

Minutes of Sex Workers Liaison Group

16 February 2016 2.00pm

Castle Buildings

Attendees: Simon Rogers	-	DOJ (Chair)
Julie Wilson	-	DOJ
Alison Redmond	-	DOJ
Antoinette Cosgrave	-	Sex Workers Alliance
Lucy Smith	-	Ugly Mugs
DCI Douglas Grant	-	PSNI
Susan Semple	-	Belfast Trust
Paul Moore (minutes)	-	DOJ
Apologies: Sgt Nick Williams	-	PSNI Sex Worker Liaison Officer
Sgt Sharon Cromie	-	PSNI Sex Worker Liaison Officer

1. Welcome and Introductions

1.1 Simon welcomed everyone and apologies were noted.

2. Action Points

2.1 The Chair ran through the Action Points from the last meeting. All action points were closed with the exception of an update to be provided from Sgt Nick Williams. In his absence, DCI Grant gave an overview on developments on the PSNI side. Whilst recognising the legal position, Lucy and Antoinette expressed concerns about the impact of brothel keeping laws on sex workers who work together for safety purposes. Lucy noted that guidance issued by the CPS in England and Wales takes a different approach to dealing with sex workers who work together for safety.

2.2 DCI Grant explained that where PSNI is presented with evidence that an offence has been committed it is obliged to implement the law. He also noted that there are differences in other jurisdictions in the arrangements for how police and prosecutors work. He acknowledged that there may be scope for greater understanding on the enforcement of the legislation in this area.

ACTION POINT – PSNI to consider best practice on enforcement in this area .

3. Update on developments

3.1 DOJ provided an update on the human trafficking work currently in train:

- plans to extend the scope of the NRM to all victims of modern slavery in Northern Ireland;
- secondary legislation currently being taken forward, including:
 - i. two pieces of legislation under the Modern Slavery Act 2015, dealing with the duty to co-operate with the Anti Slavery Commissioner and a code of practice for the exercise of maritime powers, had gone through the Assembly process; and
 - ii. the regime for Slavery and Trafficking Prevention Orders under the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Etc) Act (NI) 2015 is due to commence in April 2016.
- overview of the planning for the 2016/17 Human Trafficking and Exploitation Strategy. Members of the group were content that a draft strategy would issue to the group for comment.

4. Awareness raising event

4.1 Susan gave a detailed overview of plans for the human trafficking awareness evening for sex workers. This would be hosted by Belfast Trust. It was agreed that an agenda would be drawn up by DOJ and that there would be an opportunity for written questions to be posed anonymously, if that were preferred. Relevant trafficking resources could be shared at the event. It was noted that the focus of the event was on raising awareness in order to identify victims of trafficking within the sex industry.

4.2 The group agreed that it would also be beneficial for the PSNI Sex Worker Liaison Officers to attend the meeting. They could pass on any concerns that sex workers had about trafficking to the PSNI Human Trafficking Unit.

ACTION POINT DOJ to provide resources to Susan

ACTION POINT DOJ to produce an agenda for event

4.3 Lucy explained that a symposium on the Legal Regulation and Policing of Commercial Sex would be taking place in Queen's University Belfast in early March. She offered to display human trafficking literature and resources at the event.

ACTION POINT DOJ to provide leaflets to Lucy

5. AOB

5.1 Lucy asked about if the Joint Agency Taskforce, which had been covered in the press, was fully operational as yet. The Chair confirmed that this group was established under the Fresh Start agreement and noted that the first meeting of this group is expected to take place in March.

6. Date of next meeting

6.1 A date for the next meeting planned for May would be circulated at a later date.

Number	Action	Owner
1	PSNI to consider best practice on enforcement in this area .	PSNI
2	Leaflets to be provided to Susan Semple ahead of awareness event	DOJ
3	DCI Grant to confirm who will attend awareness event from PSNI	PSNI
4	DOJ to produce an agenda for human trafficking awareness raising event for sex workers	DOJ
5	DOJ to provide leaflets to Lucy Smith for display at Queen's University Symposium	DOJ