

WHAT IS GOVERNMENT DOING TO TACKLE HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

LEGAL REQUIREMENT TO ADDRESS HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Through an EU Directive, Governments in all EU Member States (including the UK and so, the Northern Ireland Executive) are required to have minimum standards in place to prevent and combat human trafficking and to protect victims of human trafficking.

WHO WORKS TO TACKLE HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN NORTHERN IRELAND?

Within the Northern Ireland Executive, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has overall responsibility for developing policy and legislation to tackle human trafficking.

Law enforcement agencies such as the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland (PPSNI) play operational roles in investigating trafficking cases, recovering victims, protecting the public and prosecuting perpetrators.

Other Government Departments such as the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) and its Arms Length Bodies also have an important role to play in supporting victims and safeguarding children.

The Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF) works to tackle different types of organised crime, including human trafficking. Members include DOJ, PSNI, the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and the PPSNI.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) also have an important role to play and the DOJ has set up an NGO Engagement Group to work with the voluntary sector to tackle human trafficking.

WHAT IS BEING DONE TO ADDRESS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Across the UK there is a national strategy on human trafficking which the DOJ and its partners are aligned with. It focuses on:

PREVENTION - work includes:

- Raising awareness of human trafficking amongst the general public and specific groups, for example, schools, businesses, taxi drivers, letting agents and farmers' unions.
- Training for police officers, medical staff and prosecutors to help them to recognise potential victims of human trafficking.
- Providing information to victims.
- Developing a victim-centred approach to human trafficking across the Criminal Justice System.

PROTECTION – work includes:

- DOJ provides support while adult potential victims are being assessed through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) to determine if they are victims of trafficking.
- This includes: safe accommodation; one-to-one support; help with living / travel costs; help to access healthcare; sign-posting to immigration advice; sign-posting to independent legal advice and advice on compensation; help to access counselling or other therapeutic services; and interpreter / translation services.
- DHSSPS provides appropriate support for adults who have been confirmed as victims through the NRM. This support replicates that provided by the DOJ contract, as set out above.
- The Health and Social Care Trust provides support for child victims of trafficking.
- Guidance on the Working Arrangements for the Welfare and Protection of Adult Victims of Human Trafficking, developed by DHSSPS and DOJ, was published on 9 October 2012. Similar guidance on arrangements for child victims was published in February 2011 by PSNI and DHSSPS.

PROSECUTION – work includes:

- Developing better links with police forces and law enforcement agencies in other countries to help with effective investigations.
- Creating effective laws and new offences when they are needed. For example, the Criminal Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 made new offences so that traffickers operating across international borders, or internally within the United Kingdom, can be brought before the Courts in Northern Ireland.
- Ensuring that there are appropriate sanctions and punishments: the Criminal Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2013 also changed the law to provide that human traffickers prosecuted in Northern Ireland can receive a maximum sentence of 14 years in prison.
- New training and guidance for prosecutors on recognising the views and interests of victims and on special measures that may be applied for to help them give their best evidence.