**Victim Support MSSIG Meeting**

**DATE 15 September 2020**

**TIME 11:00 am**

**LOCATION Microsoft Teams**

**CHAIRS Kate Roberts, Tamara Barnett, Anna Sereni**

**PRESENT** Kate Roberts, *Anti-Slavery International*

Anna Sereni, *Anti-Slavery International*

Tamara Barnett, *Human Trafficking Foundation*

Rachel Smith, *Human Trafficking Foundation*

Ann-Marie Douglas, *TSA*

Jemimah Higginson, *TSA*

Phill Clayton, City Hearts

Avril Sharp, *Kalayaan*

Pamela Mawoza, *Ashiana Sheffield*

Cathy Sheehan, *NHS*

Victoria Marks, *ATLEU*

April McCoig, *Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner’s Office*

Julia Tomas, *The Passage*

Sarah Chase, *Justice and Care*

Sian Oram, *Kings College London*

Amber Cagney, *West Midlands Anti-Slavery*

Jenniffer Dew, *IOM*

Rosie Riley, *VITA Training*

Lynne Chitty, *Love146*

Phil Ishola, *Love146*

Ellie Greenwood, *LGA*

Anna Szczodry, *TSA*

Kate Garbers, *Unseen UK*

Baldish Sohal, *Black Country Women’s Aid*

Louise Gleich, *Care*

Bronagh Andrew, *Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance, Glasgow*

Ella Read, *Hestia*

Andrea Nicholson, *Nottingham Rights Lab*

Tatiana Gren-Jardan, *Justice and Care*

Louise Hatch, *Hibiscus*

Rebecca Johnson, *LGA*

Nicola Simpson, *MSU*

Luke Hughes, *MSU*

Becky Digby, *MSU*

Jonet Tann, *MSU*

Dave Lamb, *MSU*

Edward Fairhead, *MSU*

Jessica Lynn, *MSU*

Isabelle Hammond-Caines, *MSU*

**Actions**

1. MSU to share an explanation of tranches of work and stakeholder engagement plans on the NRM Transformation Programme, including a list of upcoming workshops.
2. VS MSSIG to share evidence with TSA on survivors’ experiences within safe house accommodation, where it did not meet the standards framework.
3. MSU to provide a written update regarding engagement with local authorities at the next MSSIG meeting.
4. Anna (Anti-Slavery International) and Nicola (MSU) to pick up offline a conversation about the adult at risk policy.
5. Group to consider terminology used to refer to individuals within the new MSVCC and share thoughts with MSU.

**MINUTES**

**NRM Reform/Transformation**

* MSU have engaged with various stakeholders in the sector on embedding a needs-based approach and alternative models to support. The team are reviewing the current system and considering options for more long term and radical changes to improve the system of victim identification and support.
* MSU are speaking to the Child Task and Finish Group (CTFG) regarding the piloting of devolving decision-making for children to local authorities.
* The NRM Transformation Programme is still at an early stage, but MSU are keen to engage with the VS MSSIG group as much as possible to discuss progress and gain insights and thoughts from the group.
* MSU have planned a series of workshops with the Victim Support Group over the coming months and will be circulating a list of scheduled workshops to date.

**New VCC- Care Standards and inspection regime**

* HTF’s care standards were drawn on heavily during the development of the MSVCC.
* TSA will be sharing a standards framework with support workers, which should be used for application to non-safe house accommodation. If accommodation standards are not suitable for survivors, support workers are encouraged to support survivors in reporting this to ensure the issues are remedied.
  + Under the new contract, TSA can escalate matters further if standards are not being met.
* TSA have a robust arrangement around all safehouse checks and have recently developed an inspection checklist which has been sent to the Home Office for clearance.
* TSA are required to complete an Asylum Needs-Based Assessment for those who have claimed asylum, the purpose of this assessment is to ensure a person's needs can be meet in asylum accommodation. The standards required of asylum accommodation are similar to the MSVCC standards.
* The group queried the definition of ‘safe accommodation’ and noted that regardless of the setting the Home Office should ensure all accommodation including NASS accommodation is suitable for survivors.
  + MSU noted that the Home Office funds an inspection regime that reviews NASS accommodation and reiterated that individuals in this accommodation can raise all issues via the typical avenues, but that it would not fall to CQC.
* MSU stated that the CQC pilots are not scheduled to be published, but that there would be a national report detailing overall findings.
* TSA flagged their work developing an electronic leaflet for service users on subsistence entitlements and discussed consulting service users on this.

**VCC Financial Support policy**

* MSU are reconsidering the current financial support policy, in order to embody a more need-based approach to support. MSU emphasised the importance of focusing on individual need and ensuring that the right services are tailored to and provided for survivors.
* The group expressed concern at the proposal for financial support to be focussed on individual victims’ needs and questioned prospective requirements for survivors to evidence their need, the potential for increased litigation and the additional requirements changes may pose to caseworkers and survivors.
* MSU noted the intention to ensure that any new system is fair and transparent.
* The group were keen to understand the benefits of means testing, in order to ensure that the needs of survivors are central to the approach and the policy positively supports their recovery.
* *Right to work* – the group urged MSU to consider the right to work policy as part of reforms to the financial support policy*.*

**Recovery Needs Assessments**

* MSU’s recent call for evidence on recovery needs was intended to support work in the NRM Transformation Programme to further embed a needs-based approach to support. The call for evidence was not intended to inform the updates to the RNA guidance, published on 21 August.
* The group flagged the need to ensure that survivors are provided with information on the RNA in advance and are able to see the RNA documentation that relates to them.
* MSU noted that the guidance does request that support workers work with survivors to complete the RNA form and provide the decision and form to the survivor.
* The group discussed the delay in decision making times and MSU discussed on-going work to consider whether the provision of support can be decoupled from the CG decision point.
* MSU recognised a perception that the RNA is focused on exiting individuals from support but noted that its main focus is to consider the specific needs of individuals and whether there are other systems that best meet their needs.
* The group noted the importance of considering ways in which survivors can be equipped for the future, for example via skill building, job hunting support.
* The importance of information sharing with clients in an accessible manner, across government agencies and local authorities is paramount, especially for when an individual has exited support.
* MSU noted that as part of the new MSVCC there is consideration being given to the way in which the Home Office engage with local authorities.

**Statutory Guidance Reference Group meeting update**

* The Modern Slavery Act 2015 Statutory Guidance sets out the arrangements for providing assistance and support to potential and confirmed victims of modern slavery. As part of this guidance there was a commitment to establish a reference group.
* The group had their first meeting in 15 July and the next meeting is scheduled for 21 October.
* MSU flagged current work underway which considers the best ways to engage survivors more effectively within policy development.

**AOB**

* *MSVCC Terminology* - Given the transition to the MSVCC, MSU requested thoughts around the terminology used in the new contract. For example, regarding the most appropriate manner to refer to individuals who have experienced modern slavery.