**HTF Advisory Forum**

**9th January 2017**

**Minutes**

1. **Welcome by the chair**

Anthony Steen (Human Trafficking Foundation, Chairman) welcomed all in attendance

1. **Announcements**

Euan Fraser (Human Trafficking Foundation) explained an adjustment to the Announcements section. The intention is to focus upon issues and problems which Forum members encounter in their work. It may then be possible to bring other Forum members together to address the issue, perhaps through briefings to policy makers.

By way of example, Jess Gealer (Medaille Trust) has identified the lack of immediate safe/staffed accommodation following identification (Surivor Reception Centres). As a result of which victims have had to sleep in police stations and hotels.

Forum members should contact HTF if they would like to help address any of the following issues. Other announcements (eg. projects, initiatives, events, vacancies etc) can be circulated in a new monthly newsletter. Please contact euan@humantraffickingfoundation.org.

1. Juliette Nash (ATLEU): provided an update on the Ministry of Justice [review of Legal Aid for victims of human trafficking](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/577351/tmscc-review.pdf) and the [decision to allow firms up to 15 matter starts](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/civil-news-matter-starts-for-modern-slavery-compensation-claims) to bring compensation claims on behalf of victims of trafficking. She explained that ATLEU consider this to be insufficient and that the LAA should operate a formal contract with providers to provide help for compensation claims for victims of trafficking as it does in areas such as housing and immigration law. This would allow providers to invest in the work and build up centres of expertise. We cannot know how many victims will seek legal advice once it is freely available, so there should not be a limit on the numbers the lawyers can help; any limit risks leaving some victims without the legal help they need. As the number of victims identified grows year on year, any limit would become out of date in any event.
2. Elaine Gaskell and Mike Richardson (Home Office – Voluntary Returns Service): provided the following summary of the VRS, which has so far helped 20 victims return.

*The Home Office has created the Voluntary Returns Service (VRS), an in-house service which provides support to those who have claimed asylum, are recognised Victims of Trafficking or have no legal basis to remain in the UK and who want to return voluntarily to their country of origin.*

*The service facilitates the return of single, non asylum over stayers, those who are in or have been through the asylum process including the return of families and those individuals with complex needs, focussing on those identified as vulnerable; for example physical or mental health needs, over 65s, recognised victims of trafficking (EU or non-EU), Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and pregnancy.*

*The VRS team provides different levels of support from something as simple as access to a passport or travel document, purchasing tickets or through to assistance including reintegration support for those with vulnerability or complex needs. All cases are considered on a case by case basis, allowing us to provide the right support to those who are most in need.*

*VRS provides a single email address, web site and telephone number for all voluntary returns. The web pages provide details of who is eligible, how to apply; including the application form and details of how to contact us.*

[*www.gov.uk/return-home-voluntarily*](http://www.gov.uk/return-home-voluntarily)*; Phone: 0300 004 0202 – option 3;* *voluntaryreturns@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk*

*The financial package for recognised Victims of Trafficking would include travel costs from the UK to anywhere in their country of origin and, depending upon the country of return, either £1,000 on a start card when they leave the UK or £1,000 of reintegration support from an overseas provider when they reach their destination, in addition to support given to obtain travel documents, if necessary.*

Kate Roberts (HTF) – if the individual approaches the VRS and changes their mind, will they be removed by Immigration Enforcement?

Mike Richardson – it will depend on the details provided. They won’t necessarily contact Immigration Enforcement if the person decides not to return.

James Simmonds –Read (The Children’s Society) – asked if the VRS conduct a risk assessment prior to the return?

Mike Richardson – The VRS don’t carry out a risk assessment, they rely on the charity referring the victim to assess the situation.

Emilie Martin (Hestia) – Does the VRS stay in touch with victims once they have returned to their country of origin?

Mike Richardson – No

Laura Cremen (Afruca) - expressed concern about relying on charities to guarantee safe returns

Mike Richardson – VRS works with stakeholders in the countries of origin

1. TatianaGren-Jardan (Office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner): The Commissioner has written to Sarah Newton MP, Minister responsible for modern slavery, regarding his vision for the NRM (letter to be published on the Commissioner’s [website](http://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/)). He will then meet with stakeholders to discuss solutions to existing problems. This research will be fed back to the Minister.

The report by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration into the Border Force response to modern slavery will be published in early February.

The Commissioner’s report on homelessness and trafficking, conducted in partnership with The Passage, will be published at the end of January

1. Justine Currell (Unseen): provided an update on the Modern Slavery Helpline. Since October 2016:
* 470 calls to the helpline
* Those calls have involved 349 cases and 425 potential victims
* 15% of calls originated from victims themselves (more than anticipated)
* 70 referrals to law enforcement in 20 police forces areas.
* 14 safeguarding referrals made to local authorities.
* 12 referrals to NGOs/NRM.
* Most cases have involved forced labour, in particularnail bars, car washes
* 17% of calls re domestic servitude (often from victims themselves).

Successes: working with police forces; helped people out of exploitation directly; working with Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority; received support from Devolved Administrations; working with Crimestoppers and Stop The Traffik to complement other services

Challenges: there remain parts of the country without adequate victim support services

Directory of Services: would like to encourage more NGOs to be involved in the directory

Advisory Group: application process open for individuals/organisation to apply to be part of group

1. **Superintendent Jeremy Capey (Devon and Cornwall Police)**

Superintendent Capey provided an overview of the Police Transformation Fund (PTF), which aims to make the police response to modern slavery more effective and efficient. The £8.5m Fund, announced in November 2016, will allow for increased resources until 2019 and includes 56 people to be employed around the UK.

At the international level, one person will be based in Europol. In the UK, a Joint Slavery and Trafficking Analysis Centre (JSTAC) within the National Crime Agency will help build a better picture of the problem. Regional analysts within Regional Organised Crime Units will also gather information from local police forces. Regional coordinators will provide tactical advice and support regional partnerships.

A best practice centre will be established to help understand various related issues, such as cybercrime, child protection, immigration crime, financial crime, training/awareness raising etc.

An NRM Triage Centre will look at historic NRM referrals to determine whether any investigations or prosecutions might be possible. They will also look at the data gathered from Duty to Notify forms.

Baroness Butler-Sloss (HTF): asked about training; how data collection will be managed; and whether the work will cover the whole of the UK.

Jeremy Capey: Training will be covered, with 2 people tasked with looking at what training is currently being provided. Regarding data collection, he said that it was vital to have suitable IT support to make sure that data is gathered in a meaningful way. The PTF is taken from the England Wales policing budget, but they will be inviting Scotland and Northern Ireland to be part of the work.

Professor Gary Craig (University of Hull): raised the lack of consistency between police forces, and the lack of understanding in certain areas. Is there capacity to target resources on those who are ill-informed and not responding to the issue?

Jeremy Capey: They are starting to see a better reaction across the country, but the PTF will look to improve those forces which are preforming well. The best practice centre will try to improve consistency.

Shahrzad Fouladvand (University of Sussex) will the PTF look at corruption and human trafficking?

Jeremy Capey: explained that there were many areas of cross-over and they will be looking to develop a better knowledge base. NCA is looking at better understanding across modern slavery, including corruption.

Anthony Steen: asked about the low number of convictions for trafficking and modern slavery offences, and suggested that NGOs should be more involved in supporting victims.

Jeremy Capey: explained that pre-Modern Slavery Act traffickers were prosecuted for other offences. Since the Modern Slavery Act, there have been more prosecutions, and so the numbers for 2016 will be higher. He agreed that it is important to support victims in order that they might then help prosecutions.

Juliette Nash: asked if there will be a mechanism for reporting bad practice.

Jeremy Capey: Yes, there will be someone tasked with victim advocacy to improve methodology.

Lara Bundock (Snowdrop Project): asked if it will be possible to contact someone directly should a victim, post-NRM, decide that they wish to press charges against their trafficker.

Jeremy Capey: The Triage Centre will look at NRM referral but would not cover the situation described. He suggested discussing after the meeting.

Anna Sereni (Hestia): asked about capacity to deliver this work.

Jeremy Capey explained that local forces will be relied upon to deliver the day-to-day response

1. **Detective Chief Inspector Phil Brewer (Met Police, Modern Slavery and Kidnap Unit)**

DCI Brewer provided an overview of the pan-London response to modern slavery and discussed some of the potential implications of Brexit for law enforcement.

He explained that they are taking steps to increase knowledge and he is working with Stop The Traffik and HTF to improve the understanding and response within London Boroughs. Multi-agency partnerships have emerged which require support. NHS England are devising training for London boroughs in order to ensure greater consistency of knowledge. The Met are also aiming to ensure there is one Special Point of Contact on modern slavery within each borough police force. He explained that Sophie Linden, the Deputy Mayor for Police and Crime, is supportive and keen to improve the London response.

He states at a significant issue is the lack of awareness, and consistency of approach between and within police forces. This is made more difficult with a shrinking budget.

Regarding Brexit, he explained what being part of institutions such as Europol and Eurojust currently means for law enforcement agencies in the UK. Europol’s trafficking in human beings strand, Project Phoenix, dictates the European response. The UK are one of the key drivers of this initiative, with significant influence, and contributing the most intelligence to the project.

Partnership of Europol and Eurojust offers funding opportunities, in particular Joint Investigation Teams (JITs), to tackle the end result in the UK and to dismantle the criminal networks in the country of origin. There are currently 11 JITs in 4 countries (Romania, Slovakia, Hungary and Lithuania). Each investigation brings financial support for travel, interpreters etc. He spoke of a recent success story involving arrests in the UK and Romania, and the rescue of a 15 year old girl in sexual exploitation in London. The advantage of JITS is that they are very flexible and therefore enable the investigation to adapt to changing circumstances. Without JITs, the police are reliant on International Letters of Request which are less flexible and more time consuming.

The UK has recently sent a formal letter requesting renewal of the UK’s membership of Europol. If this were to be declined, the UK may be granted third party membership, like USA and Australia, which would diminish the UK’s influence.

Vicky Brotherton (ATMG) asked when the UK is likely to get a response to its letter regarding membership renewal.

Phil Brewer: Membership is ratified in April or May. The decision may be influenced by the political mood at the time.

Ruth van Dyke (London South Bank University) explained she is doing some work to look at modern slavery post Brexit, including policing, borders, and human rights.

Baroness Butler-Sloss asked about financial implications and the European Arrest Warrant.

Phil Brewer: said the UK contributes to then access wider funds. Leaving the EU may mean losing access to those funds. This will cause difficulties with the Met expected to save £400m by 2020. He wasn’t able to provide information on the European Arrest Warrant.

Tatiana Gren-Jardan: asked if there is a breakdown of how many victims in London go into the NRM.

Phil Brewer: explained that there is a lack of understanding about referrals with a London footprint.

Anthony Steen: Thanked Jeremy and Phil for their contributions. He suggested that the low conviction rate was due to a lack of cooperation between police and NGOs. It is necessary to involve NGOs at all stages when victims are giving evidence.

Baroness Butler-Sloss: stated it is important for NGOs to appreciate that the police are on their side.

1. **Date of Next Meeting**

8th May, 12-2pm, The Mermaid