

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & ALL-MEMBER MEETING**

Date: 25 June 2015

Subject: **Modern Slavery Act: New duties for South East councils**

Report of: Roy Millard, South East Strategic Partnership for Migration



Recommendations:

- i) Consider how best member councils can raise staff awareness and encourage action in response to the new duty for local authorities on modern slavery
- ii) Support use of the South East film and training package within member authorities and their partner organisations to help staff respond to the new duty.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Tackling Modern Slavery is a personal priority for Home Secretary Theresa May and carries full Government and cross-party support. The Modern Slavery Act received Royal Assent in March 2015 just prior to the end of the last Parliament. It enshrines the function of a UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and includes a duty on councils and other public authorities to co-operate with the Commissioner.
- 1.2 Local authorities are well placed to identify and report evidence or signs of slavery through thousands of everyday interactions across council functions such as housing, environmental health, education, social care or regulatory services.
- 1.3 To help South East authorities discharge their new duty the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM) and SEEC have produced a 2-minute film, accredited by the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and funded primarily by Home Office grant. The film is designed to work as part of a training package for council staff and stimulate the professional curiosity of staff to look out for and report potential signs of slavery, for example multiple benefit claims from the same address or evidence of people being controlled by others. The film purposely concentrates on the role of council staff in identifying possible slavery, complementing rather than duplicating existing materials from other sources that highlight the serious impact of slavery on individuals' lives.

2. New duties on councils and relevance to the South East

- 2.1 Following a screening of the film, members are asked to welcome two expert speakers who will briefly outline local authorities' new responsibilities, give an overview of slavery in the South East and answer member questions.
 - **Christopher Ansell** from the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner's office will outline the scale of Modern Slavery in the UK and the South East, the role of the Commissioner and his relationship with local authorities.
 - **Offer Stern-Weiner**, Head of the Modern Slavery Unit at the Home Office, will explain the expectation on local authorities in response to the duty in the Act.
- 2.2 The session will highlight some of the instances of modern slavery across the South East. Recent cases include care home workers in Worthing, nail bar workers in Reading & Wokingham, trafficking in Dover, forced labour in Oxford and suspected slavery among car wash staff in Guildford. It will also draw on examples of good practice in the South East where collaborations between Gangmasters Licencing Authority, police and councils have supported successful prosecutions.
- 2.3 County, unitary and district councils are all covered by the duty to notify the Secretary of State about people believed to be victims of slavery or human trafficking. The Act also makes provision for guidance and regulations on public authorities' role in providing assistance and support to victims. In particular, members may wish to consider implications for local services such as housing, education and social care.

3. Encouraging local anti-slavery training

- 3.1 The SESPM/SEEC training film will be distributed to all South East local authorities free of charge and members are encouraged to make use of it in their councils. It helps raise awareness of the need to be alert for signs of modern slavery, highlights examples of relevant evidence and shows where to access further information and advice.
- 3.2 SESPM are writing guidance notes to accompany the film which will support authorities to conduct in house training sessions. A new Modern Slavery section on SESPM's web pages will provide a single point of contact for partners to access current information. For any additional information members can contact SESPM Manager Roy Millard by email on roymillard@secouncils.gov.uk .