

Human Trafficking and Exploitation Local Authority Guidance

Summary and Recommendations

The purpose of this report is to introduce draft guidance on human trafficking and exploitation for Scottish local authority officers and frontline staff.

COSLA works closely with Scottish Government and partners to deliver the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy for Scotland. COSLA also chairs Action Area 1 within the strategy which focuses on awareness raising efforts and identifying victims and supporting them to safety and recovery.

The guidance sits in that context, and is part of COSLA's ongoing commitment to awareness raising and supporting Scottish local authorities in developing collaborative approaches to contribute to the Strategy.

This paper invites Board members to:

- i. Comment on the content of the draft guidance;
- ii. Agree that the finalised guidance is published and distributed on Anti-Slavery Day, 18th October 2019;
- iii. Share the approved guidance as widely as possible to raise awareness and to support their local authority's approach to identifying, referring and supporting victims of human trafficking and exploitation, and deterring and disrupting criminal activity; and
- iv. Support COSLA in establishing a list of lead contact officers in all local authorities in order to support our future work in this area.

References

Previous reports on human trafficking and exploitation:

- November 2018 – Community Well-Being Board, Item 6 – Human Trafficking and Exploitation – Progress Report
- June 2018, Community Well-Being Board, Item 9 – Human Trafficking and Exploitation – Training and Annual Report
- November 2017, Community Well-Being Board, Item 5 – Human Trafficking and Exploitation – Nail Bars
- September 2017, Community Well-Being Board, Item 10 – Human Trafficking and Exploitation

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Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to present to members draft guidance for Scottish local authority officers and frontline staff on Human Trafficking and Exploitation and seek the Board's approval and support for wider dissemination.

Current COSLA Position

2. COSLA is a key partner in the implementation of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy. This is a three year strategy from 2017-2020, and is focused on three key action areas:
 - Action Area 1 – to identify victims and support them to safety and recovery;
 - Action Area 2 – to identify perpetrators and disrupt their activity; and
 - Action Area 3 – to address the conditions that foster trafficking and exploitation
3. In addition, there is a child trafficking working group which looks at the specific needs of child victims of trafficking.
4. COSLA has representation on each of the strategy's working groups and chairs Action Area 1. A key priority is to raise public and professional awareness of these crimes, inform professionals and public bodies of the reporting mechanisms and ensure effective support for victims.
5. Instances of human trafficking and exploitation have been recorded in all 32 Scottish local authorities and work to tackle human trafficking and exploitation intersects with many services that local authorities provide. For example, local authority staff may encounter potential victims in schools, or while undertaking home visits, or elected members might receive notification of concerns from residents about particular businesses, properties or individuals in their area. Further, powers and duties afforded to local authorities under regulatory legislation mean that local authorities are crucial for deterring and disrupting criminal activities. For example, trading standards, licensing and environmental health and other regulatory services may encounter victims or perpetrators whilst inspecting premises such as nail bars and regulating food processing businesses, sexual entertainment venues, nail bars, taxis and private hire vehicles. Lastly, local authorities are critical in identifying and supporting victims under their statutory safeguarding and child protection duties.
6. Additionally, under Scottish law, local authorities are 'first responders'; that is they are a designated frontline organisation with a responsibility to refer victims to the UK National Referral Mechanism where appropriate. It is therefore crucial that all local authority staff are made aware of the potential signs of human trafficking and exploitation and how to report their concerns; and that councils fully enact their powers and duties in order to disrupt perpetrators.

What is changing?

7. The draft guidance attached at Appendix A has been developed in order to support Scottish local authorities to develop good practice to identify, refer and support victims of human trafficking and exploitation, and disrupt and deter criminal activities. It seeks to provide clear practical guidance of how different departments in local authorities can contribute to identifying potential victims of trafficking and/or disrupt activity of perpetrators.
8. In drafting the guidance COSLA has sought contributions and comments from the Action Area 1 Delivery Group, which comprises lead officers from across the public and third sector, and has also consulted with a range of other officers from across Local Government and Scottish Government.
9. The guidance is designed to be published online and will be hosted on COSLA Migration website at: <http://www.migrationscotland.org.uk>. This will enable officers to update and refresh the guidance to reflect developments in legislation and policy. In this way, the accuracy of the guidance can be maintained and any new information or resources can be incorporated as quickly as possible.

Next Steps

10. Members are requested to comment on the draft guidance and, further to the incorporation of suggested amendments, agree that the guidance should be published and shared as widely as possible.
11. We are proposing to formally launch the guidance on Anti-Slavery Day on 18th October. On that date, members are requested to support COSLA's efforts to publicise and share the guidance, including through social media, in order to raise awareness and to support their councils to identify, refer and support victims of human trafficking and exploitation.
12. Members are also asked to support COSLA in establishing a list of lead contact officers in all local authorities in order to support our future work in this area.
13. Finally, members are reminded of the additional information and awareness raising resources that are currently available on the COSLA Migration website. These can be accessed at: <http://www.migrationscotland.org.uk/anti-human-trafficking-and-exploitation-resources>.

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