

# Counter Human Trafficking Bureau

## ***Victim identification and protection*** **Social Work Practice Pioneer Project**

### **Final evaluation report to the Social Care Institute for Excellence**

#### **Overview**

The Counter Human Trafficking Bureau (CHTB) is a social enterprise whose aim is to develop specialist professional skills, enhance safeguarding arrangements and improve the quality, availability and sharing of actionable information to better identify and protect victims of exploitation, violence and abuse.

Responding to concerns that there is insufficient knowledge among practitioners to effectively respond to the trafficking of human beings (THB), in particular in the area of identifying and assisting victims, CHTB has established an independent service as part of the Social Work Practice Pioneer Project (SWPPP) to improve victim outcomes (through a more specialist and holistic assessment of need) within the adult safeguarding sector.

This report outlines the work undertaken using grant funding from the Department of Health (and others), specifically capturing the positive outcomes in the context of people using the service and the innovative delivery of social work practice over the course of the last 12 months. This document is particularly timely, as 'working together' to better identify and protect victims has become a key priority within the recently adopted European Union (EU) Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings (2012-16) and the imminent implementation of the EU Directive on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting its Victims (2011). In addition, the government are facing scrutiny over their implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings following a monitoring visit by the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) late in 2011. That report (published in September 2012) reaffirms some of the practical recommendations made by the SOLACE study group (2009) into the role of local authorities, in which it concludes:

*'The greatest challenges in meeting the needs of victims of trafficking lie in the disparate levels of knowledge and understanding about the crime and the needs of the victims at the local level. Effective local leadership is needed to highlight the implications of the crime for the local area and to ensure that the council has a comprehensive approach to assisting the victims and preventing further trafficking.'*

In their report to the British authorities, GRETA acknowledged some of the work currently being developed, and recommended that they should 'continue to promote the training to local authority staff, health professionals and social workers' and that 'evidencing good practice rehabilitation' and enabling a more 'human rights based approach' was critical in taking action against the THB.

From the onset of this project (February 2012), we have aspired to embed a social work model within the national framework to identify and protect victims, to develop mechanisms with which to share good practice in Europe and to develop effective systems with which to enhance safeguarding responses locally. Albeit a longer-term approach towards improving outcomes and addressing any practice deficiencies, the delivery of pioneering social work directly to victims in need of support has begun to produce some real benefits, not least as part of informing the development of social work training and a set of professional standards in regards to safeguarding victims of human trafficking (and related forms of abuse or exploitation).

Although this project is still very much in its infancy, unprecedented opportunities are beginning to emerge from our ongoing commitment to support decision-making in this area and our preparatory efforts to engage partners early. The business approach that we have used demonstrates a sustainable, durable solution that is flexible and able to adapt to our learning and the fast-moving, continually changing policy environment in which we inhabit.

## **Project implementation**

Early on in the project, we marketed the SWPPP across a wide range of local services, with a particular focus on areas where there is high activity associated with suspected human trafficking and exploitation (such as the North West, the Midlands and Greater London). Potential stakeholders that were approached initially (and at first, to little avail) included local authority (adult safeguarding) boards, hospitals (and other health services), police forces and support providers. The perceived uncertainty and pressures associated with budgetary cuts presented an immediate challenge, as did:

- demonstrating the utility of the project without being too critical of systemic weaknesses between agencies and our potential customers involved in safeguarding vulnerable people;
- continually pushing and awaiting the outcomes of time-consuming contract negotiations;
- keeping the model small and cost-efficient when demand was inconsistent and where pockets of need appeared to be spread across different regions.

Although currently outside the scope of this report, there has been significant interest from children's services and our partners in Wales and Scotland that see this project as complimenting (and as a key component to enhancing) their own statutory frameworks as part of meeting obligations set out by the Council of Europe Convention and other international human rights legislation.

The project therefore needed to adapt, and we are currently delivering (on a trial basis) a bespoke package for the Metropolitan Police's Specialist Crime and Operations Unit on Human Exploitation and Organised Crime (SC&O 9) by offering outreach support to suspected victims (who are also key witnesses in criminal proceedings against their abusers). Indications show that this collaborative (fully independent), cross-local authority, spot-purchased service arrangement has helped to overcome many of the barriers that we had originally identified. Used in this way, our holistic trafficking assessment framework has resulted in some unintended positive outcomes, derived in part from pioneering assessment practices (never before used in criminal proceedings) to retrospectively age-assess a witness whose circumstances make them unable to recount the time of their abuse. Other social work roles that we have offered include:

- undertaking victim-centred threat assessments (within 24 hours in emergency circumstances);
- carrying out initial risk and needs assessments of potential victims (who may not have any visible factors determining vulnerability);
- acting as intermediaries to support the communication needs of witnesses with mental ill health in giving evidence;
- signposting towards obtaining legal advice and bringing perpetrators to justice;
- conducting joint information-gathering exercises to assist in the formal identification of trafficking victims (via a police referral to the National Referral Mechanism);
- signposting towards statutory services (where appropriate) within the national framework and/or linking to other discretionary or voluntary services such as health or drug and alcohol support;
- crisis management and advice.

Preparatory work with the Salvation Army and the Ministry of Justice is now also about to be realised, opening up the opportunity to deliver this project within the national framework as a fully funded service to identify local authorities, their partners and/or suspected victims or survivors. A similar project is being negotiated with partners that have links to councils within the South West and as part of our innovative holistic approach, to make available additional services such as:

- care planning and reviews of potential or confirmed victims to update the social care risk assessment and management record;
- restorative justice initiatives such as survivor support, counselling and mentoring programmes;
- exit planning and coordinating integrating or re-integration (voluntary safe returns) efforts for potential victims;
- profiling of threat data in order to develop a localised confidential activity matrix;

- management advice and consultancy on developing protocols and strategies within and between agencies and departments.

## **The difference it has made for people who use services**

Although there are some wide-ranging benefits to victims generally associated with the changing policy environment with which this project continues to influence, primary outcome indications from the limited number of cases that we are delivering services to (as part of the delivery model adapted for SC&O 9) show that experiences (as far as can be reasonably expected) has been positive. In a special report published in *Community Care* magazine (May 2012), independent social worker Vivien Griffiths spoke about the work that she had undertaken as part of the CHTB team in responding to the psychological needs of a suspected victim of human trafficking:

*'This work is about providing advice to police investigating officers on issues around capacity, how best to question the victim in order to get the best evidence, and how to ensure that the needs of the victim are met. In doing this, I would use a range of assessment tools to establish how the person communicates, what difficulties they may have in understanding questions (or in communicating their answers) before deciding what strategies may suit them best. Mostly, this would involve an informal chat and collating previous information about the needs of the victim before undertaking any formal assessment process.'*

While it has not been possible to gain formal feedback from people who use services (given the nature of ongoing police investigations and the often severe and enduring circumstances which make them vulnerable), tangible outward differences to suspected victims includes them being protected from further harm, gaining access to medical treatment (and counselling) as well as receiving information regarding their legal rights. Through working closely with the police and others, victims have been afforded opportunities to seek punitive and restorative justice and as such, to exercise their fundamental human rights and freedoms.

In practical terms, this has been achieved under the following three main pillars.

### ***Personalisation***

The delivery of services is structured according to the suspected victim's wishes both in regards to the organisations they wish to be involved in and the way in which assessments are structured to meet their needs. The voice of the victim is crucially important in enabling the recovery process to start and lead to a successful outcome for victims. In all of the cases, this process has begun in earnest. Each care plan is created in collaboration with the victim, with the provision of services being victim-centred (it is not generic) and substantively victim-led. At times, however, we have experienced occasions where the trauma suffered by victims (and the conditioning tactics used by human traffickers) have led to them presenting behaviour that is a real risk to their own safety. Working with such challenging cases has led to much longer periods of recovery

to enable them (as survivors) to be active and contributing members of their communities.

### ***Partnership***

Although feedback from the police has shown that the highly specialist input that this project provides ensures that suspected victims have the opportunity to receive the care and support to which they are entitled, this would not be possible without being able to work together with third sector support providers (such as Eaves for Women), the NHS, local adult safeguarding boards, the Home Office (particularly in the cases of those victims with no recourse to public funds) and the prime care coordinator (the Salvation Army and their partners). As part of this collaborative approach, suspected victims have benefited health-wise in particular from flexible arrangements to minimise the duplication of assessments (avoiding repetition and the continual reliving of trauma). Furthermore, benefits have been realised by way of clearly mapping out the roles of agencies and their respective relationships and processes to assist the victim with their recovery.

### ***Protection***

Access to advice pertaining to the rights of victims under UK and EU law (as well as other rights enshrined under the EU Conventions) are embedded in the operating model and have been a fundamental element in structuring the project. Victims have benefited from feeling safe as a result of our close working relationship with the police and support providers who might also be involved in their day-to-day care. Appropriate safeguards (including information sharing and access to secure accommodation) against the risk of further exploitation and abuse to minimise the potential of victims being re-trafficked is a cornerstone that has both enabled victims to share their experiences with confidence and slowly gain of all of the necessary information as part of the decision-making and recovery process effecting their lives. Through our partnership work (and the consent of victims to share information as appropriate), with law enforcement agencies in particular, indications show that the victims have benefited from feeling reassured that their protection can also be achieved through the prosecution of traffickers, and that by collaborating, they may also be protecting as yet unidentified victims.

## **The difference it has made for social work and social workers**

Feedback from social workers who have been involved at every stage in designing and running the bespoke package for the Metropolitan Police's Specialist Crime Directorate shows that they have used their skills, dedication, compassion and imagination to enhance social work practice for protecting suspected human trafficking victims. Social work lead Philip Ishola speaks about the work that he has undertaken to manage and develop the skills of independent social workers within the service:

*'One of my main roles within the CHTB is to help develop pioneering social work practices and to inform preventative human trafficking strategies on a local, regional, national and international basis, bringing together the skills of professionals, practitioners*

*and experts specifically trained and experienced in their specialist areas of work. This includes helping local authorities and the police to undertake victim needs and threat assessments as part of using a harmonised, holistic approach to identify the risks to vulnerable adults [and children]. As well as looking at a suspected victim's psychological or emotional needs and their connection to different communities both inside and outside of the UK, I actively seek to corroborate different pieces of information and victimology in order to establish a risk profile that helps vulnerable people to remain safe.'*

### **Enhanced practice for social workers**

Although the measurable differences made to social work practice is still in its infancy, the notable encouragement of the creation of cross-border partnerships to enhance existing knowledge within the sector has had considerable benefits.

In particular, the inclusion of EU Trafficking Conventions and developing the human rights-based approach within our social work framework has fostered a flexible, multiagency approach that is victim-centred and advocates social work practice as the lead mechanism to assess risk, need, integration and re-integration within a global environment. To support this further, we are looking at developing virtual conference facilities to enhance case management and to plan care more effectively (including professionals and victim care charities and care workers from within and outside the UK where required).

As well as social workers feeling empowered (by way of leading on the continued development of the project), social work practice has benefited from the direct application of a holistic victim (and survivor) approach to assessment and multiagency social work practice. This includes the application of trafficking assessment techniques covering victim needs, mental capacity assessments and the complex 'international' assessment of risk. These techniques were successfully developed and tested over three years within children's case work, and are now beginning to have a major effect in the field of adult safeguarding. The application of this project in a multiagency environment has started the process of 'sharing and embedding' practice-based knowledge in order to enable local authorities, the police, health providers and third sector organisations to come together and deliver what is a comprehensive package of services to victims. A critical factor in being able to link this project to the national framework over the coming months is the approach that has been taken to allow for victims to become survivors. Crucially for social work practice, this has led to the early alignment of statutory service delivery and in partnership with the Salvation Army (as the UK's prime contractor of care and support to victims of human trafficking) we are looking to extend this approach to the wider survivor recovery theatre within the next three months.

It is envisaged that the deployment of holistic social work methods based on individual case work and assessment, group work and community intervention will prove critical in raising the profile of social work practice. While our involvement and the outcome of test cases currently being put together by the Metropolitan Police's Specialist Crime Directorate involving victims as key witnesses may prove to be the acid test going

forward, we have already begun to demonstrate the utility of using an enhanced theoretical approach (using culturagrams, for example, to provide critical insight into cultural inequalities, and the connection between the suspected victims and their respective community).

Given the associated (and often inextricable) international context of this work, we feel that there are also tremendous advantages in applying the macro-level theories that are beginning to help us understand the root causes of inequalities at a community level. Through our commitment to a more unified (EU level response), we are working with our international partners to see how this level of understanding can be used as an upstream tool in order to help identify and protect potential victims earlier, even within their countries of origin.

## **Effectiveness and sustainability**

Although the CHTB was established as a social enterprise nearly two years ago, the grant funding from SCIE has been critical in accelerating opportunities with which to demonstrate a stronger evidence and knowledge base of how social work practice can enhance outcomes for victims of human trafficking (or similar forms of exploitation and abuse). In the same way that domestic violence was once lacking an effective social work response, the SWPPP has begun to show how social workers can effectively intervene in everyday practice with victims, their families and survivors of human trafficking.

We are currently sharing the learning that we have gained with practitioners across a range of service areas (in particularly social work which occurs within the health and criminal justice sectors) as part of a Home Office-sponsored 'train the trainer' initiative aimed at improving identification and protection. Additionally, we are supporting a national Anti-Human Trafficking Conference (in partnership with the Salvation Army, the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office), which in April 2013 provided a unique arena for practitioners to come together to talk about their current obligations and experiences, to showcase examples of best practice, to build new relationships and to nurture multiagency collaboration.

Ongoing, we are seeking to compliment and augment both victim-centred and agency-specific outcomes in accordance with the national and international statutory and best practice requirements (to include, but not exclusively, services to males, victims of non-sexual abuse, non-recourse to funds and where the age of the victim is unknown or disputed). Improved outcomes for potential victims (whose circumstances make them vulnerable) and who may also become key witnesses in criminal proceedings against perpetrators includes:

- early identification and protection from avoidable harm
- an enhanced quality of life and a positive experience of care and support services
- a standard of living capable of ensuring secure accommodation and subsistence

- equal access to emergency medical treatment
- equal access to translation and interpretation services
- equal access to counselling and information as regards legal rights
- equal opportunity to seek punitive and restorative justice
- ability to exercise fundamental human rights and freedoms
- integration or re-integration.

Secondary outcomes envisaged as a result of an enhanced victim-centred methodology focus on the crucial areas of prevention and participation that have been identified within the UK government Human Trafficking Strategy. For partner agencies and civil society, this includes:

- better sector coordination locally, nationally as well as internationally
- effective investigation and prosecution of offenders
- safer cohesive communities raising prosperity and wellbeing
- enhanced ability to act early and where possible, prevent the harm from reaching the UK.

To achieve this, we have developed a three-year funding strategy that aims to generate at least 50% of its income from the sale of tools and social work services by 2016. Routes to market are currently being established with public authorities, practitioners and concerned individuals, and we are now actively seeking principle interim levels of grant funding to pilot and create these future income streams.

The shared learning events hosted by SCIE have been highly beneficial in shaping this strategy, particularly in hearing about the experiences of mutuals and the potential opportunities associated with delivering social work models outside of local authority controls. As a social enterprise, we see a strong correlation with that of the market for social investment, and are now exploring how best to demonstrate investment readiness. This is with a view to quantifying positive outcomes using an advanced measure of impacts and cost-effectiveness, both in terms of early interventions and the prospect of reduced overheads attributable to practices that can be delivered as a pooled resource.

## **Conclusion**

While the number of people who use services has remained consistently low, work is well underway to address some of the barriers associated with the project implementation. At the same time, the political will to consider the merits of independent social work models is growing, and there is a realisation that more needs to be done from within the sector to uphold the human rights of all people at risk of (or vulnerable to) abuse and exploitation.



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