



The Scottish
Government

CEL 19 (2012)

7 JUNE 2012

Dear Colleague

TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

I write to bring to your attention new guidance for healthcare staff in detecting and responding to victims of trafficking. An electronic copy of the guidance has been published on the SHOW Website at: http://www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/mels/CEL2012_19booklet.pdf

Background

As a signatory to the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings, the UK has undertaken a number of anti-trafficking measures to protect victims and bring traffickers to justice. The provision of healthcare is one of our obligations in this respect.

As the recent investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission into Human Trafficking in Scotland highlighted, human trafficking for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation, forced labour and domestic servitude is happening across Scotland, not just in urban areas. We all therefore need to be alert to its existence.

The health consequences of human trafficking are such that the NHS may be the one public agency to which a victim will turn for assistance. The provision of healthcare services to victims may therefore present the opportunity not only to address their health needs but also to facilitate access to wider support services that can afford them care and protection.

This is clearly a difficult and complex issue which may be challenging for staff. The infrequency of such presentations, coupled with the fear and vulnerability which may hamper a victim's disclosure, are undoubtedly impediments to early detection and intervention. Nonetheless, we have a responsibility to ensure that victims of trafficking receive the best possible health care that is sensitive both to the harrowing nature of their experience and the potential danger to their lives.

Action

Please ensure that staff are aware of the guidance contents. I have asked NHS Health Scotland to develop a brief leaflet to accompany the guidance and NHS Education for Scotland to develop training

Addresses

For action

Chief Executives, NHS
Boards
Chief Executives, Special
Health Boards

For information

Chief Executives, Local
Authorities
Executive Director,
Scottish Partnership Forum
SWAG
COSLA

Enquires to:

Fiona Baird
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh EH1 3DG
Tel: 0131-244 3211
Fax: 0131-244 2989
fiona.baird@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
www.scotland.gov.uk

resources as necessary that will equip staff with the knowledge and skills to deal with this issue. It makes sense to align this work with your ongoing programme of work on Gender-Based Violence and I would suggest that your Operational Lead for Gender-Based Violence is linked in to any related activity.

Crucial though our role is, it is only through close collaboration with other agencies that we can support the wider effort to make Scotland a hostile environment for traffickers and eliminate this practice. I am aware that some boards have contributed to the development of local multi-agency protocols on trafficking. Mindful of the fact that events such as the Commonwealth Games in 2014 may witness an increase in trafficking, I would encourage all boards to engage with their local partners to ensure a coherent and effective response.

The work is being led by the Gender-Based Violence Programme at NHS Health Scotland, and you will be aware that there is a suite of guidance on gender-based violence which will also be useful to staff. If you require any further information please contact NHS Scotland or the Gender-Based Violence Programme in the first instance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ros Moore". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

Ros Moore