

Local Members' Interest

N/A

Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee – 12th December 2016

Modern Slavery

Recommendation/s

1. It is recommended that the Safe & Strong Communities Select Committee scrutinises the progress made to date in relation to tackling modern slavery.

Report of Cllr Gill Heath, Cabinet Member for Communities and the Environment

Summary

2. The purpose of this report is to update the Safe & Strong Communities Select Committee on the development and progress in respect of the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent multi-agency partnership approach to tackle the issue of modern slavery, following on from the report that was presented to the Committee on 6th April.

Report

Background

3. Tackling modern slavery in Staffordshire requires a co-ordinated, consistent partnership approach. In April, a paper was presented to the Safe & Strong Communities Select Committee, and subsequently to the Safer Staffordshire Strategic Board, with the recommendation that a Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent multi-agency task and finish group be established to develop a partnership plan to tackle modern slavery. This approach was endorsed.
4. Subsequently, a pan-Staffordshire multi-agency Strategic Task & Finish Group was established to:
 - a. Oversee co-ordination of a consistent multi-agency partnership approach to tackling modern slavery across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.
 - b. Develop a joint Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent action plan, which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of partners, actions required and timescales.
 - c. Consider and recommend most appropriate governance arrangements for this area of work and consider how this can link in with existing and related areas of work.
5. This report provides an update on the work of the Modern Slavery Strategic Task & Finish Group to date.

Update on Progress

6. An action plan has been developed which outlines key areas of focus for the partnership. At the last meeting of the Strategic Task & Finish Group, leads were identified for each of the priorities within the Action Plan. These leads have been tasked with co-ordinating activity and requested to report back progress at the January 2017 meeting of the Group.
7. The following three actions were agreed as immediate key priorities:
 - a. developing a consistent and co-ordinated approach to training and awareness raising across the partnership workforce;
 - b. agreeing the operational arrangements for tackling modern slavery;
 - c. Identifying clear referral routes which align with existing processes and procedures.
8. Two subject-specific task groups have been established to address these actions on behalf of the partnership. These groups have met and reported back their progress to the last meeting of the Strategic Task & Finish Group in September.

Training Task Group

9. The Training Task Group is developing a Modern Slavery Training Framework (based on the existing partnership Prevent Training Framework). The purpose of the Framework is to enable organisations to prioritise their staff for training and to support them in identifying what type of training is required for different cohorts of staff. This is to encourage consistency in message across the partnership, and ensure that staff receive the right level of training for their role, while allowing organisations to be flexible in the methods they use to deliver the appropriate training. Elected members are included within the framework document, as a distinct cohort who will require training.
10. The Framework will include a tool to enable organisations to group staff into distinct 'cohorts' (depending on nature of role, level of contact with public etc.) and will outline the level of training required for each cohort. The framework document has been drafted and is being refined by the Task Group.
11. The next key areas of work for the Group are to develop a 'menu' of training (drawing upon existing training where available) which organisations can draw from; to identify existing training which could include an element on Modern Slavery (e.g. Safeguarding Level 1, CSE training etc.) and make these links, where appropriate; and to finalise the framework document, share with wider Strategic Task & Finish Group for input and endorsement and roll out to wider partnership.

Referral Routes Task Group

12. The Referrals Routes Task Group agreed that there is a requirement for consistent, clear routes for practitioners and members of the public who identify

concerns relating to modern slavery and wish to refer. Once agreed, these referral routes will be promoted through training and awareness-raising.

13. It was proposed that referrals of children would be made through the existing children's safeguarding referral pathways in both Staffordshire and Stoke, with processes being built into these pathways to ensure that referrals are made to the National Referral Mechanism¹ (NRM) and to ensure that the Police are alerted to these referrals in a timely way.
14. Adult victims of modern slavery who do not have 'care and support needs' (as defined in the Care Act) would not currently be picked up through adult safeguarding routes and it has been noted that existing safeguarding routes may not be the most appropriate pathway for these individuals. It has been suggested that as the vast majority of adult victims of modern slavery are unlikely to have care and support needs, it may be more pragmatic for referrals to be made via the Police in the first instance. Any victims who were identified as having 'care and support needs' would then be referred to adult safeguarding, as necessary. Further dialogue is taking place with Staffordshire Police and Stoke-on-Trent City Council with regard to the development of referral routes for adult victims.

Operational Arrangements

15. It was agreed by the Strategic Task & Finish Group that an operational forum was needed to enable partnership problem-profiling and problem-solving in relation to modern slavery and to facilitate and support multi-agency involvement and co-operation in enforcement activity.
16. A monthly operational group has been established which will:
 - a. Enable partners to share information / intelligence in relation to modern slavery;
 - b. Discuss recent information / intelligence received and, where possible, expand upon this information;
 - c. Identify how this information / intelligence can be used to inform enforcement activity;
 - d. Ensure multi-agency co-operation and involvement in relation to enforcement activity;
 - e. Offer a forum in which issues in relation to enforcement and multi-agency practice can be identified and addressed.
17. Terms of Reference have been developed and partners are being invited to identify appropriate representatives to be part of this group.

Governance Arrangements

18. It is acknowledged that governance arrangements for community safety and safeguarding are complex across the county and the city and, from the outset, it was not intended that an additional partnership structure be established to govern

¹ The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a gateway for locating and identifying potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring that they receive the appropriate protection, support, accommodation and advice.

the work around modern slavery. It would be preferable for this work to be embedded within existing partnership arrangements.

19. The purpose of the Strategic Task & Finish Group is to develop a shared action plan, identify key leads for various actions and co-ordinate the initial work which is required to implement the partnership approach. Once this phase of the work is completed, the expectation is that the Strategic Task & Finish Group will no longer continue to operate. However, some form of continuing partnership oversight will be required to ensure that work is effectively embedded within organisational practice and that partners are held to account for their activities.
20. A paper was submitted to the Safer Staffordshire Strategic Board (SSSB) on 26th July, on behalf of the Task & Finish Group, with recommendations in relation to governance. The paper recommended that, as the overarching strategic community safety group with a remit which covers both Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, the SSSB may be in a position to undertake this oversight and hold partners to account with regard to delivering actions within the Action Plan. It was suggested that the Staffordshire Safer & Stronger Communities Strategy Group and Stoke-on-Trent Responsible Authorities Group could support this by overseeing the work undertaken at a locality level and ensuring that work is embedded within and delivered through existing local community safety partnership structures. This recommendation was endorsed by SSSB.

Staffordshire County Council Activity

21. As highlighted in the April report to the Safe & Strong Select Committee, the Modern Slavery Act 2015 has a number of implications for Staffordshire County Council. Local authorities are required to notify the Secretary of State of any case whereby they have reasonable grounds to believe a person (adults and children) may be a victim of slavery or human trafficking. They are also required to provide information to the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner when requested under section 43 of the Act. To ensure that victims of modern slavery are effectively identified and supported, and that information is reported as required to the Secretary of State, there is a need to embed a co-ordinated and consistent response to modern slavery within operational practice and existing referral mechanisms. Frontline practitioners (including contractors) will need to receive appropriate training to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge to identify and refer people who may be victims of modern slavery.
22. Staffordshire County Council are actively contributing to the partnership activity outlined above and are supporting the co-ordination of the various groups which have been established to embed this work. In addition, an internal County Council Working Group has been established to ensure that our work in relation to modern slavery is joined up and links appropriately with the wider partnership activity.
23. Training has been delivered to selected frontline staff across Families First, to ensure coverage across the service. The training aimed to provide the frontline practitioner with an awareness of what constitutes modern slavery and enable them to better identify victims, improve their responses, and further develop a

victim centred approach. Ongoing training will be delivered using the partnership training framework.

24. A good practice guide for practitioners has been developed to raise awareness regarding modern slavery and the duty to refer young people through to the NRM where there is concern that they have been trafficked for the purpose of exploitation. This good practice guide has been distributed to all managers and they have been asked to cascade this information to their teams. Following on from this email, a communication has been circulated to managers to cascade to their teams giving further advice regarding the criteria for a referral through to the NRM, specifically linked to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), and highlighting the benefits of this for children and young people. The good practice guide is available on the intranet and the communication emails have been made available on the managers' communications weekly blog.
25. The CSE Panels are now considering cases whereby a referral through to the National Referral Mechanism may be appropriate. If the elements of the Modern Slavery Act recruitment and transportation for the purpose of exploitation are present, this is raised at panel and an action to follow up a referral through to the NRM is given.

Link to Strategic Plan – Work to tackle the issue of modern slavery will contribute to the following strategic priority: “The people of Staffordshire will feel safer, happier and more supported in and by their community”.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity –

Community Impact – The development of an evidence base, which will facilitate the consideration of potential community impact, is being undertaken by Staffordshire Police in partnership with other agencies. The evidence base will inform the development of a multi-agency partnership plan.

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Appendices/Background papers

Appendix A - Staffordshire Anti-Slavery Partnership - Modern Slavery Action Plan