

Joint Statement of the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group (IDMG) on Modern Slavery

Introduction

This is the third publication of the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group (IDMG) on Modern Slavery. Since the publication of the last IDMG report in October 2013, all UK administrations have made considerable progress in tackling this issue and establishing the UK as a true world leader in the fight against modern slavery. Given the significant volume of activities ongoing, this year's publication is a short, action-focused update, with a more comprehensive report planned for next year.

UK-wide Activity

Through the IDMG and wider cross-Government activity, a number of UK-wide steps have been taken to strengthen and improve the coordination of our law enforcement response, enhance identification and support for victims, and to prevent people becoming victims of slavery and trafficking.

Specific legislation to tackle modern slavery and human trafficking is being progressed or planned in the UK Parliament, Northern Ireland Assembly, and Scottish Parliament. Administrations are liaising closely to ensure that these measures create a coordinated UK-wide response.

For instance, the Anti-slavery Commissioner, which will be established through the UK Government's Modern Slavery Bill, will, subject to the agreement of the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly, be extended to cover the whole of the UK. For the first time we will have an independent figure working across the administrations to improve the law enforcement response to modern slavery and the identification of victims.

Similarly, subject to the agreement of the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly, the maritime enforcement powers contained in the UK Government's Modern Slavery Bill will apply across the UK, ensuring there is no safe haven for slavers and traffickers at sea. We are also working together so that measures on areas such as civil orders and victim identification work effectively across the UK.

Identification is a key issue, as modern slavery is a hidden crime. To help counter this, a UK-wide awareness raising campaign took place this summer, which highlights how modern slavery occurs in the UK and encourages reporting to the newly launched Modern Slavery helpline (0800 0121 700), or through the website www.modernslavery.co.uk.

The UK is also absolutely determined to give victims of these appalling crimes the support and care that they need. A review of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), which is the process by which people who may have been trafficked are identified, referred, assessed and supported by the UK Government, will report shortly. This review will make sure that the NRM is working as effectively and supportively as possible.

Slavery and trafficking are global issues and the UK also supports international efforts to end this abhorrent crime. In June 2014, the UK supported the creation of a Protocol to support the Forced Labour Convention, a legally binding international instrument which will improve the international response to this crime, encouraging other nations to better protect and support victims of slavery.

UK Government Activity

In June 2014, the UK Government introduced the Modern Slavery Bill. The Bill will give law enforcement the tools they need to tackle modern slavery, ensure that perpetrators receive suitably severe sentences for these appalling crimes and enhance support and protection for victims. The UK Government also intends to amend the Bill to require businesses above a certain size threshold to disclose each year what they have done to ensure that there is no modern slavery in their supply chains.

Although the Bill will be world-leading, legislation can only ever be one part of the solution. The UK Government is taking forward a range of work alongside the Bill.

This includes: reviewing the support that victims receive, through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) review and the re-tender of the adult victim care contract; trialling a system of specialist independent advocates to support child victims of trafficking; developing and deploying specialist anti-slavery teams at the Border; and making modern slavery a priority for the National Crime Agency.

The UK Government has also taken steps to support better co-ordination and collaboration. The Gangmasters Licensing Authority, which does excellent work in preventing labour exploitation in its regulated sectors, has had its sponsorship transferred to the Home Office to improve collaboration with policing agencies. The management of the Victim Care contract has also been transferred to the Home Office to ensure policy development is aligned with the needs of victims.

We will set this out in more detail in the Government's Modern Slavery Strategy, which will be published later this year.

Welsh Government Activity

To tackle slavery in Wales the Welsh Government has established the Wales Anti-slavery Leadership Group, made up of key strategic decision makers from devolved and non-devolved organisations, and from other organisations including the voluntary sector. The Leadership Group has a Strategic Delivery Plan and the Wales Anti-slavery Operational Delivery Group coordinates this work and facilitates the sharing of good practice through the five Regional Anti-slavery Fora which have been established to cover Wales and are located in Cardiff, Dyfed Powys, Gwent, North Wales, and Western Bay.

Most cases of slavery are complex, both to investigate and prosecute. The Anti-slavery Coordinator has worked with the Police, the Crown Prosecution Service Wales and other partner organisations, including NGOs to develop a specialist joint training programme for Senior Investigating Officers and Prosecutors. The three-day programme, is currently delivered in South Wales every six weeks and, following a successful roll-out, will be delivered in North and West Wales in 2015.

A 'Survivor Care Pathway' has been established to support survivors of slavery by providing the best possible support enabling them to restore their life back to normal. The Pathway puts in place an individual plan for how 'wrap-around' support services are provided to the survivor from the beginning of the National Referral Mechanism 45 day 'reflection and recovery period', and beyond where necessary. In Wales, Bawso are sub-contracted by The Salvation Army to deliver the Home Office funded support to survivors. The Pathway was piloted in Cardiff and is now being rolled-out across Wales.

Northern Ireland Executive Activity

In Northern Ireland the Department of Justice (DOJNI) has continued to develop its collaborative working to tackle slavery and trafficking through strategic partnerships with statutory agencies; local government; and relevant civic society organisations as well as with neighbouring jurisdictions.

A Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill is progressing through the Northern Ireland Assembly. It includes measures to transform victim support and protection in Northern Ireland, as well as new offences and increased sentences to enhance public protection and to ensure that perpetrators in Northern Ireland can expect to face the full force of the law.

The Minister of Justice has published the second annual Human Trafficking and Exploitation Action Plan for Northern Ireland covering the multi-agency response to trafficking and exploitation. It identifies strategic priorities of strengthening law enforcement; protecting and supporting victims; and preventing human trafficking and exploitation. Good progress is being made against the plan.

Victims are a key priority. New contracts for support services to adult potential victims have been awarded by DOJNI and this support is to be given a statutory footing by the Bill. A significant focus has also been placed on training, awareness and education which continues to be delivered to law enforcement and prison staff; other frontline professionals; the private sector; and the wider public.

Reducing demand is also critical. With support from the EU, DOJNI is partnering the Irish Government in the "REACH" project, aimed at raising awareness of and reducing demand for human trafficking for sexual exploitation. A cross-border conference focusing on forced labour is also planned, co-hosted by the Irish Government.

Scottish Government Activity

In March 2014 the Scottish Government announced that it would bring forward bespoke human trafficking legislation. The purpose and aim of the Bill is to clarify and strengthen the criminal law against traffickers; introduce new measures to disrupt and prevent trafficking; ensure the rights of victims to access assistance and support and ensure a strategic, cross-agency approach to trafficking. The specific Bill proposals draw on recommendations from the various reports and inquiries published on this issue.

The hidden nature of this crime necessitates that a holistic approach be taken to tackle it. Measures that are necessary, practicable and sustainable require to be put in place. Therefore the Bill will commit Scottish Ministers to publish and update regularly a Scottish Anti-Trafficking strategy, setting out a vision and key objectives for a multi-agency approach to raising awareness of trafficking and making Scotland a hostile environment for traffickers. The Bill and Strategy will build on the work arising from the Scottish Human Trafficking Summit hosted in October 2012.

The Scottish Government is aware of the criticism of the NRM and is participating in the review of the NRM.

The 2014 Commonwealth Games were hosted in Scotland and a Police Scotland Action Plan was put in place. The Plan was developed to address specific issues in the lead up to and during the Commonwealth Games and included actions designed to prevent an increase in any trafficking ahead of the Games, deliver focused awareness raising and training and the provision of protection and support for potential victims.

In October 2014 the Lord Advocate hosted a Human Trafficking Summit bringing together, for the first time, the heads of prosecution from Scotland, England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland to discuss the issues involved in the detection and prosecution of trafficking offences and share operational experience.

Conclusion and Next Steps

These actions demonstrate the UK's determination to stamp out the evil of modern slavery. Across the UK, law enforcement are being given the tools they need to catch and prosecute the perpetrators of these heinous crimes and victims' support and care are being improved.

Next year a full report will be published outlining both the further actions across the UK to end these appalling crimes and a more detailed analysis of the nature and scale of modern slavery in the UK.



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