA said that the ICTA pilot is amazing but said that it is still only a pilot. KA said Wales is still not where we should be with social services in all areas in Wales and about understating their role as first responders. Were it not for the ICTAs being in place, there would not be the number of referrals that there had been. More work needs to be done with social services and getting them to understand their role as first responders. The Anti-Slavery Commissioner is about to launch next month a campaign on the role of first responder. Legislation in Wales may be different but Wales should keep a keen eye on this. More work needs to be done on safeguarding rules.

KA said she liked the idea of a strategic level hub that involves the CPS, Welsh Government and Policing and so that they have a base where everyone can work together. There have been cases highlighted on Twitter. The key is to make sure that everyone knows what the regional groups do, who they are and what they stand for. More work needs to be done on the Communications and to work with the Media.

AR said more needs to be done on aftercare, with cases of male and females becoming homeless, for traffickers to take advantage. NE agreed with AR. NE said the systems in place for aftercare can be so poor that they are vulnerable to re-trafficking.

SC said the NRM is operated by the Home Office, with a 45 day period of recovery and reflection. The Home Office are reviewing the NRM are about to announce some changes. It’s 45 days in the UK, 30 days on the continent, and 60 days in Southern Ireland. SC said pressure is being put on the Home Office to increase the number of days for support.

DR said that there should be a definition of slavery if we are asking people to identify slavery. Is it the absolute sense of ownership by somebody, or does it also entail people working in car washes, working 10 hours a year for less than £3 an hour?

SC said there was no offence to slavery before 2015. We all use the word slavery but the modern slavery act in 2015 created the offence of slavery and the definitions of what constitutes slavery. In Wales we’ve raised awareness and keep on raising
awareness. In 2012, there were only 34 cases referred in Wales. At that time, there was assumed to be ‘no problem’ with human trafficking amongst the police force. Since that time, KA has led on awareness raising and training across Wales. In 2014, over 2000 people across the country were trained, 4500 in 2015, and 2016 close to 5500 people. Social media is used to raise awareness. There were 123 referrals last year and recognised as being victims of slavery and referred to the NRM. At the end of June this year, there have been 109 referrals this year.

DR said that the police raided a place in Newport last year. A place where there were no contracts of work and where the workers were earning £3 an hour. The police did nothing because the people were in the country legally and that was the end of their involvement. DR asked when prosecutions would be made.

SC said more people are being prosecuted and cases now being pursued.

KA said there are now staff from the Grandmasters Licensing Authority looking into these types of cases. Where criminal prosecutions are not pursued, other offences are transferred and pursued by the Grandmasters Licensing Authority.

DR said he had to leave to attend another meeting and thanked attendees.

RA said she supported a more integrated approach into modern slavery within the safeguarding approach, rather than a separate hub.

JW said the emphasis from the contributions was around regional co-ordinated work and aftercare.

MR thanked KA in providing training for spotting vulnerable signs of trafficking on University campuses.

NE said there is very little resource for a dedicated multi-agency training and a person working on a full-time basis, and they are currently dependant on good will. As there is for the lack of resource around on-going victim support. Given the very little money, the amount that has been achieved in Wales is remarkable.

HH said a nudge needed to be given to first responders and to remind them of their duties. Also a nudge on procurement and the code of practice.

JW said an event will be hosted in January, with a recent meeting with the Police & Crime Commissioner, Jeff Cuthbert on ethical procurement. JW said that people had to take personal responsibility when it comes to procurement and to keep an eye out. JW said she went to a car wash and where the staff had no waterproof clothing. Local authorities have a duty of care to monitor the practices of companies they license.

BN said there was a need for first responders to get their act together.

SC said it is important to first establish who first responders are. The Home Office Visas & Immigration and Border Force, Police, Social Services in Local Authorities and some NGO’s (BAWSO and New Pathways). Last year, LA’s referred 4 people, NGO’s 31, police 24 and Home Office 64 dealt with on the border or as asylum cases. The NGOs are working well. The NRM is 8 pages long.
KA said a letter has gone out to all first responders highlighting their duties under legislation. The Home Office has asked for this letter to be held off and because of the on-going NRM review. This will be the next piece of work.

NP asked KA about awareness raising using new technologies. NP asked if there were specific resources being put into paid Facebook advertising. NP outlined the typical costs and reach of advertising on Facebook. New technologies should be used alongside traditional forms of marketing such as letters.

KA said there was a need for someone to manage this type of marketing. NE said an operational budget for this would be needed.

NP emphasised the need for pooled resources between all organisations and NGO’s. First Responders could be reached on a continual basis on Facebook at minimal costs. NP emphasised that Facebook is key to success in raising awareness and ahead of Twitter. Resources have to be pooled with aims all being the same for all organisations and NGO’s, within a single Facebook group.

MM said there was an issue of lack of resources and there is a need to co-ordinate work more closely. MC said that there is an importance for survivor engagement and to train them to help raise awareness.

SC that the pilots that were run in England, one in West Yorkshire and South West of England, did away with NGOs as first responders, instead creating slavery safeguarding leads. It didn’t work because it only involved Home Office personnel, police and LA’s, with no engagement from NGOs. In Wales the NGOs that are first responders are BAWSO, New Pathways and Barnardos for children.

SC said that it can take weeks or months for someone to go into the NRM, to build trust up. The rest and recovery period of 45 days is not working and there should be a push on the Home Office to increase this.

SC said that section 54 deals with transparency in supply chains for commercial organisations that turn over £36m. SC said more needs to be done on companies that fall below this turnover and the public sector to also ensure ethical procurement.

JW said that in most cases only companies that fall within the category of having a multi-million turnover would be multinational supermarkets and would not touch most businesses, and people that are being exploited.

KA said that she had Googled the Wales top 30. Most of those companies are in the construction sector, car firms, AEG, etc KA said work has been done with Peters Pie’s in Caerphilly because they employ people in the local community. It’s about looking at the businesses that fall within the turnover of £36m but also other local businesses.

SC said issues with tendering can arise when subcontracting occurs and the risk of, for example, clothing being done in sweatshops. SC gave the example of Cosy Beds that were making beds for Next and John Lewis. SC also referred to the Tesco horse meat scandal.

KA said the training model in Wales needs to be pushed further across the UK and work is being done with other universities in the UK. KA said there could also be
issues within the hotel industry and further work and research should be done around this.

RA said work is being done with operation Make Safe through safeguarding week to raise awareness of the duties of hoteliers and taxi firms.

NP said when there are concerns that first responders do not know their duties, then there is little hope of people at a grass roots level locally knowing the signs of slavery.

SB said that BBC Wales have been in touch with a number of NGO’s to do a documentary around modern slavery and this would be an opportunity to highlight the work being done in Wales and to outline the signs for spotting slavery.

MM more work needs to be done to coordinate work around the modern slavery and human trafficking agenda. If there is no coordination, resources are being wasted.

SC that he would take action to talk to his head of communications and to look at safeguarding and to work with others on this. SC now has dedicated support from SK and to help with communications.

JW said 3 actions points should be found by the group to pursue going forward. JW said she is asked by groups repeatedly to talk about trafficking, and would soon be speaking at an event on the refugee crisis and the link with human trafficking. JW said she would continue to raise the issue of unaccompanied minors.

JW one of the key issues is the post-45 day period.

DM said that if the issue of after-care is looked at, then the focus should be on the first minute of rescue. There are deficiencies in the system at the moment. BAWSO are fantastic in supporting victims during their troubled times but they need victims to engage in the NRM. The level of service will depend on whether they engage with the NRM system. DM said victims are rarely ready to tell their story at minute 1 and so they have an uncertainty on whether they will get accepted or not, and whether they will be supported or not.

NE, KA and RA said pre-and-post NRM care, and a consistent approach from start to finish, needs to be looked at and through to recovery.

DM said the NRM does not address the level of risk and the level of safeguarding response to the victim. For domestic violence and honour violence victims there are scientific risk assessment tools that people go through to assess the level of risk and for support to be provided according to that level of risk. Risk is currently assessed according to professional judgement. DM said it should be possible to take a more scientific approach to this assessment.

HH raised concerns that there should not be a dilution of the safeguarding process with a standalone process, and this could be a chance for a more integrated assessment where vulnerabilities will be seen across different areas. The risk of having a specific category for human trafficking is where there is an overlap with other areas. For example, the Cardiff girls that went out to Syria is seen as a prevent extremism agenda, but it could also be seen as trafficking or online grooming.
SC said an evaluation is on-going for ICTA’s and the pilot scheme by the University of Bedford.

DM said the ICTA’s are fantastic. The ICTA’s could be embedded into the multi-agency safeguarding hubs.

NP repeated the need for NGO’s and government departments to better co-ordinate on communications. SC said a sub-group could be setup to discuss the issue of communications and awareness raising, and a meeting could be called to discuss this issue further.

SC said the sub-group that would look at communications strategies and would invite people to come along, with a new Facebook page setup, with roles, rights, etc confirmed in that meeting.

HH said that there were masses of reference documents that need to be hosted and kept online.

KA said that a website should be setup that would allow documents and content to be hosted, for someone to own it. KA said that the Anti-Slavery Commissioners website is up to speed.

NP referred to the Human Trafficking report by JW in 2009 and which referred to the need for a centralised hub in the form of a website that kept members of the public, stakeholders, etc updated on the latest developments in the area of human trafficking and the work being done. NP said the Anti-Slavery Commissioners website is a perfect example of what should be created in Wales.

SC said that work and advice on actions relating to human trafficking in Wales is done in part on the Live Fear Free website (livefearfree.gov.wales).

JW said for a long time her own Human Trafficking website was ranked as #1 in Wales against key search terms. NP said the domain human-trafficking.co.uk had to be dropped because of the commitment needed to maintain the site.