

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

CELG(4)-32-13 Paper 8

Human Trafficking

Credwch
mewn plant
Believe in
children



Barnardo's
Cymru

Title: Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee's Scrutiny on Human Trafficking

From: Menna Thomas
Senior policy and research officer

E-mail: menna.thomas@barnardos.org.uk

Tel: 01639 620771

Address: Barnardo's Cymru Policy and Research Unit
19-20 London Road
Neath
SA11 1LE

- **This response may be made public.**
- **This response is on behalf of Barnardo's Cymru.**

Barnardo's registered Charity Nos. 216250 and SC037605
Rhifau Cofrestru'r elusen Barnardo's 216250 a SC037605

Information and working context of Barnardo's Cymru

Barnardo's Cymru has been working with children, young people and families in Wales for over 100 years and is one of the largest children's charities working in the country. We currently run 82 diverse services across Wales, working in partnership with 19 of the 22 local authorities, supporting in the region of 8,500 children, young people and families last year.

Barnardo's Cymru services in Wales include: care leavers and youth homelessness projects, young carers schemes, specialist fostering and adoption schemes, family centres and family support, parenting support, community development projects, short breaks and inclusive services for disabled children and young people, assessment and treatment for young people who exhibit sexually harmful or concerning behaviour and specialist services for children and young people at risk of, or abused through, child sexual exploitation.

Every Barnardo's Cymru service is different but each believes that every child and young person deserves the best start in life, no matter who they are, what they have done or what they have been through. We use the knowledge gained from our direct work with children to campaign for better childcare policy and to champion the rights of every child. We believe that with the right help, committed support and a little belief, even the most vulnerable children can turn their lives around.

Our experience of working with trafficked children and young people

- Barnardo's has been tackling child sexual exploitation since 1994 and has 23 specialist services across the UK
- In Wales Barnardo's Cymru Seraf service offers specialist services to young people at risk of, or experiencing, child sexual exploitation and trafficking in Wales. The service also offers training and awareness raising work with regard to child sexual exploitation.
- In England Barnardo's has three trafficking services in London, Hampshire and Manchester. As well as direct work with children, these provide awareness and training also.
- We run a specialist fostering service in the South East of England that provides family placements for unaccompanied asylum seeking children, including trafficked children, and supports them through the asylum process.
- Our 16+ service runs a residential unit for looked after and accommodated unaccompanied asylum seeking children, including trafficked children, in Glasgow.

1. The role of the Wales Anti-Human Trafficking Co-ordinator, including its effectiveness and achievements so far.

We are very encouraged to see local Anti-Human Trafficking Groups being established across the country. However, we have some concerns that the coverage is not comprehensive with some areas of Wales not having access to such groups. We consider that these forums have the potential to address some of the more persistent barriers to addressing human trafficking, most of which are derived from a lack of awareness of the problem. Some of these barriers have been identified and highlighted again recently in The Centre for Social Justice's Slavery Working Group policy report: 'It Happens Here: Equipping the UK to fight modern slavery' and include:

- The postcode lottery of responsiveness and service provision.
- The lack of awareness amongst organisations listed as NRM First Responders of the issue of trafficking and the existence of a protocol to address it.
- The lack of training for First Responders in relation to using the NRM.
- The problem of trafficked young people ending up in the criminal justice system due to this lack of awareness.
- The absence of a trafficking and human slavery component to some of our key professional trainings such as social work and teaching.
- The lack of knowledge and awareness with regard to the internal trafficking of young people for sexual exploitation.
- The need for more formal multi-agency work, such as co-located teams, or multi-professional teams to address the related issues of trafficking, child sexual exploitation and missing children.
- The lack of data collection in relation to human trafficking.

There is currently a focus on awareness raising activity in the form of public campaigns and the development of consistent, high quality training. Awareness raising and training, in relation to child trafficking, has been attempted previously via a Welsh Government E-learning course and LSCBs have also delivered training locally on child trafficking in some areas. It may be that giving professionals and practitioners more local control and involvement and access to a professional network for support and advice, will help to push these initiatives more firmly. The establishment of a Human Trafficking Leadership Group at strategic government level to guide the work of the local groups is also helpful, as is the plan to fund an Anti-Human Trafficking post in each area to drive the work forward.

2. The effectiveness of multi-agency working between UK and Welsh Government departments and the other bodies such as health boards and the police

We are not in a position to comment on the working relationship between the UK and Welsh Government departments. However 'It Happens Here: Equipping the UK to fight modern slavery' makes a very strong argument for the establishment of an Anti-Human Trafficking Commissioner at UK level with similar status to a Children's Commissioner. We are aware that this proposal may be taken forward through the forthcoming Modern Slavery Bill.

What can we expect from this potential new role in terms of the relationship with our own Anti-Human Trafficking Co-ordinator? What will it offer to trafficked children and young people in Wales and organisations that work with them?

What we think needs to change in order to better address the problem of internal child trafficking:

Within Wales there have been some useful developments in tackling child trafficking. The first Anti-human Trafficking Forum was established in Gwent, and emanated from Gwent Police. This was followed by Operation Artemis which addresses the perpetration of child sexual exploitation. More recently Gwent have established a multi-agency Missing Service.

Barnardo's Cymru would like to see the establishment of similar multi-agency teams across Wales. Across the UK, Barnardo's are involved in a number of multi-agency arrangements such as the ENGAGE Project¹, established by Lancashire Police. We believe that child sexual exploitation and trafficking and missing children could be the remit of single multi-agency teams, co-locating professionals to enable swift and efficient information exchange and improved interventions.

Recent legislation such as The Mental Health (Wales) Measure and The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Bill set the scene for extensive multi-agency working. We expect to see further opportunities for establishing multi-agency work similar to the ENGAGE project with police forces and safeguarding boards across Wales.

We are encouraged by the current work being undertaken by North Wales Police to address the problem of missing children, and those at risk of or exposed to sexual exploitation.

Children and young people trafficked into Wales and the UK:

There are a number of important interventions to safeguard and protect children and young people at points of entry into the UK eg. Operation Paladin at Heathrow. This is a joint initiative between the Metropolitan Police, the UKBA and the Asylum Screening Unit at Croydon involving information sharing to enable the identification of trafficking suspects as they arrive or leave via Heathrow. In the Netherlands a charity called 'Nidos' works closely with the Border Police and the Immigration Service to identify unaccompanied and vulnerable children and ensure they are safely accommodated when they arrive in the country.²

¹ It Happens Here: Equipping the UK to fight modern slavery. The Centre for Social Justice. March 2013

² As above

We would like to see similar approaches and services made available at all ports and airports in Wales and across the UK.

Barnardo's is involved in multi-agency protocols at two ports in England which identify procedures to be followed where there are suspicions that a child may have been trafficked. Working with police, children's services and the port authorities, we provide one-to-one support to the child as well as advising on personal safety planning and providing a pathway to other services.

3. The role of local authorities in identification and awareness raising

The establishment of local Anti-Human Trafficking Groups in some areas and the changes anticipated in addressing safeguarding and child protection via the new regional Safeguarding Boards, will bring forward changes to the processes of information dissemination, training and service provision. It is too early to say whether these changes will lead to improvements in identification, multi-agency working and improved practice on the ground.

4. How the recommendations of the Council of Europe 2012 'GRETA' report and the 2009 SOLACE report on human trafficking are being taken forward and plans for future work.

Like other organisations, and as a First Responder, we have had concerns about the effectiveness of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Included in GRETA's proposals concerning the implementation of the Convention by the United Kingdom is section 20 where GRETA outline where they think improvements need to happen in order for the NRM to be made fit for purpose. We would like to draw attention to the following from sections 20 and 22:

As part of the review of the NRM, GRETA considers that the British authorities should:

- Entrust the identification of victims of trafficking who are illegally present in the UK to persons who are not involved in the asylum seeking procedure of the applicant, to avoid conflicts in the decision making*

Also Section 22:

Further GRETA urges the British authorities to take further steps to improve the identification of child victims of trafficking, and in particular to:

- Enhance the involvement of local authorities in the decision making process in order to ensure that the special needs and circumstances of children are taken into account during identification; in this context, it would be appropriate that Local Children's Safeguarding Boards(health*

and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland) act as Competent Authorities in child cases;

- *ensure that unaccompanied children are not returned from entry points before being fully assessed by local authority children's service;*
- *conduct interviews with child victims in a child friendly setting;*
- *train all professionals working with child victims of trafficking to recognise and respond appropriately to their needs;*
- *ensure that all unaccompanied minors who are potential victims of trafficking are assigned a legal guardian.*

We support GRETA's position in believing that immigration officials in the Home Office are not appropriately placed to judge the validity of these cases as the considerations made should be based on child protection issues rather than immigration issues. Immigration officials are unlikely to have specialist child protection knowledge to make such decisions. Our practitioners (in England based trafficking services) also report that some solicitors are unwilling to refer to the NRM as a negative decision can have an impact on the young person's asylum claim. This means that some children, who may have received a positive decision, miss out on the support they would have been entitled to. There is no reason to assume that this would be responded too any differently by some solicitors in Wales.

We know that NRM decisions have a huge impact on the support that trafficked children receive. We are very concerned by recent estimates that 65% of the total number of potential victims of trafficking are not recorded in the NRM.³ We believe that this is indicative of a lack of awareness and training around the NRM amongst front-line professionals. We also know that some frontline staff retain a culture of disbelief towards trafficked children, believing that their primary motive is to be provided with asylum. For this reason we would urge the training sub-group of the Cardiff Human trafficking Group to ensure that they key message for professionals working with children is that trafficking is a child protection concern and that children are treated as children first and migrants second.

23. Further, GRETA urges the British authorities to take steps to address the problem of children going missing from local authority care, by providing suitable safe accommodation and adequately trained supervisors or foster carers.

In 2011 Barnardo's received grant funding from the Department for Education to deliver a two-year 'Safe Accommodation Project' in response to the concerns around the current care system to safeguard looked after young people who are at risk, or victims, of child sexual exploitation and/or trafficking. The project was aimed at under-18 year olds and included 13 specialist foster placements. Four of these placements were for victims of trafficking and nine for young people at risk, or victims, of CSE.

³ Association of Chief Police Officer of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. *Position from ACPO Lead's on Child Protection and Cannabis Cultivation on Children and Young People Recovered in Cannabis Farms*

An evaluation of the project was carried out by The International Centre for the Study of Sexually Exploited and Trafficked Young People at the University of Bedfordshire. The evaluation report was published in May 2013 and outlines eleven key messages for practice and an analysis of the cost effectiveness of placements.

http://www.beds.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/281374/Barnardo27s-SA-Project-Evaluation-Full-Report.pdf

Barnardos' Cymru Seraf Service are currently working with Swansea Local Authority and a private care provider to offer specialist residential provision to young people who are at risk, or are victims, of Child Sexual Exploitation.

.....

