

Meeting Notes from 15 May 2017

In Attendance:

Dragan Nastic, Senior Policy and Advocacy Advisor, UNICEF UK

Andrea Simon Campaigns & Policy Officer, ECPAT UK

John Merralls, Migrant Help

Claire Falconer, FLEX, representing The Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group

Phillipa Roberts (for Neil Wain), Hope for Justice

Jennifer Dew, International Organization for Migration (IOM), UK

Tamara Barnett, Human Trafficking Foundation

Lucy Leon, Service Manager, The Children's Society

Rachel Harper, Modern Slavery Helpline, Unseen

Karen Hutchison, Sophie Hayes Foundation, Sophie Hayes Foundation

1. Introductions and Updates of the Helpline

After a brief time of introductions, Helpline Management updated the Advisory Group members on the last couple of Months on the Helpline, informing the room that March had been our busiest month to date, with April then surpassing March.

Time was given to discuss the upcoming Quarterly report for the first quarter of 2017. Although no draft was shared, the room was informed as to the content to be published, including a breakdown of types of Modern Slavery, victim demographics by gender, age with respect to minor vs adult, individual country reports, breakdown by police force region including type of MS, victim demographics and number of referrals made. The room suggested that the number of referrals to local authority agencies be included in the quarterly report as well. Management shared that an early confidential draft would be shared with the room if possible and that the plan will be to include another level of detail in the annual report.

Members were particularly interested in data that reflected the outcomes of our referrals and/or our experiences in referring cases, including obstacles faced, refusals to accept referrals, etc. Management explained that the Helpline does not currently have the capacity or authority to manage cases beyond the referral stage, meaning that the Helpline may engage in some initial victim advocacy as to the expressed needs of the victim, but once the Helpline has confirmed that the referral has been received and that case has been passed on, there is little ability to monitor the journey of that victim or response of external agencies.

2. Response Protocols

The majority of the meeting was spent working through four operational protocols: Referrals to Law Enforcement, Referrals for Child Safeguarding, Referrals for Adult Safeguarding, Referrals for Support, including the NRM.

Management reminded the room that all referrals with sensitive case-specific information are sent through a CJSM account, and if the receiving entity does not have a secure account that the referral is sent as a password protected document asking the entity to phone for the password.

Regarding the process as to what entity, a referral is made, Management makes those decisions and approves all referrals; however, the Advisers are responsible for gathering needed information over the phone, such as locations. Management also explained that a risk assessment is conducted for each referral, to take efforts to not increase risk to the caller or unnecessarily place other potential victims at risk. Management explained the need to retain discretion within our protocols under the 'Do No Harm' approach, meaning that if a referral would normally be done but cause increased harm to another individual, that all known increased risk is considered as fully as possible, as a matter of practice.

Members inquired as to how referrals were written. Management explained that we use a form and list the concerns as well as the relevant facts shared. Members were eager to know if indicators of Modern Slavery and exploitation were highlighted. Management confirmed that exploitation and indicators are highlighted and the referral opens with the type of modern slavery suspected. The members suggested to flag potential future risks to the victim, in particular the risk that minor victims may go missing, as a result of or related to the exploitation suffered.

A significant amount of time was spent discussing responding to cases involving minors at risk. One member warned of the amount of time their own organisation employs chasing referrals to local authorities for child safeguarding and advised to factor that into capacity needs. Members asked if we were required to use the individual forms for each local authority, and management reported that this has not been an reoccurring issue, that the authorities were consistently accepting our form. Members asked after the success of such referrals. Management explained that for child safeguarding referrals, without a residential address, name and DOB, these referrals were often received but not acted upon.

Regarding communication with young people and the limited number of calls received directly from minor victims, the room discussed the importance of adding non-phone routes into the Helpline. Management discussed plans to incorporate texting, and one member stressed the need to incorporate WhatsApp, based on the fact that many youth may not have credit or ability to send SMS text messages.

Regarding referrals and calls which advise victims of the NRM process, members stressed the importance of Helpline Advisers explaining all conditions of the NRM process to ensure that the and adult victim is fully informed when deciding whether to consent to an NRM application. Members suggested that victims should seek legal advice when considering an NRM application. Management listed the factors that Advisers explain regarding the NRM and also discussed needs to vary the conversation slightly depending on the state of the victim and the ability to receive the information. However, Advisers consistently represent the scope of the NRM as accurately as possible, including the fact that applications are not anonymous, are visible to immigration and law enforcement, that support is short-term only and may also last longer, that there are no long-term benefits or rights, that victims may be moved from their current location, etc. Members stressed the importance of explaining to victims that immigration enforcement may follow the NRM period and that services will not be given to victims automatically but that they must ask for needed services throughout the support time.

Members asked as to the success of the Helpline being able to conduct NRM applications over the phone. Management reiterated that this would only happen in the rarest of circumstances, that the logistics are prohibitive, in addition to the fact that an NRM application interview is best done in person. The Helpline endeavours to find other suitable first responders in the area and is not able to act as a national first responder.

Members requested to review the protocols for cases outside of the UK and the protocol for Assessing Modern Slavery.

3. Next Meeting and Wrap up

The next Advisory Group meeting is to be in September, date depending on room availability.