

Briefing Note: Home Office DCLG Funding for Post NRM Pilot for Victims of Modern Slavery

Steve Harrison, Specialist Projects Manager, Community Safety and Cohesion 29 Jan. 18

Summary

Today the Home Office confirmed that they had approved in full our spending proposal to pilot a support programme for victims of modern slavery. This is not official until internal process in central government is cleared. The total amount of funding is £182,000. Funding is for 2.5 posts in the Council, 0.5 posts in voluntary sector and additional funding to support the programme. Funding to be spent by 31 March 2019.

Background

The Head of Community Safety and Cohesion became aware of this funding opportunity just before Christmas and an expression of interest was worked up and submitted by the 4 January 2018 deadline. As a result of the short timescale and the Christmas break it was not possible to consult widely with partners and some of the bid relies on existing partnership and good relationships.

The project comes from a review undertaken by the Home Office that established a number of weaknesses in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for victims of modern slavery. Key to these was a lack of oversight of individuals once their NRM support package ended and some evidence of victims returning to slavery (assumed to be because of lack of other options or because of ongoing vulnerability). Local evidence also suggests a widespread reluctance among victims to enter the scheme. The Home Office invitation to bid talked of support for integration into communities.

Our proposal aims to offer a tailored package of support to victims at the end of NRM, ideally be starting to engage with victims whilst still in NRM safe houses, to have a package on offer when the NRM package finishes, to help re-empower victims into housing and employment and to build a life in local communities and ensure health needs are met. The project will also use this intervention to collect information about the experience of victims and a better understanding of the barriers to integration – in effect a piece of action research.

The timescales are challenging with the need to design and recruit posts as soon as practicable and to meet all the other requirements of the Council and other partners and commence delivery as soon as possible. It is hoped that recruitment may offer an ability to reduce the impact of redundancies (albeit only for a period). Under our proposal we have committed to support up to 34 victims, a figure that reflects the number of referrals made locally into the scheme and we have the support of County colleagues in delivering this. There is a lack of Home Office data that may mean this number is not met.

In addition to supporting those taking up the NRM, it is hoped that an improved pathway will increase the take up of NRM leading to both better support for victims and reduction in opportunities for those exploiting others. The project also supports the City's aspiration to be a slavery free City.