

Wales Anti-Slavery Conference 2015

Tuesday 14th July 2015

SWALEC Stadium, Cardiff

I was very pleased to be invited to attend this conference which featured interesting and insightful speakers and provided an opportunity to further examine ways in which 'Stop-Slavery' can collaborate with other individuals and organisations in the fight against Modern day Slavery and Human Trafficking.

A brief report on the conference:

Stephen Chapman - Welsh Government Anti-Slavery Co-ordinator

Mr Chapman opened the conference thanking everyone in attendance and acknowledged the excellent work being done in Wales with the aim of 'Making Wales Hostile to Slavery'.

Leighton Andrews (Assembly Member) – Minister for Public Services, Welsh Government

Mr Andrews made a Keynote Address in which he said he was proud that Wales was leading the way in the UK in combating slavery and reiterated the strong political will and support for the policies being implemented through the Wales Modern Slavery Leadership Group.

He emphasised the Wales Assembly Government's (WAG) commitment to the issue and reminded delegates that an Anti-Slavery Co-ordinator was appointed in Wales as long ago as 2011. He welcomed the enactment of the new Modern Slavery Act 2015 which led to the appointment of an independent UK Anti-Slavery Co-ordinator and completed his address with the Call to Action; 'Say No to Slavery in Wales.'

Dr Mwenya Chimba – Violence Against Women Director, BAWSO (Black Association of Women Step Out) – Why we are here today; 'Rachel', a Survivor's Story.

BAWSO is an all-Wales, Welsh Government Accredited Support Provider, delivering specialist services to people from Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) backgrounds who are affected by domestic abuse and other forms of abuse, including Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage, Human Trafficking & Prostitution.

Dr Chimba introduced 'Rachel - a Survivor's Story' to remind delegates why we were at the conference.

'Rachel' had been intending to attend the conference in person to tell of her ordeal herself but had withdrawn at the last moment as she no longer felt able. Nonetheless, her courage was acknowledged and she was thanked for her account which was related by Dr Chimba on her behalf.

'Rachel' described how she had been sold by her family in Nigeria as they had been unable to pay for livestock purchased. She had been trafficked to the UK and exploited initially into domestic servitude and thereafter working as a prostitute.

Rachel's story, as related by Dr Chimba, captivated the delegates and served as a timely reminder of the scale of the issues being faced by those tackling Slavery.

Jeff Farrar – Chief Constable, Gwent Police – Slavery in Wales

Chief Constable Farrar is the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) lead in Wales on Protecting Vulnerable People, Performance Management and Human Trafficking and chairs the Welsh Government Effective Services for Vulnerable People Board.

He challenged delegates by asking: 'What would you do if you walked into Queen Street (main shopping thoroughfare in Cardiff) this afternoon and saw someone begging in the street with a child?'

He emphasised that in his view, human trafficking and slavery is about vulnerability and accountability. It is also about 'joined up' public services – more than partnership working – tackling such vulnerability in a coherent and effective way, with the 'victim' at the very heart of the process.

Mr Farrar also commented on the need for accountability; 'It's good to have the conversation, but who is doing what?' He also stressed the need for a performance management regime to hold people to account.

Simon Maal – Detective Chief Inspector, South Wales Police – Building the Intelligence Picture of Slavery in Wales.

He is the lead officer for the Wales Regional Organised Crime Unit (Tarian) whose main focus is to develop and disseminate intelligence on a national, regional and force level.

Through intelligence gathering operations mounted by Tarian, a better understanding of the scale and impact of Modern Slavery is being sought. DCI Maal chairs the Wales Anti-Slavery Intelligence Board which is made up of law enforcement partners and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

He stressed the importance of sharing information and intelligence across all organisations and the challenges of trust and accountability this poses.

Paul Broadbent – Chief Executive, Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA) – Working Together to Protect Vulnerable Workers.

The GLA is a UK Government Agency addressing issues of human trafficking and the exploitation of workers. The Authority works closely with the retail industry, public/private sectors, cross Government and national and international law enforcement agencies. The GLA is responsible for the provision of regulatory control and law enforcement where labour is provided across the UK.

Paul spoke of the new requirements arising from the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and the need for transparency in supply chains. Whilst there was consultation ongoing around the size of the organisation this would specifically apply to, all organisations are to be encouraged to develop processes to eliminate the possibility of exploitation.

He highlighted: 'Labour exploitation is prevalent wherever low paid, low skilled and high demand labour is required.'

Offer Stern-Weiner, Head of the Home Office Modern Slavery Unit – The Modern Slavery Act 2015 (MSA) and the National Referral Mechanism Review

Offer and his team at the Home Office Modern Slavery Unit is responsible for the implementation of the provisions of the Modern Slavery act 2015 and the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) Review recommendations.

The National Referral Mechanism is a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking and ensuring they receive the appropriate protection and support.

The NRM is also the mechanism through which the UK Human Trafficking Centre collects data about victims. This information contributes to building a clearer picture about the scope of human trafficking in the UK.

The NRM was introduced in 2009 to meet the UK's obligations under the Council of European Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. At the core of every country's NRM is the process of locating and identifying "potential victims of trafficking" (PVoT).

The NRM grants a minimum 45-day reflection and recovery period for victims of human trafficking. Trained case owners decide whether individuals referred to them should be considered to be victims of trafficking according to the definition in the Council of Europe Convention.

Mr Stern-Weiner highlighted some of the main aims of the Modern Slavery Unit out of the MSA and the NRM Review:

1. Improved victim care
2. Effective training and victim identification
3. Productive partnerships
4. Private sector working with supply chains
5. Evaluation of law enforcement activity

Through the NRM review and the desire to improve the experience for PVOTs, Mr Stern-Weiner signposted a document: www.humantraffickingfoundation.org/trafficking-survivor-care-standards

The Modern Slavery Unit is hoping to begin its appraisal of the NRM Review following the completion of two pilot schemes; one in the south-west of England and one in the north this autumn.

The latest (interim) report on the NRM Review can be found at <https://nrm.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

Kevin Hyland OBE, UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner – The role of the UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner

Kevin Hyland is the first UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, as appointed by the Home Secretary 13th November 2014. The creation of the role is one of the key provisions of the Modern Slavery Bill.

In his new capacity, the Commissioner will spearhead the UK's fight against modern slavery, with a concerted focus on strengthening law enforcement efforts in the UK and internationally and helping to ensure that public authorities identify and support slavery victims effectively.

Mr Hyland recognised the good work that is already going on in Wales which has helped to shape much of what is contained within the Modern Slavery Bill but also spoke of the challenges of implementation that lie ahead. He is sure that the strong political will and leadership that is required exists within the UK Government, but commented; 'Will and words are not enough – action is required'.

The Commissioner is also very keen to explore the implementation of preventative measures and his work has already taken him to Nigeria, Romania, Vatican City etc.

Kim-Ann Williamson, Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group; Kate Hood, Accredited Training Lead & Dr Sam Clutton, Assistant Director Policy, Barnardo's Cymru – Launch of the All Wales Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation Training

This 'All Wales' training is the first of its kind in Wales, and followed extensive research and campaign work by Barnardo's to highlight the level of need in Wales and the lack of support services.

Also, the various levels of practitioner training already being rolled-out across Wales have exposed a gap in the recognition of links between child sexual exploitation and trafficking and this course is designed to complement the awareness raising practitioner training already in existence.

The formal launch of this Training Package is fully supported by all agencies and will be delivered across Wales providing the necessary guidance, knowledge and expertise to those staff working with children and young people who are at risk of or being abused through sexual exploitation.

Rachel Henderson, Caerlas, Sex Worker Project Officer – The Wales Sex Worker Project: Reducing Exploitation through Prostitution

This sex worker support project was the first of its kind in Wales and aimed to:

- locate all forms of sex work in Wales, setting a baseline for future research
- engage with sex workers and identify the needs of sex workers
- share areas of good practice

The voices of sex workers, the community and stakeholders have been brought to light through this project, demonstrating key findings and making recommendations that address the needs of the sex work community across Wales with a view to reducing the risk of exploitation.

Workshops

Delegates broke out into Workshops to learn and share best practice on different facets of modern slavery:

1. Slavery Reception Centres – Case studies - ‘Operation Base’ and ‘Operation Fulcrum’ – Jim Coy, North Wales Regional Anti-Slavery Co-ordinator and Detective Inspector Dan Michel, South Wales Police.
2. Child Exploitation – Chloe Setter, Head of Advocacy, Policy & Campaigns (Child Trafficking) ECPAT UK.
3. Survivor Care Pathway – Dr Mwenya Chimba, Violence Against Women Director, BAWSO.
4. Tackling Labour Exploitation in Wales – Transparency in the Employment Chain – Mark Heath, Head of Business Change and Development, Gangmasters Licensing Authority.

The Wales Anti-Slavery Conference presented delegates with the opportunity to hear from leading experts on new and changing policy and how services can effectively coordinate to implement sufficient safeguarding procedures against exploitation.

Key elements of the day included improving the way potential victims are identified and supported; the role of multi-agency working models in coordinating services; the role that health, social and other services must play in identifying and supporting victims; creating awareness in local communities; and the relationship between slavery, forced crime and immigration and asylum processes.