

Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods

Report to Executive Board

Date: 20th June 2012

Subject: Response to the Full Council Deputation by Active Communities Against Trafficking (ACT) Group.

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. This report provides a Safer Leeds response to the deputation by the Active Communities Against Trafficking (ACT) group. The deputation highlights the plight of victims of human trafficking and gives examples of individuals who have entered the UK legitimately to work in restaurants and who have had their passports taken from them by restaurant owners been subject to fourteen hour working days, seven days a week and received constant verbal and physical threats in conditions of neglect, abuse deprivation and economic exploitation. The deputation also refers to a case of a woman who was trafficked for sexual exploitation. The deputation is attached at appendix 1.
2. ACT describe themselves as deriving from a global movement called Stop The Traffik and aim to provide people with resources and tools to address trafficking. ACT are seeking Leeds City Council's support to instigate a range of awareness raising sessions to educate staff working in the transport and leisure industries.
3. Specifically, ACT is requesting that the council give:
 - 3.1 Permission to launch poster and flyer campaigns in train stations
 - 3.2 Funding
 - 3.3 Staff resources to deliver awareness raising sessions

- 3.4 Help to raise awareness through different mediums
- 3.5 Permission to use the Town Hall or another high profile venue to host an awareness event in Leeds

Recommendations

It is recommended to Executive Board that:

- i) It supports the initiative to raise awareness and take action against trafficking.
- ii) A letter is written to Dalia Hawley to support the campaign and raise with other Councils.
- iii) That, building on the many positive arrangements already in place, Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire Police affirm their commitment to tackling the issue of trafficking people.
- iv) That officers continue to review opportunities to develop and deliver work to address trafficking.

1.0 Purpose of the this report

- 1.1 This report provides a Safer Leeds response to the deputation by the Active Communities Against Trafficking (ACT) group. The deputation highlights the plight of victims of human trafficking.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 The hidden nature of trafficking makes it difficult to gain an accurate picture of its true scale and nature. Recent evidence has started to build a clearer picture of the numbers of victims in the UK. Project Acumen³, a study by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), estimates that there are at least 2,600 female adult victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in England and Wales. Reports from the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre suggest there are on average around 300 child trafficking victims in the UK per annum.
- 2.2 Human trafficking is an internationally organised crime with the exploitation of human beings for profit at its heart. It is an abuse of basic rights with organised criminals preying on vulnerable people to make money. In most cases, victims are brought to the UK from abroad but we know that trafficking also occurs within the UK. Children are also vulnerable to falling victim to exploitation. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (the 'Palermo Protocol') describes trafficking as:

'the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual

exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.’

- 2.3 Traffickers use threats, force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power and payment to control their victim. It is estimated that 17% of organised criminal networks operating in the UK are involved in organised immigration crime, of which a small proportion is human trafficking. Some groups organise the trafficking process from beginning to end, while others sub-contract aspects of the process, such as money laundering, or obtaining illegal passports and visas. Offenders are primarily driven by profit. Trafficking offers opportunity for profit because the continual exploitation of the victim’s body or labour generates money over a period of time. Underpinning this profit is demand, with people living in the UK paying money for sex or the products of labour exploitation.

3.0 Main issues

3.1 Council work and Priorities

- 3.2 Within Safer Leeds, Safeguarding has increasingly been prioritised and the Domestic Violence Team leads on the delivery of a city wide, multi agency Domestic Violence Action Plan to address domestic violence and sexual violence, including supporting victims who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation. As part of this work, the Domestic Violence Team works with a range of partners to increase standards of services to victims and their children and works at a strategic level to promote good practice and influence commissioning activity. Awareness raising initiatives, including producing a quarterly newsletter; twitter feeds and organising the Leeds 16 Days of Action, are supported by the team and this strand of work would link appropriately to the work of ACT.

Children are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked. The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board aims to protect and safeguard all children in Leeds. Work to address trafficking is integrated into a range of work strands including multi agency child protection training; policy and procedure development and work on Child Sexual Exploitation. LCC’s Children’s Social Work Service responses are key to identifying trafficked children or children at risk of being trafficked and this service is working hard to identify, assess and protect this vulnerable group.

The Leeds Safeguarding Adults Board supports work to address trafficking through the provision of care packages and tailored support to vulnerable adults. The Board facilitates the delivery of multi agency training on Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults which includes prompts to help practitioners identify and respond to adults who may be vulnerable to trafficking.

- 3.4 The council also commissions the Leeds Domestic Violence Service which works with female and male victims of domestic violence and including victims who have been trafficked into the UK and those trafficked within the UK. In addition, the council facilitates work to tackle child sexual exploitation which includes supporting those children being trafficked into and across the UK.

3.5 Police Response

- 3.5.1 Dealing with trafficking from a police perspective is currently being researched. It is not possible to quantify the precise scale and nature of the issue as it manifests itself within West Yorkshire. DI Vanessa Smith has undertaken a significant amount of work around trafficking issues in this force area and is preparing a full report which is intended to inform strategic thinking and result in an appropriate plan of action.
- 3.5.2 Trafficking people is linked to wider offending, often of a serious nature, as well as raising very real welfare issues for the victims. Behind trafficking you will often find organised crime groups, due to the scale and the complexities involved in bringing people across borders and concealing activity from the relevant authorities. The crime groups do this because there is money in it. The criminals involved might also have a background of committing very serious offences overseas, and in this case would have the potential to cause serious harm to people in West Yorkshire as well.
- 3.5.3 Even where the victims of trafficking are not at immediate risk of harm, they may be dependent on their 'employer' and are therefore open to manipulation. This might put them at risk of being drawn into the sub-cultures of drugs and low-level crime, e.g. shoplifting. Where they are trafficked for purposes of the sex trade, they face the additional problems faced by sex workers.
- 3.5.4 Trafficking of non EU Nationals is dealt with by the UK Border Agency and has a number of police officers seconded to the unit.

4.0 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Extensive consultation is being undertaken by ACT with key partners and key stakeholders and LCC will support this appropriately. Further public consultation is due to take place in Leeds in October 2012. Leeds City Council's Domestic Violence Team carries out consultation with service users to assess levels of need and ascertain what kind of services are most effective.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 The issue of trafficking is bound up with equality and diversity issues in that the most vulnerable and powerless members of society are targeted and exploited by perpetrators in more powerful positions. It is most likely that victims will be women and children, vulnerable adults and those whose who are experiencing poverty, uncertain immigration status and homelessness. The council is committed to tackling inequality and exploitation and this is embedded into all council procedures and service standards.

4.2.2 An independent impact assessment is not required for the approvals requested in this deputation however the council's domestic violence action plan has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 Leeds has a significantly diverse population and the local authority aims to ensure that the needs of all communities are met. The council, through the work of Safer Leeds and in partnership with West Yorkshire Police, is committed to tackling and intervening in any work to reduce crime, including work to address trafficking. In addition, one of Safer Leeds' key priorities is to Improve Safeguarding and Vulnerability. Victims of trafficking are particularly vulnerable and the council will continue to work with partners to ensure that victims receive appropriate support and that perpetrators are dealt with effectively.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 Domestic Violence Team to support the areas of work, namely staff resources to help with awareness-raising sessions.

5.0 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

5.5.1 There are no legal implications directly related to this report.

6.0 Risk Management

6.6.1 There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

7.0 Conclusions

7.7.1 The ACT submission highlights some of the issues facing people who are trafficked into the UK and proposes a number of strands of work to address the issue. ACT are requesting that the council give permission to launch poster and flyer campaigns in train stations; funding; staff resources to deliver awareness raising sessions and help to raise awareness through different mediums. It is realistic and relevant to the work of the council's Domestic Violence Team to support the two latter areas of work, namely staff resources to help with awareness raising sessions and help to raise awareness through different mediums and this can be achieved through direct contact with ACT.

8.0 Recommendations

It is recommended to Executive Board that:

8.1 It supports the initiative to raise awareness and take action against trafficking.

8.2 A letter is written to Dalia Hawley to support the campaign and raise with other Councils.

8.3 That, building on the many positive arrangements already in place, Leeds City Council and West Yorkshire Police affirm their commitment to tackling the issue of trafficking people.

8.4 That officers continue to review opportunities to develop and deliver work to address trafficking.

8.5 Consider possible venues for holding the event in Leeds

Background Documents

Deputation by Dalia Hawley on behalf of Active Communities Against Trafficking (ACT) Group

1. The background documents listed in this section are available for inspection on request for a period of four years following the date of the relevant meeting. Accordingly this list does not include documents containing exempt or confidential information, or any published works. Requests to inspect any background documents should be submitted to the report author.