

REPORT TO COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 15 FEBRUARY 2018

POLICE SCOTLAND NORTH EAST DIVISION - THEMATIC REPORT: HUMAN TRAFFICKING

1 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1.1 Note the attached report which seeks to inform the Committee regarding Human Trafficking in general and in Aberdeenshire in particular.

2 Background / Discussion

2.1 Global Context

2.3 Human Trafficking is a crime against the person and one of the most tragic human rights issues of current times. It divides families and communities, threatens public safety and national security and undermines national and global markets. It is the exploitation of the weakest and most vulnerable members of the population, most often for the financial gain of those who perpetrate it.

2.4 An individual's personal circumstances, including mental health issues, loss of family, poverty and financial difficulties can leave them highly vulnerable to trafficking. These circumstances are often made worse by political instability, war, famine, ecological disasters, discrimination and persecution within their country of origin. Many Foreign National Potential Victims of Trafficking (PVOTs) who are processed through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in Scotland, report the effects of many of these issues prior to their movement and exploitation.

2.5 European Context

2.6 European countries are known to be key transit areas for traffickers moving people to the UK from Africa and South East Asia, particularly France from where smuggled and trafficked persons enter the UK through clandestine means within vehicles. These people may experience exploitation while in transit as their illegal status increases their vulnerability and is used by their traffickers as another tactic of control and coercion. Legitimate freedom of movement agreements between European countries are also exploited as a means of people entering the UK for the purpose of exploitation.¹

2.7 U.K Context

2.8 Over the past 5 years, the United Kingdom has been documented as a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to sex trafficking, forced criminality and forced labour, including

¹ Global and European contextual information obtained from a report produced by Police Scotland's National Human Trafficking Unit.

domestic servitude. The UK government estimates there may be up to 13,000 persons subject to trafficking and children are likely to represent around 25-33% of this figure.

- 2.9 Statistics from the NRM in 2016 provide that most identified victims of any age group are subject to trafficking for labour exploitation including forced criminality. Most foreign trafficking victims come from Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe. Albania, Vietnam, Nigeria, China and Romania were the most common countries of origin for PVoTs during the past year. NRM statistics for 2016 also reflect a significant increase in the number of UK children as victims of sexual exploitation within the UK with children in the care system and unaccompanied migrant children at particular risk.
- 2.10 The majority of Human Trafficking crime groups in the UK are small with limited hierarchies, although larger more structured groups exist. It is likely that the majority of groups pursue diverse criminal interests alongside Human Trafficking, in order to maximise profits.
- 2.11 Offenders are most likely to use online recruitment to coerce individuals and the prevalence of these methods are highly likely to increase. Online advertising of escorts and sexual services is also a significant enabler of sexual exploitation. The boyfriend/partner modus operandi of recruitment is common in the case of victims of sexual exploitation where the relationship is used initially as a lure and then as a means of forcing victims compliance to become involved.²
- 2.12 Scottish Context**
- 2.13 Transit opportunities in to Scotland provided by low cost airlines and passenger ferries present a significant threat given that victims of trafficking originating from outside Scotland are often not identified at entry ports.
- 2.14 Human Trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation involves the trafficking of people, often foreign nationals, for employment in businesses such as nail bars, car washes, barber shops, construction, agriculture, fishing, hospitality and catering industries in Scotland. Nationals including those from Vietnam, Romania, Ghana, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Iraq and Syria have been targeted for this purpose.
- 2.15 Forced criminality, such as organised theft, financial fraud and involvement in cannabis cultivations, has also been reported by victims of trafficking in Scotland. Foreign Nationals including those from Romania, Latvia and Vietnam have been linked to this type of criminality, both as victims and perpetrators.
- 2.16 Sexual exploitation includes the trafficking of individuals for the purpose of prostitution, pornography, sexual assault/rape and child sexual exploitation. Events, such as industry conferences and sporting events, have been identified as a factor which increases the demand for sexual services in a localised area which is highly likely to be exploited by traffickers. A significant volume of reporting continues in relation to off street prostitution of Romanian females.

² UK and Scottish contextual information obtained from a report produced by Police Scotland's National Human Trafficking Unit.

2.17 In 2016, the number of people being referred into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in Scotland was 150; there were 103 adults and 47 children within this total. The predominant source countries identified were Vietnam, China and Albania. This figure represents a 3.4% increase on the previous year's referrals and equates to 3.9% of the total UK referrals.³

2.18 Aberdeenshire Context

2.19 Between 2014 and 2017, Police Scotland has recorded three concern reports in relation to Human Trafficking, relative to the Aberdeenshire Local Authority area. Seen in the context of neighbouring Moray and Aberdeen City local authorities, this number of reports appears consistent, relatively speaking, with the same number of reports over the period having been received in Moray and nine within Aberdeen City. The three reports relate to concerns over potential labour exploitation. Following Police enquiry, no Human Trafficking offences or potential victims of Human Trafficking were identified.

2.20 Similar to the rest of the country, lack of awareness may potentially mean that there is a degree of under reporting in relation to suspected instances of Human Trafficking and that the actual number of victims requiring support, may be higher in some areas.

2.21 The National Human Trafficking Unit based at the Scottish Crime Campus provides a national resource in relation to the investigation of human trafficking. Each Division within Police Scotland has a dedicated Human Trafficking Champion, usually a Detective Inspector within the local Public Protection Unit, whose role is to provide the link between the National Unit and their respective policing Divisions and local partner agencies, in relation to Human Trafficking matters. Detective Inspector Alan Armit fulfils this role within North East Division.

2.22 In 2017, Police Scotland and partner agencies nationally, including in Aberdeenshire, were involved in two national operations run by the National Crime Agency. The first of these involved potential labour exploitation in the fishing industry. The second involved potential labour exploitation of workers, predominantly within nail bars and car washes. No Human Trafficking offences or potential victims of Human Trafficking were identified.

2.23 As contributing partners tackling the threat of Human Trafficking, Police Scotland will continue to engage proactively in 2018, in line with focussed objectives and emerging criminal trends that the National Crime Agency have identified within Scotland and in the rest of the UK.

2.24 Within North East Division, Police Scotland have provided inputs at a multi-agency awareness raising event, held at Robert Gordon University; distributed public awareness raising posters in prominent public locations and in conjunction with Barnardo's, taken part in a live 'Facebook' chat, to raise awareness of the subject, particularly in relation to the exploitation of children. Links have been made with a representative from 'City Hearts' charity, in relation to the provision of a temporary accommodation facility, based in Aberdeenshire, for any identified victims of Human Trafficking.

³ National Crime Agency 'National Referral Mechanism Statistics' published 07/04/2017

2.25 Detective Inspector Armit has taken part in a Scottish Government commissioned research project, conducted by staff at Glasgow University, aimed at identifying the measures required to effectively tackle the issue of Human Trafficking within Scotland.

2.26 Response

2.27 Police Scotland acknowledges the threat and impact which Human Trafficking poses to individuals within our communities and has structured a policing response accordingly.

2.28 Regular national meetings are held involving partners representing agencies nationally who are involved primarily in the enforcement of Human Trafficking legislation. These meetings are invaluable for information sharing and dissemination of practice issues from a national to a local level.

2.29 Recent Government advertising campaigns and consultation events involving UKBA and other partners, along with increasing portrayal of Human Trafficking themes in mainstream media, have heightened public awareness of the issues.

2.30 In line with legislative requirements under the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015, the Scottish Government published a Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy, with a vision of eliminating Human Trafficking and Exploitation.

2.31 In relation to the 'action areas' identified by the Scottish Government, in support of their strategy, Police Scotland plays a pivotal role in relation to the identification of perpetrators and disruption of their activity. A 'duty to notify' forms part of the legislation and places a requirement upon relevant public bodies to notify Police of Human Trafficking concerns. The finer points of this aspect of the legislation and the mechanics of its working are yet to be finalised.

2.32 Policing activity also targets the 'action area' which seeks to address conditions that foster trafficking and exploitation.

2.33 In terms of the 'action' which looks to identify victims and support them to safety and recovery the strategy highlights the expectation that local public protection committees and partnerships, including those for adult and child protection and violence against women, ensure that their policies, training and practice meet current need with regard to Human Trafficking and exploitation.

2.34 In addition to the 'action areas' identified above, the Government strategy also highlights expectations which relate specifically to children. Local Child Protection Committees are to ensure that there is robust partnership working in place to address child trafficking and exploitation.

2.35 To strengthen the multi-agency response, Police Scotland are currently piloting a child sexual exploitation and abuse intelligence sharing toolkit, which will be evaluated ahead of a national rollout.

2.36 Within Police Scotland North East Division work is ongoing with the three Local Authorities and Third Sector Groups, to enhance information sharing

and strengthen the partnership response to Human Trafficking. Staff awareness training, practice reviews and links with private business are all being considered, along with procedures to enhance the support offered to victims.

2.37 Conclusion

- 2.38 Human Trafficking is developing into an area of increasing national interest, driven by the Scottish Government's strategy. Police Scotland has responded appropriately, in conjunction with partners, with resources being directed towards raising awareness, improving services to victims and tackling those involved in this type of criminality.
- 2.39 Although the number of reports of Human Trafficking being received within the North East of the country remains reassuringly low, such reports are continually managed and reviewed by Police Scotland through the process of daily management and monthly tactical meetings. Local partnership contributions in relation to incidents reported follow child and adult protection procedures as appropriate, and partnership contributions in relation to information sharing and development of processes and procedures is channelled through the Child Protection Committees.
- 2.40 Policing activity will continue to focus on tackling all aspects of Human Trafficking and working with partners to ensure that local partnerships continue to develop procedures and responses in relation to Human Trafficking and exploitation, in support of the vision set out by the Scottish Government.

3. Scheme of Governance

- 3.1 The Committee is able to consider/comment on this item in terms of Section D.1.1 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to matters concerning Police Scotland.

4 Implications and Risk

- 4.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because this report is principally designed to in regard to Human Trafficking. There will be no differential impact, as a result of the report, on people with protected characteristics.
- 4.2 There are no specific staffing or financial implications arising from this report.
- 4.3 There are no Risks directly identified in respect of this matter in terms of the Corporate and Directorate Risk Registers as the Committee is monitoring the performance of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service as required under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 however links to the Corporate Risk of Working with Other Organisations.