

Cross Party Group on Social Science

Minutes of the Meeting held 13 March 2019

Present: Daniel Johnson (DJ), Eloise Savill (ES), Isabella Orpen (IO), Alicia Turner (AT), Hannah Graham (HG), Emma Hill (EH), Rhoda Grant (RG), Nick Bibby (NB), Sarah Weakley (SW)

1.0 Welcome

DJ welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2.0 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes were adopted without changes. Prop, DJ; Sec, NB.

3.0 Presentations: Human Trafficking in Scotland

The two presenters discussed four separate policy choices that they believe will address some of the issues within human trafficking.

3.1 Eloise Savill (University of Edinburgh)

Eloise presented two policies to address human trafficking: the first to create an alternative to the National Reporting Mechanism, the current way in which trafficking victims are identified; and the second is to reframe awareness of human trafficking for the general public with a focus on labour rights issues, which will improve intelligence in supply chains to identify victims.

She presented the option of reforming the National Reporting Mechanism as a combination of the Dutch Model, which gives trained police officers responsibility to identify trafficking victims rather than border agents, and the Glasgow Model, which is a child-rights based approach that provides immediate and specialised care for children who have been identified as trafficked. This revised policy would allow more victims to be identified as it does not intersect with immigration enforcement. A new public awareness campaign would highlight workers' rights, as forced labour is the most common form of modern slavery, and police would work with businesses to understand supply chains where labour rights abuses such as poor working conditions, excessive working hours, extreme wage deductions and consistent underemployment may be occurring.

3.2 Isabella Orpen (University of Edinburgh)

Isabella presented another two policies that would address human trafficking in Scotland: new national guidance for services likely to encounter trafficking and an adoption of the 'Nordic Model' of sex work legislation.

New national guidance across all sectors would address regional inconsistency with identifying and reporting trafficking, would provide guidance for sharing victim and perpetrator information between sectors (e.g. NHS and Housing Authorities), and would aim to provide a Single Point of Contact per case in each sector. IO noted that this new guidance and joined up services for trafficking victims is particularly relevant in the face of Brexit, as the protocols and guidance for interacting with international agencies that currently address trafficking will need to be maintained and/or updated.

Finally, IO presented the policy option of Scotland adopting the Nordic Model of sex work legislation, which advocates for a decriminalisation of the selling of sex whilst criminalising the purchase of sex. Some of Scotland's neighbours have adopted this

legislation (e.g. Ireland, Sweden, Norway). This legislation was advocated for most recently in Scotland in 2012 but there were concerns that this violated privacy, ignored the agency of those who voluntarily sold sex, that it pushes prostitution further underground, and that it does not address labour exploitation issues. To address these concerns IO calls for the government to conduct an investigation of the effects of the Nordic Model in Ireland, following Engender's 'Scottish Model' for research with women.

3.3 Questions and Discussion

DJ opened the discussion by asking a context question of the extent of human trafficking in Scotland and the UK. ES replied that the current figures for those who were identified as trafficked via the NRM was 213 people in Scotland in 2017, where 64% of the group are those identified as exploited labour. In the whole of the UK, it is estimated that roughly 13,000 people are victims of trafficking each year, a figure that goes beyond those in the NRM. HG noted that identifying an accurate figure of those in this situation is difficult for this group in particular, but that the figure of 13,000 sounds more adequate than the cases that are reported to NRM.

EH was interested in how issues of human trafficking interacts with the immigration and asylum seeking cases, and ES noted there is a danger of conflating asylum assessment and trafficking assessment in border control. A different agency addressing trafficking with the proposed NRM policy would ideally address some of these issues, as the border agency is not set up to deal with trafficking victims as they are an enforcement agency (NB). This would be a major culture shift.

On this issue DJ asked the extent to which immigrants and asylum seekers are aware of their status and rights, which may result in underreporting to any authorities if they are being victimised. EH noted that particularly if an immigrant entered the country by precarious routes they will likely not know or not be able to self-report if they are being exploited. EH also noted that although social work and local authorities wanted to help asylum seekers, those working on the ground were not aware of what each type of immigration status means, for example, for accommodation. Therefore more training for front-line workers who interact with the immigrant and asylum seeker populations, some of whom may be victims, is recommended. DJ noted that accommodation in particular is a devolved area where the Scottish Parliament could make policy that addresses issues of trafficking if possible.

HG discussed the Nordic Model policy proposal, and noted that there is a relationship between the rise of risky behaviours (such as the selling of sex) and economic insecurity, evidenced in the global financial crisis. She proposed that policy should combine the two different viewpoints on prostitution – one where buying and selling is decriminalised and the other that is prohibitionist/abolitionist. IO replied that there is evidence in human trafficking research that supports the Nordic Model in this way, as it reduces demand for prostitution and therefore those sex workers who enter the market are those willing to do so. HG noted the 2017 evidence review published by the Scottish Government in conjunction with SCCJR 'Evidence assessment of the impacts of the criminalisation of the purchase of sex: a review', where prostitution policy is hybrid in practice. She also noted the issues of men more likely to buy sex abroad and therefore there are links to organised crime;

if laws could identify people associated with prostitution then those who control and traffic women in this black market could perhaps be more easily identified. In a response to NB asking whether the issue of human trafficking is indeed a live political issue, RG noted that indeed this is the case. The passage and implementation of Scottish Parliament's Human Trafficking Legislation in 2015 resulted in more trafficked individuals being identified and made it illegal to have sex with someone who has been trafficked. However, there is more to be learned to uncover the black box of how the industry works – both prostitution and labour exploitation.

As a final point DJ noted that understanding referral pathways for those who are victims of trafficking is particularly valuable for policymakers: how can devolved areas of policy address the supply chains and increase referrals for victims? HG noted that the awareness raising done for domestic abuse within various industry spaces has been inclusive with any points of access where victims can self-report (e.g. housing authorities, food banks) and there is a single point of contact within the industry: there is an opportunity to make this kind of referral pathways available for victims of trafficking as well. Most importantly, there needs to be in place consistent support for people once someone is identified.

DJ closed the discussion and thanked the presenters for their work.

4.0 AGM

4.1 Election of Office Bearers

4.1.1 Convenor

Daniel Johnson MSP was elected unopposed; proposed RG, seconded NB

4.1.2 Deputy Convenor

Andy Wightman MSP was elected unopposed; proposed DJ, seconded NB

4.1.3 Secretary

The organisation acting as the secretariat would change from the Campaign for Social Science (CfSS) in Scotland to the Scottish Policy Innovation and Research Exchange (SPRE). In practical terms, however, this would continue to mean NB and SW supporting the CPG administratively.

4.2 Review of the Year

The review of the year as noted in the annual report was noted and agreed as accurate.

4.3 Membership

The membership as noted in the annual report was noted and agreed.

4.4 Topics and Plans for 2019-2020

It was noted that engaging with other CPGs and offering to act as a bridge to the research base had been a successful strategy and was one the group should continue to adopt.

5.0 Close