

LGA conference - modern slavery: disruption and community
Wednesday 21 November 2018

Overview of the council role
Ellie Greenwood, Senior Adviser, Local Government Association

Introduction

- Good morning everybody.

- My name is Ellie Greenwood and I'm a senior adviser in the safer communities team here at the LGA. Along with my colleague Jessica Norman, I support our work on modern slavery.

- It's a pleasure to welcome you to Smith Square today.

- The aim of this short session is to put the rest of the day into context by setting out councils' role in relation to tackling modern slavery.

- Although the main focus of our event is disruption, I know that we have in attendance a number of councillors as, well as officers from a range of different backgrounds.

- I thought it might be helpful for all of us to get a sense of each other's roles and where colleagues are in relation to work on modern slavery.

- Can I therefore ask you to raise your hand if you:
 - Are a councillor?

 - Are an officer working in a role that may be directly involved in disrupting MS, eg regulatory role or community safety?

- An officer working in a role that perhaps has more of a safeguarding focus, for victims of modern slavery?

- In terms of your councils, is modern slavery an issue that your authority:
 - Has been working on for some time?
 - Or something that you have come to more recently?

- In terms of multi-agency working, how many of you clear on local partnership structures for addressing modern slavery?

- As expected, we have a mix of different professional roles present, and of councils which are at different stages in their work.

- That clearly reflects the range of different services and officers that may become involved in modern slavery, and the extent to which work on modern slavery has been rapidly developing over the past couple of years.

Councils' role in tackling modern slavery

- As Cllr Rhodes has said, the LGA's work on modern slavery began in earnest when the former Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner Kevin Hyland attended the LGA Safer and Stronger Communities Board back in January 2017.
- The Commissioner outlined that modern slavery is happening right here, right now and that it's happening in every part of the country. In businesses, on our high streets, and in houses in our neighbourhoods.
- He was clear that many different types of people can become victims of slavery, including people from the UK as well as from abroad – we'll hear from the National Crime Agency next about these types of trends in MS.
- But for all victims, wherever they are from, the perpetrators are ruthlessly exploiting people's vulnerabilities to make a profit.
- The Safer and Stronger Communities Board agreed that councils play a vital role in tackling this crime, but felt that there was a lack of guidance for councils to draw on. The Board agreed that by working jointly with the Commissioner's office the LGA could fill this gap and help our member councils.
- The result is our council guidance on modern slavery, which is available on our website. The guide outlines what modern slavery is, the legislative framework for modern slavery, and councils' role in tackling it.
- The Guide outlines the different ways in which councils can work on this issue. There are four distinct areas of work:

1. identification and referral of victims
2. supporting victims
3. community safety and disruption activities
4. and finally, ensuring that the supply chains councils procure from are free from modern slavery.

- **So, firstly, identification and referral of potential victims.**
- Councils are under a duty, under Section 52 of the Modern Slavery Act, to identify potential victims of modern slavery, and refer them to the Government. Councils are what's known as first responders, meaning that they can refer victims directly.
- As first responders it is important that council staff understand the signs of modern slavery and how to spot potential victims, as well as knowing how their council manages referrals for potential victims.
- For child victims and consenting adults referral is done through the National Referral Mechanism, also known as the NRM.
- For adults who don't consent to enter the NRM, councils are still under a duty to notify the Government but should fill out an MS1 Form instead.
- The NRM provides a framework to identify, refer and record potential victims of modern slavery, whilst the MS1 form provides intelligence to help give a fuller picture of modern slavery in the UK.
- Once a person enters the NRM, the first step is a reasonable grounds decision - which means that from the information available "I suspect but cannot prove" that the person maybe a victim of modern slavery. The competent authorities aim to make this decision within 5 days.
- Potential victims are then eligible to receive support through a government funded contract with the Salvation Army; we'll hear this afternoon from one of the organisations providing support under that contract.

- The support provided includes a recovery and reflection period of 45 days. During this time a conclusive grounds decision is made.
- At the end of the NRM process if someone receives a positive conclusive grounds decision they have 14 days to exit Salvation Army support, if they have a negative grounds decision they have 48 hours to exit support.
- As many of you will know, the NRM process is currently being reformed. This will contain a number of changes, including for local government.
- The Government is just launching a consultation on the role of first responders, and piloting changes that lengthen the period of support provided to victims who go through the NRM.
- It will introduce a digital system, and establish a single body for reviewing referrals, regardless of where a victim is from or their immigration status.
- It is expected that the changes will be introduced across 2019 and into 2020, when the current Salvation Army contract ends.

- **Exiting the NRM process brings us onto councils' second key role**, supporting victims.
- Depending on the age and needs of victims of modern slavery, councils may have statutory responsibilities to provide support to them through child or adult safeguarding.
- However, it should also be noted that a lot of adult victims will not meet the thresholds within the Care Act for social care support, although victims may come into contact with housing or homelessness services.
- This reflects a stark challenge in how we support the victims of modern slavery, in that housing and care resources are already stretched very thinly, and the support that councils might want to give to victims may simply not be possible given current constraints.

- **Thirdly**, councils can play a key role in undertaking community safety and disruption activities.
- Modern slavery is a complex, serious and often organised crime. Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act councils have a duty to do all that they reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in their areas, which will include modern slavery and trafficking. There are a range of crimes where councils may come across victims and perpetrators of modern slavery, including county lines, child sexual exploitation, gangs, violent crime, drugs and forced begging, amongst others.
- Many parts of the council have powers of entry and inspection that can be used to disrupt the activities of traffickers and criminal networks. Utilising these regulatory tools – whether in relation to housing, or different types of businesses - can help councils to provide a comprehensive community safety response.
- Partners such as the police and GLAA find that the wide range of powers councils have can be invaluable in disrupting modern slavery, as well as other criminal activity.
- An Environmental Health Officer I was speaking to in Rotherham once commented how gob-smacked the police were when they realized the ability regulatory officers have to enter premises, without a warrant, under food law and other areas of legislation.

- **Finally**, councils' fourth role is to consider how they can ensure that the supply chains they procure from are free from modern slavery.
- Currently, councils are not legally required to produce a transparency in supply chains statement under the Modern Slavery Act. But that may change in future, as there is currently an independent review into the Act which is looking at issues including supply chains.
- Either way, the LGA's view is that councils should lead the way by doing so.
- More than sixty councils have already produce a modern slavery statement, and we expect that number to rise to 100 by the end of the year.
- There are a number of examples and tools on our website, and we are looking at developing a risk map of modern slavery for local authority supply chains.
- We strong encourage councils to consider human rights due diligence when undertaking procurement, working with suppliers to address any issues as they arise.

- All four of these areas must, of course, be underpinned by effective partnership working both internally within councils and externally with partners such as the police, the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority and the third sector.
- Internally, modern slavery cuts across many different areas that councils are involved with, and a number of different departments may come across it whilst going about their everyday duties.
- It is therefore important that councils consider how best to ensure a common approach to modern slavery across their organisation and local area. Identifying a lead officer for modern slavery may help to provide a focal point and coherence to cross-organisational work on the issue.
- Externally, councils are also part of a wide number of partnerships and Boards which can all play a role in tackling this issue through sharing information, joint activities and targeted work.
- The Anti-Slavery Commissioner's office has worked with Nottingham University to produce a map of modern slavery partnerships and partnerships toolkits. We'll hear more about these later, but both provide a valuable resource for councils and their partners to draw on.

- In conclusion, I hope that has been a useful overview of the role that councils have on this issue.
- We **all** have a part to play in tackling modern slavery and we hope that you'll find and today's event, useful in helping you to do so.
- The LGA is always keen to hear from councils about the work they are doing to tackle modern slavery, so do please come and speak to Jess or I during the day to tell us about your work, and how we can support you.