



House of Lords

House of Commons

Joint Committee on Human
Rights

Human Trafficking

Oral and written evidence

Tuesday 26 January 2010

*Mr Alan Campbell MP, Parliamentary Under
Secretary of State, Home Office*

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Joint Committee on Human Rights

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Oral evidence

Taken before the Joint Committee on Human Rights

on Tuesday 26 January 2010

Members present:

Mr Andrew Dismore, in the Chair

Dubs, L
Onslow, E
Dr Evan Harris

Fiona Mactaggart
Mr Virendra Sharma

Witness: **Mr Alan Campbell MP**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office, gave evidence.

Q1 Chairman: Good afternoon everybody and welcome to this evidence session of the Joint Select Committee on Human Rights, with Alan Campbell, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office, looking at the issue of human trafficking. We have published two reports on the subject of human trafficking during the course of this Parliament, in October 2006 and again in October 2007. It has been an issue that we have focused on since then and it is an opportunity for us to follow up on some of the parts of that report with the Minister as the Parliament comes to an end. One of the key issues we identified in our first report, and we keep coming back to, is the lack of data on the numbers of victims. I think you told the Home Affairs Committee last year that you hoped to have some data by 2009. We are now in 2010. I think in Anthony Steen's debate last week you said that you would be publishing it very soon. Perhaps you would tell us how soon is "soon" and what is the reason for the delay and where you have got to?

Mr Campbell: Thank you, Chairman, and thank you for inviting me. 2009 was certainly our aspiration but it has taken slightly longer and I do apologise for that. The Home Office has worked on some research from 2003 which gave a figure then of 4,000 women it was believed had been trafficked for sexual exploitation. That figure has been questioned and is certainly in need of update, and so we commissioned some work which we hoped would have reported by the end of last year but will report shortly, to get a more accurate and up-to-date figure on women who we believe have been trafficked for sexual exploitation. You ask why the delay: I think two reasons. The first is that we live in an age where we need to be very careful when we bring statistics into the public realm, and we want to be absolutely sure that we have drilled right down and bottomed out the issue when we do bring forward those figures. I think it is also worth saying that having looked at the methodology behind the work that we are doing we are learning a lot more about trafficking as we are doing that work, and therefore I hope that the delay is certainly worth it. You ask when: I hope in about two months' time.

Q2 Chairman: In two months' time?

Mr Campbell: In April we are aiming to publish.

Q3 Chairman: We may well be engaged on other

things by then.

Mr Campbell: We will get it sooner if possible.

Q4 Chairman: Have you done any work on other aspects? You have talked about women who are trafficked for sex purposes. What about children and what about people who are trafficked for labour purposes?

Mr Campbell: Yes, we have been doing some scoping work on labour trafficking. It is a relatively new concept compared to other forms of trafficking that perhaps we know more about. We are conscious of the need, again, to get reliable and accurate figures, which is why we are doing some scoping work on that, but it is not as advanced as the work that we are doing on women trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Q5 Chairman: Looking at the statistics that are available, as you say, the 4,000 figure was always a bit speculative and is now considered to be out-of-date. There have been suggestions that the figure is much higher and suggestions that the figure is much lower and the same goes for the estimates regarding the other forms of trafficking too. The *Guardian* published quite a long article in October analysing some of the arguments about the numbers. I think their conclusion was that the problem had been somewhat overestimated. Do you think it has been overemphasised and overestimated the amount of time and effort that has gone into the question of trafficking?

Mr Campbell: I think there is a problem of human trafficking which comes in many forms, and therefore I think it is right that a response of the Government, along with our colleagues around the world, should be focusing on this issue. I do hope that when we bring forward figures that we can, to some extent, lay the argument to rest, which is why we need to have statistics which are, as far as they can be, verifiable but also the research has been peer-reviewed as well. It is a very difficult issue, partly of course because trafficking is an illegal activity. It is very difficult to judge the quantity of that. If you are talking about women coming to this country for sexual exploitation, it is difficult enough to get a firm hold on how many women and girls are involved in the sex industry, how many of them are involved in it of their own free will, how many of them are coerced and how many of them are trafficked. I think

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this debate will go on because in the absence of a clear definition of what trafficking is, with a clear agreement amongst governments and agencies, then people will draw a line in different places. Having helped to take through the Policing and Crime Act, as it is now, in the last session, I appreciate that there is a diverse opinion about the motives and the condition of women that get involved in the sex industry, whether they do so of their own free will or whether they are coerced. There is always going to be a difference of opinion and therefore I would suggest a debate about the real figures.

Q6 Mr Sharma: During our visit to Sheffield we found out that there is a possibility of changing the location of the Human Trafficking Centre. Can you tell us why it was necessary to change the arrangements for the Centre to be located within the Serious Organised Crime Agency?

Mr Campbell: Yes, when the Human Trafficking Centre was set up, it was set up without clear legal status. It was based in South Yorkshire, and I am very grateful for the work and support of South Yorkshire Police in helping us to establish that and, in a sense, to look after the Centre and help it locate there since, but of course the Human Trafficking Centre has to some extent expanded its role. Thankfully, it has a higher profile and of course now that it is involved as part of the National Referral Mechanism it is much more important to get its legal status clearly established, and perhaps a more permanent home for that. We were approached by South Yorkshire Police, and indeed the Human Trafficking Centre, to say this was an issue and we looked at a whole range of alternatives, including UKBA and the Serious Organised Crime Agency, and decided that the Serious Organised Crime Agency is the place for it, but I have to say certainly without a plan to soon relocate nor one which will change in any major way the operational activities of the Centre because I think the Centre does good work. I think we should do everything that we can to maintain its status and we should do everything that we can to support it in the work that it is doing. I have made very clear to SOCA that when the Human Trafficking Centre becomes part of SOCA that as far as possible it is a stand-alone organisation to be able to have that remit which is so important to the work that it does.

Q7 Mr Sharma: And what steps are you taking to ensure that its remit and operations—particularly its focus on victims—is unaffected?

Mr Campbell: The whole approach that we take to human trafficking is a victim-centred approach. It is the basis for our Action Plan which we have introduced in 2007 and we have refreshed annually since. When we look at human trafficking it is crucial that we begin with the focus clearly on victims and the rights of victims. I have to say, however, that is sometimes quite a difficult thing to do, where people will claim to be the victims of traffickers when they were actually part of the problem in the first place, and sometimes victims are reluctant to come forward and acknowledge that they are victims.

Sometimes they get what I understand is called “Stockholm Syndrome” where they have an affinity with the perpetrators who brought them to this country, so whilst we always seek to emphasise the importance of a victim-centred approach, it sometimes throws up cases that are very difficult to resolve where it is not always clear who is the victim and who is the perpetrator.

Q8 Dr Harris: I just want to follow that up. Is the practical result of that that when someone is picked up in circumstances where they might be a victim, the presumption is that they are a victim and they are treated in that way, even if they say they are not because they may be scared, and they are not put on a plane before they have had time to reflect in every case where this applies? Or can the presumption sometimes be that they are not a victim?

Mr Campbell: I think you would expect me to answer that by saying it is a case-by-case basis. Of course we want to protect the victims of trafficking. The point I am making is it is not always clear that trafficking has taken place and indeed that they are the victims. What is absolutely crucial in this is that we make sure that our actions against trafficking are rolled out to the very front-line of all of the agencies, including the police, that have a key role to play and that training for officers is a very important part of that so that they know what to look for. I am not saying in every instance that they would be looking for the signs and conclude that trafficking has taken place, but certainly we would want front-line police officers, as a matter of course, to consider whether or not in this case trafficking had happened and therefore they should be looking for victims.

Q9 Mr Sharma: Locating the Centre in a crime agency sometimes could give the impression that trafficking victims are criminals or associated with crime. How will you make sure that this does not happen?

Mr Campbell: There is a shared aspiration of course between the Human Trafficking Agency and SOCA anyway because SOCA's second priority is tackling organised immigration crime, which includes human trafficking and its first priority is drugs, so there is a shared ambition, but I do take your point. We thought about this long and hard as to whether or not SOCA was the right place for it. By giving the Human Trafficking Centre an opportunity to continue with the work that it does, yes, it has police officers as part of its work and, of course, it works very closely with the police and other agencies, but it has other both official and non-governmental organisation contact too. I think having that multi-agency approach is important, which is why we will do everything that we can to maintain it.

Q10 Mr Sharma: Anthony Steen last week expressed his concerns that sometimes the victims are dealt with in an overly bureaucratic way. He suggested that referrals should be dealt with by welfare or social workers. Is this a fair criticism and how are you monitoring the cases generally?

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Mr Campbell: When we ratified the Convention and implemented the Convention and set up the National Referral Mechanism, there were clear differences of opinion about who should have responsibility for that and who should, if you like, take the lead on that, and I think that debate will continue. Again, it is difficult to answer the question because it rather depends upon the circumstances of the individuals and the traffickers, but remember that someone might be trafficked but nevertheless be caught up in other kinds of criminality too, and therefore it is a case of dealing with them on a case-by-case basis. I do not think there is a general rule to this actually.

Q11 Fiona Mactaggart: But is it not true that it is very frequently the case that trafficked people are caught up in other kinds of criminality because the only people they know are criminals, that is the life that they have been trafficked into, and therefore there is a real responsibility on the state to recognise their vulnerability? Maybe they are actually responsible for, let us say, pickpocketing, because that is the other thing that the guy who runs them runs, but they are extremely vulnerable and require our protection. I was in the debate where Anthony raised the case of Chloe, or whatever she was called. Is it not the case that it is quite common for women who have been trafficked for sexual exploitation to apparently voluntarily have gone back into the sex trade because it is the only way they know to get money because of their vulnerable situation? Is it not really important, is not the point of the National Referral Mechanism that they actually have something which identifies their vulnerability and protects them? It does not give them a free pass from prosecution for criminality but it protects them in relation to their vulnerability. Is it not the case that that is not always happening when it should be?

Mr Campbell: I would accept that there is a case for saying that it does not always happen when it should and I would accept the argument that we need to do more. I would accept that perhaps we should start with the presumption that individuals need support, but also time to reflect. There were a number of cases which were quoted in the debate. Let me generalise rather than concentrate on one of them. It has been the case, for example, that someone has been picked up at a raid and has put their hands up and said that they were involved in the criminality and the question arises are they actually the victims of trafficking, are they somehow not aware of their rights in this situation, or because they are part of that criminal family if you like, they do not see the way forward, and in some cases they have actually said, "We are willing to go through the judicial process and to take the punishment which is coming." In some cases the National Referral Mechanism has stepped in and given them space, and indeed the people who are dealing with them space, to look carefully at all of the circumstances to try to identify, I think in the way that you are, to say they are victims of trafficking and that is the central issue; in some cases they have rejected that approach and took the punishment which was coming. I am

not trying to be evasive. All I am saying is that on a case-by-case basis some of these are extremely difficult cases and difficult to call, but on a general premise we should start with the assumption that there are victims of trafficking here and make sure that we go as far as we can to establish that and if they are not then other procedures and rules kick in.

Q12 Earl of Onslow: Minister, I think what you are saying makes an enormous amount of sense. It is a graded thing the whole way through. Some people have obviously been involved in criminality and then there is an element of blackmail to make sure they have been trafficked. I seem to remember watching a television programme. It was about prostitution in Moldova and there was a woman who was kidnapped and sold into prostitution in Turkey, in Istanbul I think. She is rescued but then she voluntarily goes back because she has got no money whatsoever and the conditions in Moldova are really absolutely appalling. I do not really know what the answer to this is. I can understand that it is an extremely complex social problem, and that is my question and it is left hanging in the air because, frankly, I do not know the answer.

Mr Campbell: Yes, there are some extremely distressing cases where I think to some extent individuals almost try to work out where their best interest lies.

Q13 Earl of Onslow: We all do that.

Mr Campbell: But in a perverse way. By remaining in the condition that they are in, even if they are being coerced into prostitution in the United Kingdom, I suppose they could argue that they may have some kind of income and some kind of shelter and it might not compare too badly with conditions that they would be facing going back. That is why I think we need a longer period, and of course under the National Referral Mechanism there is a longer period than the Convention demands, a space for them to face up to some of those decisions. There needs to be discretion as to whether there can be a prolonged period before they are sent back, but we also have to consider the welfare of the individuals. Not everyone of course actually goes back, but in many cases it is in their interests to go back to be amongst their families and their communities.

Q14 Earl of Onslow: Minister, I absolutely understand that but in this Chloe case which we have in front of us, and you obviously heard about in the debate, it looks as if the authorities here did not react as we would hope they had reacted. What can we do about that?

Mr Campbell: I accept that there will there be disagreements about how particular cases are handled and I am sure on reflection that there will be cases where things could have been done differently and done better, but I think part of the important work that we are doing is trying to get a better understanding by front-line officials and officers about trafficking and about the needs and requirements of victims. Whether or not it is for example in the interests of the individual concerned

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to be sent back to their source country is sometimes a hard call. I think there is an education which is still going on. It is a learning exercise which is still going on. The difficulty is while that is happening we are talking about the lives of individuals.

Q15 Dr Harris: Could I just make a suggestion because I think your responses show that you understand the concern in the human rights community. What about guidance that tells front-line police officers a simple proposition: that when they find women in these circumstances they must have a rebuttable presumption that they are a victim, so that they act on that basis initially and then when that is rebutted, they set out—and it can be one sentence on the paperwork—why whoever it is has changed that view changes their view. That would make sure that mistakes do not happen at the outset and would give a clear, reasoned paper trail as to why that presumption has been replaced by another presumption.

Mr Campbell: May I take that away and look at it?

Dr Harris: By all means.

Q16 Chairman: There is no doubt that compared to when we started working on this several years ago, we have come an awful long way towards a victim-centred approach. When we started presumption number one was that they were immigration offenders and presumption number two was that they were criminalised within the sex trade. We have come a long way from that, but my understanding of the Convention is that we do have these obligations, such as the things that Evan has just talked about, in terms of making sure that we have that victim-centred approach and anything that militates against that, for example the bureaucracy that Anthony Steen talked about last week, undermines that victim-centred approach, so if you do go away and look at this I think that would be very helpful.

Mr Campbell: Yes, but on the clear understanding though—and I am trying to recall the case that Anthony raised—that of course we want to look at it in the context of has this person been trafficked and therefore is a victim, but do not forget that there is then criminality which can have happened before they came into contact with the police and sometimes criminality which happens after they come into contact with the police. We have to have a balance here that understands that they can, to some extent, be both victims and potentially criminal at the same time.

Q17 Chairman: The essential point about the case that came up last week was the timelag between the alleged trafficking and trafficking exploitation and her coming into contact with the police. She actually approached the police. She was not arrested. She went to the police to report the fact that she had been violently raped. The problem was that there was a bureaucratic timetable that said it is so long since you were allegedly involved in the trafficking side you are on the wrong side of the limitation period,

as it were. If you are going to have a fixed limitation period for trafficking victims, it is hardly victim-centred, is it?

Mr Campbell: Let me have a look at it.

Q18 Chairman: I think that is the point, I think that is the essence of this.

Mr Campbell: I understand.

Q19 Lord Dubs: I was going to ask a question which probably fits in here although I could ask it later on about asylum. What sort of co-operation is there and what sort of links are there with the countries from which the trafficked women are believed to come? Lord Onslow mentioned Moldova. I know for a fact there is a lot of concern in Moldova among NGOs. What is the level of co-operation to help policemen when these things happen here?

Mr Campbell: There is a growing level of co-operation. We raised the issue of trafficking when we held the Presidency and it has been picked up regularly since then. As individual countries, and indeed collectively in Europe, they are grappling with the same sort of issues as we are about where is the research on which to base good policy and how can we have a more joined-up approach. Part of that is to do with enforcement of course but there are also issues around what happens if you are a victim of trafficking and you are going back to your source country. We do a lot of work through DFID with source countries to make sure that the conditions there are not acting as a push factor for people to get caught up in trafficking. Of course, very importantly, information campaigns warn people that if they are responding to a newspaper ad or a leaflet saying “there are good jobs in London: ring this number” that they should be particularly careful about that and be aware that these may well be traffickers. We have also got the Serious Organised Crime Agency which has a lot of people based abroad who are working on this very issue. I saw for example some work that we were doing with the Nigerians at the end of last year. Nigeria is a source country particularly for trafficking into southern Europe, Spain and Italy in particular, and we have Serious Organised Crime officers in parts of the world where we are seeking to work with the authorities there in a better way.

Q20 Lord Dubs: You may not want to mention particular countries and there may be a good level of co-operation, hopefully, with most of the countries from which the trafficked people come, but are there some countries where they are in a state of denial about this and where the co-operation is difficult?

Mr Campbell: We do everything that we can to make them aware of the problems that are, if you like, landing on our doorstep as a result of trafficking from their countries, and colleagues who travel to other parts of the world regularly raise with their counterparts our concerns. Vietnam would be a good example. David Hanson was in Vietnam at the end of last year. We have concerns which he raised directly with the Vietnamese Government.

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Q21 Earl of Onslow: To go back to Moldova, on the television programme it showed—and I am arguing, I quite accept, from the particular to the general here—that the authorities were completely corrupt where this was happening and the man who was caught got a sentence that was laughably light compared to what the sentence should have been. Do we have evidence in some of the countries from which these poor people are coming that there is heavy corruption and maladministration and incompetence and all the things that one can see involved in the countries with whom we are trying to have the liaison to which you refer?

Mr Campbell: Of course that would make life more difficult. I have heard the same criticism made of some West African countries. I think sometimes that is an excuse to say that there is corruption, it is not worthwhile, why are you working with some people both within and without government when you know that there are problems and you will be frustrated? I think we can over-exaggerate that. I also think we need to work with countries at a bilateral level but, crucially, we need to work across Europe and we need to make sure that we are working at an international level and indeed a multi-national level, which is why we continue to raise trafficking as a serious issue both at EU level, where I think we are making progress, but also at the UN level too. At every opportunity the UK Government raises this issue and we seek to grow the level of co-operation which is necessary to tackle what is a global problem.

Q22 Chairman: I will phrase a question on repatriation. One of the concerns we have, and I think you have, is the risk of people being victimised or indeed re-trafficked. When we did our original inquiry we heard of one poor woman who was re-trafficked by her family within 48 hours of returning allegedly safely. One of the key issues is making sure that if people are going to be returned, whether it be voluntarily or not, that proper steps are taken to make sure that the environment to which they are going back is one in which they can have a proper life, because of course they can either be ostracised by their family or subject to repeat victimisation. Some of the evidence that came out of the academic research that we heard last year on our mini-conference, and certainly information that was presented to the UN conference on this, was the extremely high proportion of women who are found to be victims of trafficking who had already been victimised before being trafficked, either physically or sexually or both, within the family, so there is a real risk if people are returned to that environment that they are going to go back to what they hoped, I suppose, they were escaping when they came to the UK?

Mr Campbell: Yes, which is why it is important that we have that period of reflection, both to resolve the issue in our country and make sure that those people who need to be held to account are. Also we consider, as best we can, what is in the best interests of the individuals themselves. To be honest, there is probably a limited amount that we can do to change

all of the material circumstances that might have led to the problem in the first instance, but that is why it is important that we do everything we can at a multi-national level, but we also take some time to reflect on what is not just in the interests of that individual but to make sure that they are not being put at risk of their lives or indeed of being re-trafficked. I would say, perhaps going back to our original point, that I am not sure there is a great deal of evidence yet and we need to do some more work on that re-trafficking element of it. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence.

Q23 Chairman: It is not just the trafficking; it is also the victimisation in the environment that they go back to. The best way is to stop it happening in the first place and the education is all very good and we cannot do enough of that. Also trying to spot victims at the point of entry is extremely important and a lot of work has gone into the training of Border Agency staff on that as well. If people are going to be returned, I am still not satisfied that enough work is going into the source country to check on the environment that individuals are going back to. That is one of the key issues. To what extent is the reflection period and its use conditional upon co-operation with the prosecution authorities, because this is one of the key issues that we identified in our original report, and also from the work that we did when we looked at this overseas; the message that we got very clearly was that you should not link co-operation with the prosecution authorities with the reflection period because you are dealing with vulnerable, victimised people who are terrified.

Mr Campbell: The issue of course is the engagement of individuals, who may or may not be victims in this, with the authorities, who are seeking to do everything that they can to help them, which is why the initial reflection period of 45 days is the standard that we have set.

Q24 Chairman: It is half what we thought was necessary.

Mr Campbell: Yes, but it is more than the Convention said that we need to have. Of course, it can be extended, but I take your point, there would have to be grounds to extend that. Often it is because the individual either needs more time to be able to not just come to terms with what has happened to her but also to reflect upon what has happened to her to the extent that it will help the prosecuting authorities, but we have to have, it seems to me, clearly defined periods of time, guidelines and limits on this which do not leave it open-ended, because of course there are instances where people do claim to be the victims of trafficking and they are nothing of the sort.

Earl of Onslow: Minister, I see that the Metropolitan Police Service's Human Trafficking Unit is being closed down and has been closed down. The Home Affairs Select Committee said: "... as our witnesses acknowledged, the UK is just starting to tackle the problems of trafficking for forced labour and for street crime. We are therefore particularly disturbed by the police officers' assessment that closing down the unit will make it more difficult to identify

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trafficking victims.” You replied: “I believe, along with the MPS, that the change in the overall responsibility for investigations into all forms of human trafficking to the Clubs and Vice Unit whilst moving the Unit into the Specialist Crime Directorate will ensure the Met can continue to build on progress . . .” There is no more extra money being provided for this. Has your optimistic and rosy forecast come about or has Boris Johnson’s despair been proved right? “Despair” may be a bit of a strong word.

Q25 Fiona Mactaggart: A big attempt to get out of responsibility.

Mr Campbell: Let me park the Mayor for a moment and set out what the facts were. When we invested quite a lot of money into the Metropolitan Police Anti-Trafficking Unit it was on the clear understanding that we believed—and we still believe—that tackling trafficking needs to be part of core police business. Therefore they were aware that the money would run down over time and that the best place for their unit was embedding it where it was part of core police business. The end date, if you like, was going to be March 2009. In December 2008, they came to us and said effectively, “We need more time to do this,” and Vernon Coaker (who was Police Minister at the time) and I agreed that we would give them more time even at the additional cost it would bring, and therefore we invested an additional £435,000 for the financial year 2009-10, but we said to them quite clearly you have to look at the unit and where it is going to be in the future because, and of course the financial circumstances have changed even more so, there is no more funding. They took the decision at the end of last year to move the unit into Clubs and Vice and to move Clubs and Vice into Specialist Crime. That is a matter for the Metropolitan Police. I think they have done the responsible thing. I think it allows officers to continue to work in trafficking. I know that some of them are involved in high-profile operations in the metropolis as we speak and I think that it has that right blend of having the specialist officers that are necessary whilst making sure that the knowledge and operational activity goes out to the front-line. This was not about us telling the Metropolitan Police that we were summarily cutting their money. It cost us a great deal more than we thought it would. The letter which I know the Mayor sent to many Members of Parliament was based on the debate which was raging at the time at the end of last year 2009 as to whether or not the unit should continue. The Metropolitan Police Service took a decision that it would be changed and, as I understand it, the Mayor has not really commented on it since.

Q26 Earl of Onslow: Arising out of that, my next printed question says how can you be confident that the closure of the unit will not have a detrimental effect on the Met’s human trafficking work? What I think I am really asking is have the results been better under the new system, worse, or just the same?

Mr Campbell: It would be too early to tell because they have only just made the decision, but obviously we would take an interest in that. I am confident that the Metropolitan Police have made the right decision and will be doing everything that they can to retain a focus on their important work on trafficking. It is not exclusively a London issue but it is perhaps a bigger issue in London than it is elsewhere. I am confident that they have made the right decision but of course we will be watching to see.

Q27 Chairman: Part of the problem is that the Met unit was also the national lead responsibility and the risk is if the Met is not investing funding for it then it will not take the national lead responsibilities, it will just do its work in the Met.

Mr Campbell: I suppose the answer to that is that the work has to be a priority for all 43 forces. There are other ways of making sure, through ACPO and through NPIA but also through the Human Trafficking Centre of course, that the pressure is constantly on police forces and chief constables to make sure that they are at least aware of the issue of trafficking and if it is an issue in their area they are doing everything that they can. I am not sure that they need the Met in order to take the lead in the way that perhaps you are suggesting it did in the past.

Q28 Chairman: I think it is a question of having people who specialise in what they do as opposed to the generality of the detective services in the various forces around the country, who may not have come across it or may not recognise it or identify it, and then we are back to where we were where people were treated as immigration offenders and all the rest.

Mr Campbell: Which is why we are going back to the issue around education, guidance, and everything else. It is very important that work continues through ACPO and the NPIA. Of course we have SOCA and we have the Human Trafficking Centre too, so there are plenty of sources of information, help and guidance, as well as the very good work which the Met has done in this regard.

Q29 Fiona Mactaggart: Last week I had a rather useful meeting with Assistant Commissioner, Cressida Dick, precisely about the Specialist Crime Unit and the role of this unit. I have been one of those, as the Minister knows, who has been most critical about some of the plans to run it down. I found that meeting very reassuring, but one of the things that I think is very important and where I am not sure that I can see a plan in either the Metropolitan Police or in other police forces, and I would like to know if the NPIA are actually doing something about, is work to make sure that the police officers who are likely to be the first encounter—and I think the new unit will be able to deal with big operations and big raids, and things like that—but what I am interested in is the beat police officer who is perhaps in a red light district, or something like that, who picks up a woman who he says is soliciting; what training does he have to seek to ensure that he is sensitive to the issues of sexual

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exploitation and of trafficking when he is doing that basic job? I am not convinced that it is adequate at the moment. Can the Minister tell us what he thinks is being done or should be being done?

Mr Campbell: May I find out the details of what actually is being done, but it is my understanding that it is part of the work of police training, and NPIA and others have issued guidance, because it goes back to the debate about the future of the Met unit, which is should this be core police business and should it be front-line police business. It is the police constable in the red light area (but perhaps not in a red light area) that needs to be asking the question so there is an awareness exercise. I suppose it is a fact of life that there is something of a lag effectively. There is a learning experience for all police officers and front-line officials of the state in this, but I am confident that the work which is being undertaken will get the police into a better place.

Q30 Chairman: Before we leave the issue of London, there is one important thing coming up in a couple of years' time which is the Olympics. What thought has gone into the likely impact of the Olympics on the levels of human trafficking? We know for example that when Germany hosted the World Cup there was a huge increase in prostitution associated with that sporting event. The Olympics is as big if not bigger than the World Cup. What assessment have you made of the likely risks of trafficking and what steps will you take, particularly with the winding up of the Met unit?

Mr Campbell: We are very much aware of the issue and focus on the Olympics is part of the refresh of the Trafficking Action Plan which took place at the end of last year, so we are very much aware. I have to say from the intelligence which is available to date, there is no clear evidence of any increased activity. To be honest, there is evidence from other countries which can suggest a whole range of possible outcomes and indeed what the nature of the challenge might be. The Met are of course, with or without their unit, focusing very much on this and doing some activity in the four or five boroughs most affected, not just around trafficking but actually around the sex industry in general. Not surprisingly, taking the German example, there is evidence of more prostitutes coming into the main cities that were hosting the sporting activities, but of course whether they came from surrounding regions and whether they were trafficked is almost an entirely different matter. We are looking closely at the Winter Olympics in Vancouver to see if there is any evidence there, but I suppose we are making preparation by being very vigilant and making sure that the assessment of what could happen at the Olympics does focus on trafficking.

Q31 Chairman: What resources have been made available to the Met?

Mr Campbell: Not additional resources because of course there is this huge amount of money that goes into policing in the first instance and therefore, as far as I know but I will go away and check, there is no money which says this is for a possible trafficking

threat in the Olympics, because it has not as yet shown itself in that way. If it did come up as a bigger issue, then of course we would want to have a look at it. It is a watching brief. I have spoken very recently with some women from various countries that want us to go further and want us not only to have a watching brief but to be proactive and to send out a very strong message about what we are going to tolerate and what we are not going to tolerate, and I am sympathetic to that.

Q32 Chairman: You mentioned what happened in Germany at the World Cup. The Olympics is still two years away. At what stage did the Germans realise that they had a problem?

Mr Campbell: Part of the answer to that is I am not sure whether there is agreement about the size of the problem. There is an assumption among some people that big sporting events will attract more women in the sex industry both at the construction phase but also during the event, and that almost inevitably means that there will be an opportunity for organised criminality of which trafficking is usually organised criminality. There are others who will say that to some extent it can be nothing to do with trafficking; it can simply be a regional or even a local issue. I am not sure there is agreement about whether there was such a threat in Germany actually.

Q33 Lord Dubs: Could I turn to asylum and immigration in relation to victims of trafficking. Do you know in the last five years how many victims of trafficking have been charged with immigration-related offences? In particular, have any victims of trafficking been charged under section 2 of the Asylum and Immigration Act 2004 for entering the UK without a valid passport and visa?

Mr Campbell: First of all, if they are victims of trafficking then they should not be charged with an offence. We want to be clear about that. As we discussed earlier, sometimes, to some extent, there is an element of trafficking and therefore victimisation, but there are also the other elements around criminality too. I cannot answer your question directly because if they were guilty of an offence it would not be the case that they were recorded as a victim of trafficking. We would start with the assumption that if they were victims of trafficking that they would not actually be charged with an immigration offence and therefore face those consequences.

Q34 Lord Dubs: If I have understood that, it might be easier for the police to say here is an immigration-related offence than to say conclusively this woman is a victim of trafficking. It may happen willy-nilly, whatever way you describe it.

Mr Campbell: I think that was part of the concern that people had about the role of UKBA perhaps having two different hats to wear on this issue. What we are doing, both with the prosecutors, the CPS, the police and others, is this awareness campaign to say to them that there is detailed guidance on circumstances in which a prosecutor might conclude

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whether or not an individual should be prosecuted. The presumption of course is that if they are victims in the first place then they should not be.

Q35 Lord Dubs: You have already partly answered the question I want to ask now but let me state it in these terms: when a victim is repatriated to their country of origin—and you have mentioned the concerns you have and so on—is a risk assessment carried out on each individual who may be returned in these circumstances?

Mr Campbell: My understanding is that the answer to that is yes. It is part of the consideration of what is in the best interests of the victim.

Q36 Lord Dubs: But it would be individual to the victim not just to the country?

Mr Campbell: My understanding is yes.

Q37 Lord Dubs: My next question is this: sometimes of course it is children that are trafficked. What is being done to ensure that the welfare of such children is more important than immigration control considerations?

Mr Campbell: Of course if they are children who are victims of trafficking then they would be regarded as vulnerable children, and the local authority would take the lead and have the responsibility for doing everything that they could to safeguard them and to make sure that throughout the length of period that they are looking after the children they recognise that they are victims and everything is done in their best interests. I think we pay particular note to the dangers of sending children back to their country of origin. My understanding is that it is a mixed picture. Some children do go back because it is in their best interests to do so. Some of them of course, if they are 16 or 17, if it is protracted, can become of adult age during the procedure and then they might decide whether or not they are going to apply for a right to remain here.

Q38 Earl of Onslow: Arising out of that, presumably, on the other side it is quite possible for somebody who has been arrested to claim that they are a victim of trafficking when in fact they are not, and to claim to be a victim so they then do not get sent back, and their aim of getting here to continue their trade has been achieved? Presumably, we are aware of that?

Mr Campbell: Not only that but we are aware of the fact that some traffickers will seek to manipulate children and young people in a way when it suits them to claim that they are victims or not victims, so it is not just the individual children themselves, it is those who are in charge of the trafficking.

Q39 Earl of Onslow: I was not referring directly to children. I was referring specifically to women trafficked for sex purposes.

Mr Campbell: Yes.

Earl of Onslow: Section 14 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009 makes it an absolute offence for a man, as you know—

Fiona Mactaggart: Or a female. The gender of the perpetrator is irrelevant in the legislation.

Q40 Earl of Onslow: This has not been brought in. Do you intend to bring it in or do you intend not to bring it in or what are your plans?

Mr Campbell: Yes, we do intend to bring it in and we intend to bring it in as soon as we can. Again I would hope that would be within a matter now of weeks if not months. It is an important part of the Policing and Crime Act and I think we should be extremely proud of what we are trying to achieve there. It will not solve all of our problems but I think it is a step along the way. We need to send out a very strong message that it would be illegal for men to have sex with women who have been coerced and trafficked in that way and they will face consequences, because previously they did not face consequences, and therefore the argument was made, which was accepted, that they fuel demand. We will introduce the offence and that will bring with it two things. The first is we are working very closely with the police and the CPS to make sure that when it does become law and it is enacted, that it is useable, and that there are no problems and that we will get some convictions. The other thing of course, which I think is very fair, is that we need to send out the message to men and women that there is a new offence and it is a different offence in that it is strict liability. It will not be a defence to say, “I didn’t know that this person (usually a woman) was trafficked”, and therefore we owe it to them through a high-profile campaign to spell out what the consequences would be if they break that law and why it is not only in the interests of the victims but in their own interests not to do it.

Q41 Earl of Onslow: This Committee in its report on the Policing and Crime Bill stated: “In our view, the proposed offence has the potential to put women into a more exploitative or unsafe situation, may not address the problem which the offence aims to target (namely exploitative prostitution) and may discourage reporting of such prostitution.” Was the Government aware?

Mr Campbell: The Government was aware of that and this was a prolonged debate, I think a very responsible and reasonable debate, but the Government persevered and Parliament agreed and I think that that was the right thing to do. My general response to the point that you are making is I can think of fewer circumstances which are more dangerous and dark than women being trafficked into a foreign country and forced to take part in the sex industry. We owe it to them and to us to do everything that we can. We know what we would do if a brothel was raided and women were found to have been trafficked. We know what we would do with them. We know what we would do with the people who kept the brothel and forced them into that. The law is clear. What was not clear is what responsibility lay with the men that were fuelling that demand. Now we have a piece of legislation which sends out a clear message but more than that I hope it has a practical effect on reducing demand.

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Q42 Chairman: One important point that I put to Vernon Coaker when he was sat there when he had this brief when we were doing this work at the beginning was this point about trying to persuade men to report people they suspected were victims. The risk is whether now they are criminalised under section 14 will they be willing to do that and, more seriously, which is the point I put to Vernon, they are actually admitting to rape because by definition if the woman was forced into prostitution through trafficking she could not give proper consent to the sexual act even if she was being paid for it because if the man was then to suspect this was a trafficked woman, she is not giving proper consent, so potentially it is rape.

Mr Campbell: Let me be clear that as part of our deliberations we looked at what would happen if those circumstances prevailed. I am talking about the fact that the man had sex with a woman and she was trafficked and she therefore could not have consented, and of course if the evidence is there for a rape prosecution I see no reason why the authorities would not press ahead with that. What we were concerned about was what happens when the evidence is not there, when the victim is not willing to testify, when it is not clear there would be a conviction for rape. Almost as a second best, if you like, this new strict liability law would come into effect and would at least, in perhaps a smaller way, hold the men accountable for what they were doing. I take your point, because again there were members of this Committee that were on the Bill Committee—

Q43 Dr Harris: Indeed!

Mr Campbell: —and who are well aware of the arguments. There was concern about whether or not this would put off men from reporting. There are ways in which that can be achieved. They can do it with a degree of anonymity. The one thing that I recall from the evidence session of the Policing and Crime Bill which really convinced me of this, and it came from Poppy, was that they said, in their experience, 22 men had contacted them to say that they had been to a brothel and they believed that the woman had been trafficked and in every single case, knowing that, they went on and had sex with the woman. I thought here is a good case where we need to really waken up men to the horrors that they are part of and send out a clear message that we do not want them to do that. If this law is not used because men change their minds and are deterred by it, then so be it, but if it has to be used I welcome it.

Q44 Chairman: I am not opposing it; I am just making a point about the importance of trying to get the evidence or information to free these women from the scenario that they are in. If men report to the Poppy project, that is not reporting to the authorities, that is indirect reporting I suppose, but this is a potential downside because of the criminalisation.

Mr Campbell: Yes, I think we have concentrated more on the actual problems of collecting the evidence, but I do not see why the prosecuting authorities would not make a presumption to see

whether or not in fact there was a higher offence. I would hope that is exactly what they would do. In the absence of that there was a clear gap and that is where this new section 14 comes in.

Q45 Dr Harris: As was read out by Michael, our report said there was a risk, and indeed we had had some evidence, as indeed the Public Bill Committee had evidence, that the proposed offence has the potential to put women into more exploitative or unsafe situations, and may not address the problem which the offence aims to target (namely exploitative prostitution)—coercion and trafficking included—“and may discourage reporting of such prostitution.” Presumably it is capable that there might be research into those questions where the balance lies. In your view, was this offence an evidence-based policy?

Mr Campbell: Yes, but it was one in which there was evidence presented for not only both sides but every variation. I do not know want to give the impression that this was a clear-cut discussion. This was probably one of the most contentious parts of a very contentious Bill. At the end of the day we had to decide and Parliament had to decide on the evidence which was presented to them as parliamentarians as well as the evidence that we used in the demand review to base that particular clause on.

Q46 Dr Harris: That is what I want to probe. What evidence was available to parliamentarians? In your demand review on page 10 you say: “The aim of the review was to establish a firm evidence base”, which implies you wanted this to be an evidence-based policy. In the key actions of the review on page 11, and this was published in November 2008, the first one would be “a rapid evidence assessment of research available on sex buyers conducted by the University of Huddersfield to be published shortly”, and that “shortly” was dated November 2008, yet can you confirm that when parliamentarians voted on this measure there had been no publication of that part of the evidence base? There are no other references in your review so that is the only one.

Mr Campbell: I would need to check. I certainly could not say that it had been published.

Q47 Dr Harris: I can tell you that it was not published even by the time it went through the Lords let alone when I was debating this with you in the Commons on 19 January. I asked whether you were going to publish this evidence and Vernon Coaker said: “We are looking at publishing the evidence. In the end you pick the evidence which backs your argument”, which is not my idea of proper evidence-based policy making. You said: “Do not read anything into the fact—you will remember this—“that we have not published this.” Has this review now been published?

Mr Campbell: I would need to go away and check. To a certain extent we have moved on from that. I do not even want to say yes or no because I am not sure. What I would say is to some extent there is a caveat to basing everything that we do on the evidence in the way that you are arguing for. There was a lot of

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evidence brought to the attention of parliamentarians. There was evidence presented during the early stages of the Bill's deliberations. I do not think there was a shortage of strong anecdotal evidence. The problem was it pointed in a number of different directions. On this issue—and sometimes I think you have to do it even though you commit yourself to an evidence-based approach—you have to make a decision on it.

Q48 Dr Harris: I agree but you should do so openly. You are the one who raised the firm evidence base. Those were your words of November 2008. I can tell you, Minister, your research was published last month, several months after the Bill received Royal Assent, and this is what your own commissioned evidence that you did not publish before Parliament when we were debating the issue said: “Efforts to reduce demand seem to have mixed results, although the evidence is weak. It appears that the consequences of policy changes are often hidden or practically immeasurable. Also the risk of displacement threatens to negate any gains of enforcement activity making prostitution an even more hidden and secretive enterprise.” In Sweden—and I respect Fiona Mactaggart's difference of opinion from me—this is what the university academics said: “In Sweden, criminalisation of demand appeared to coincide with a reduction in street prostitution although some findings suggest a decline in the working conditions of street prostitutes and an increase in the size of the indoor market.” Finally, “This review highlights the major gaps in the evidence base and that the evidence provided is largely weak and inconclusive.” On the research you eventually published after Parliament voted on this (when you had it months ago) suggests that this is not an evidence-based policy. You are entitled to make policy on the basis of morality or ideology or manifesto commitment but you should not call it an evidence-based policy when it is not. Do you agree?

Mr Campbell: I do not agree with your analysis there.

Q49 Dr Harris: I just read it.

Mr Campbell: For a start if you are talking about trafficked women then you are not talking about on-street prostitution as much as hidden prostitution, for a start, so I would not necessarily follow that point. I do not think that ultimately parliamentarians made a decision because they either read that or did not read it.

Q50 Dr Harris: But they could not read it because you suppressed it.

Mr Campbell: A piece of evidence like that. I am not sure that is where parliamentarians arrive at their decisions. They have a great deal of evidence. As Ministers, we had a great deal of evidence. The problem was that sometimes it looked to be contradictory, it pointed in lots of different direction and there are people from other countries that have a different approach to prostitution that were welcoming the fact that we had the courage to

introduce such an Act. Of course the evidence is important but it is not just the academic report upon which people will ultimately make their minds up. Could I just say it is not just a case of plucking from the air some sense of morality or going back to some manifesto commitment. It was never a manifesto commitment. It was based on what the former Home Secretary and then Ministers learned from looking in detail at this but accepting there would never be a 100 per cent sign-up to what we wanted to do.

Q51 Dr Harris: My last question is to ask whether you would at least agree with me that there is a difference between evidence and assertion or opinion and that when a policy, for whatever reason, is promulgated it is wrong to say that it is evidence-based without producing the independent evidence to support that.

Mr Campbell: In this case there was other evidence that was available throughout the debate. This was a piece of work which was commissioned but there was other evidence that was presented to parliamentarians. There was a widespread debate based on lots and lots of evidence, often from front-line practitioners in the sex industry. The problem was there was a huge dichotomy of views on this.

Fiona Mactaggart: Can I help on the issue of the evidence base.

Dr Harris: You rightly commissioned a systematic review in order to get some order. That is what it is. It is a systematic review of 220 studies reviewed of which 181 met the inclusion criteria. The summaries I read selectively from are from a review of 181. Surely that is better than selected random opinions?

Chairman: I think that is a debating point.

Q52 Fiona Mactaggart: That is the point, because this is not question of the Home Office concealing evidence. The Huddersfield research was not original research. It was merely a review of pre-existing research, the vast majority of which was published and which was itself randomly created by the interests of researchers, frankly, so I do not think it bears the great weight which Dr Harris is putting on it. I wanted to intervene to reassure the Committee that at the point at which you produced the unanimous report which the Earl of Onslow mentioned, I was not a member of the Committee, and I think it is quite important for my integrity to make that clear. Had I been it would not have been unanimous because, in my view, that conclusion of the Committee's was wrong. One of the things that I wanted to ask you about in relation to section 14 of the Policing and Crime Act is whether you thought there was a prospect of the publicity campaign that you have referred to actually preceding the implementation of the Act or happening soon because my anxiety is that, if it does not, it is clearly a controversial piece of legislation and it is going to bump in pre-election periods and so on and, as a result, I know how the Home Office works, I have worked inside it, it will not happen at all. Is there a risk of that?

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Mr Campbell: There is certainly a risk of the electoral timetable impeding what we would want to do. I think it is important that we get section 14 on to the stocks and useable. Of course I would like to think, and we are working as hard as we can, that there was a precedent for some campaign, but I cannot say to you this afternoon that I am enormously confident of that. If there was not, it would have to come as soon as it could, but the problem is we are heading towards purdah and all sorts of things. We are trying our best but I cannot give you that assurance this afternoon.

Dr Harris: The Committee is not keen for it to be implemented so you have our support on that.

Chairman: I had understood that we do want that.

Dr Harris: It is in the report.

Q53 Fiona Mactaggart: It is the law and I think it brings the law into disrepute if laws which are passed are not implemented.

Mr Campbell: Not only will we have a campaign but I am very keen to learn from the comments that were made during the adjournment debate about who is the target and where you target it. There is some precedence again for that kind of campaign, gents' urinals on service stations.

Q54 Fiona Mactaggart: On the point that the Chairman raised about the anxiety about whether men would inform in cases where they had suspicions that women were trafficked, have you or your colleagues had any discussions with the police and the CPS about charging policy in relation to these kinds of cases, where the man's offence is clearly less significant, both in terms of potential sentence and in terms of the degrees of harm caused, than for example either the brothel keeper or the trafficker, and whether it would be possible to develop a charging policy which could say that where people who had themselves committed lesser offences were prepared to give evidence which helped to secure a prosecution for a serious major crime, that it would be looked at generously in terms of whether they were to be prosecuted?

Mr Campbell: We are working through issues around implementation both with ACPO and with the CPS and I am confident that that will be part of the discussion, because, as you said a moment ago, it is the law and therefore we need to get this right. We need to make sure that we do not send out a message that there will be a blanket immunity should one use that as a defence in court. It is a tricky bit of legislation and that is one of the issues that we are working through with the CPS. Certainly in terms of severity of sentence and outcome I would have thought there was logic in looking at that.

Q55 Fiona Mactaggart: The other thing I wanted to raise with you, I mentioned it in the adjournment debate which has been referred to earlier, is the case of Rancheva. It is a decision by the European Court of Human Rights which seems, following the death of an exotic dancer who had gone to Cyprus on a performing visa, to say very clearly that there is a duty on countries which are signatories to the

Convention to interdict in some way areas of business which provide shelter for people-trafficking. I wondered if you had had discussion with colleagues in other departments such as the Culture, Media and Sport Department and BIS about what the impact of that ought to be in the UK in order to make sure that we do not have enterprises which, in effect, by having an apparently legitimate outer face, protect the operations of traffickers, as I think probably happens in parts of the lap-dancing industry in the UK, for example, and certainly happens in industries which advertise sex services in our local newspapers.

Mr Campbell: I have not had direct talks with colleagues about that. I am reflecting on what you said in the adjournment debate. There are a number of things we need to follow on from there, but it seems to me that that is the sort of issue that we would want to have on the agenda of the inter-departmental ministerial group that overseas trafficking matters. All 18 departments are represented including the devolved administrations, so it is certainly something we would want to see on the agenda. Also if I can follow up what you were saying, the Solicitor-General has already raised with me the issue around adverts and the failure, in her view, of self-regulation in newspapers in particular, and, again, we would want to have further conversation and discussions about that. If there is a case for action then we need to act.

Q56 Fiona Mactaggart: When is the next meeting of the inter-departmental group and will this be on the agenda?

Mr Campbell: It will be on the agenda and the meeting will be very early in April.

Earl of Onslow: Can I go back to a question at a slightly nitty-grittier level. Will the Government introduce an anonymous hotline for those who use prostitutes and others to refer women who they think may have been trafficked and that would enable them possibly to counteract some of the concerns that we had in our original report? I would like to say on the plus side it is perfectly reasonable to say that we dislike the behaviour of men going to prostitutes and we think it is wrong per se, but I think it is a grave mistake to introduce legislation saying that it is based on evidence but in fact it is based on a perfectly respectable and strongly held view. I think it is easier to take what I suspect is Fiona Mactaggart's view than possibly my view, because I think it is a totally respectable view to take, but to defend it on an evidence base when it is obviously not evidence-based, I think that is a mistake.

Q57 Chairman: We have explored all the issues so do not go down that road or we will be here all night!

Mr Campbell: On the substantive point about the hotline, this was an issue which was debated at the time. Of course there are a number of existing hotlines and we would want to look at whether it was a case of better advertising them rather than perhaps set up something which replicates that; Crimestoppers being a good example.

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Q58 Chairman: Can I ask you a couple of other questions about enforcement action. The 2009 Action Plan said that there has been an improvement in prosecution rates. Can you give us the details of that?

Mr Campbell: Yes. The number of prosecutions has increased steadily since 2005. In 2005 there were 49 prosecutions brought to court. In 2006, there were 98, in 2007, 117 and in 2008, 165. The number of convictions has fluctuated to some extent. The main reason for that is that people who are prosecuted do not end up being convicted for trafficking offences; they are convicted of something else, like for example rape, brothel management, assisting unlawful immigration.

Q59 Chairman: They next question I was going to ask you is: are those prosecution figures solely for trafficking offences or trafficking-related offences like the ones you are talking about?

Mr Campbell: Let me get this absolutely clear. The figures are for trafficking alone. The convictions for trafficking alone number 118 in total for trafficking, three for conspiracy to traffic and seven convictions for labour trafficking. Just in case I have made a noose for my own neck, I have just been reminded that that figure is not for all of them; it is just for trafficking.

Q60 Chairman: The prosecutions were for trafficking alone?

Mr Campbell: Yes.

Q61 Chairman: And the conviction rate will include those who end up with convictions for trafficking plus brothel-keeping, rape, kidnapping or whatever?

Mr Campbell: Yes.

Q62 Chairman: What discussions have you had with the Crown Prosecution Service, the Police and other law enforcement agencies such as SOCA about improving the prosecution and conviction rates?

Mr Campbell: Yes, it is one of the key parts of discussions with them. It is a crucial part—that prosecutors, judges, the CPS, everybody involved in the process is aware of the need, if the evidence points that way, for prosecution for trafficking offences.

Q63 Chairman: What further changes in the procedure or law do we need to help secure it?

Mr Campbell: I am not sure that we do necessarily need more legislation. I think we need a better understanding of the legislation. We need to make sure that the people are hoping to make use of the legislation if the opportunity arises, but, of course, also, particularly because this is an element of serious organised crime, the CPS, the Police, SOCA and others are looking to use whatever measures they have to bring people to justice but also to disrupt their activities. Traffickers may not end up actually being prosecuted and convicted for trafficking but that does not mean nothing happens to them.

Q64 Dr Harris: In the answer to earlier questions you said you would get back to us. I think one of the questions was on rebuttable presumption. Could that be quite soon?

Mr Campbell: Yes.

Q65 Chairman: Is there anything you want to add?

Mr Campbell: No, thank you.

Chairman: Thank you for coming. It has been a very useful session to us. The Committee stands adjourned.

Written evidence

Letter from Alan Campbell MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Home Office

Thank you for your letter of 27 October 2009 requesting details of the future of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) Human Trafficking Team.

First, may I apologise for the delay in responding to your letter, which is due to an administrative error.

As you will be aware, the status of the MPS human trafficking team has been part of an MPS strategic review of organised immigration crime. On 11 December 2009 the outcome of that review was announced. Overall responsibility for the MPS's anti-trafficking work will transfer to the Clubs and Vice Unit, which will expand its remit to cover all forms of human trafficking (including labour trafficking) and in turn will move to the Specialist Crime Directorate, which deal with organised crime and house the outgoing Human Trafficking Team.

The government has provided £2.3 million to the MPS for its work on organised immigration crime, which includes human trafficking, between 2007 when the trafficking team was established, and 2008–09. As we pointed out in our written response to the Home Affairs Select Committee report on human trafficking in August 2009, this funding was provided on a time limited basis. Our expectation was that it would be used to pump-prime work and mainstream it into the MPS core budget and business.

It became apparent however that the MPS was not going to achieve this by end of the financial year 2008–09. The Government therefore agreed to provide an additional exceptional contribution of £435,000 for the current financial year. This gave the MPS extra time to put in place a more long term arrangement for its anti trafficking work.

Decisions on how to deploy police resources at the MPS are the responsibility of the Commissioner and his senior management team. Assistant Commissioner Cressida Dick has announced that moving responsibility for human trafficking into one single command will mean better co-ordination, less duplication and more accountability in the service provided to victims along with an increased focus on organised crime supported by the assets of the Specialist Crime Directorate.

I trust this new arrangement will ensure that the MPS can continue to build on the progress it has made in dealing effectively with human trafficking.

20 January 2010

Memorandum from London Councils and the London Safeguarding Children Board

LONDON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

The London Board provides strategic advice and support to London's 32 Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs), and aims to respond to London agencies' needs on specific issues within a broad remit of:

- providing a strategic safeguarding children policy lead for London;
- promoting information sharing and collaboration in practice guidance and training for London agencies;
- supporting research and initiatives to improve services and practice in London; and
- helping London agencies meet the challenges of national safeguarding children policy.

The London Board is chaired by Cheryl Coppell (Chief Executive, LB Havering), and its membership is made up of representatives from the London boroughs, the police, health, and probation; and London independent, voluntary and community agencies.

The Board facilitates a number of professional networks and subgroups on key issues, and has a specific subgroup in place to address concerns around child trafficking within London. Over the past year, this subgroup has led the development and piloting of a best practice multi-agency safeguarding model for responding to the trafficking of children—see below for further details.

CHILD TRAFFICKING IN LONDON

An accurate picture of the child trafficking problem in London is difficult to obtain, particularly as few LSCBs collect data in a routine fashion. However, a number of research projects have found clear evidence that the issue is prevalent in London:

- In their 2004 report *Cause for concern*, ECPAT UK found that 26 of the 33 London boroughs had trafficking concerns regarding individual cases, or were suspicious about the circumstances in which a child had been brought into the UK or was currently living in. Only one borough stated that they had no concerns at all regarding trafficking.

- Through a mixture of outreach work in eight pilot boroughs and file auditing conducted in four boroughs, the London Safeguarding Children Board's Community Partnership Project (2007), part funded by the Home Office and DCSF, also found that child trafficking was more common than expected in London.

PROFESSIONAL AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

The ECPAT UK report also found that professional awareness and understanding of trafficking was lacking at times, and recommended that specific guidance be produced to address this knowledge gap.

- The *London procedure for safeguarding trafficked and exploited children* was subsequently published in 2006, and was later used to inform the 2007 DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked*.
- In March 2008, London Councils' lead members instigated a multi-agency seminar to further raise awareness of the growing problem of human trafficking, adding to a number of conferences and seminars held on the issue both locally and pan-London in recent years.

LONDON TRAFFICKED CHILDREN PILOTS

Seven London boroughs are participating in an initiative which brings together workstreams from London Councils, individual London LSCBs, the MPS and the Home Office. The project aims to develop and share good practice local safeguarding responses, and to assist the integration of national trafficked children mechanisms with existing safeguarding children procedure and practice.

A London Trafficked Children Toolkit has been drafted to assist implementation of the model. The toolkit includes legislation, local structures, training plans and an updated version of the original London procedure for safeguarding trafficked and exploited children and is aimed at any professional who may come into contact with a trafficked child (LA children's social care, asylum teams, schools, health services, youth offending teams, UKBA etc).

London boroughs participating in the initiative are: Camden, Croydon, Islington, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow and Southwark.¹ The pilots are running for one year, and began in March 2009, with a final report to be published in spring 2010.

POTENTIAL IMPACT OF 2012 OLYMPICS

An emerging issue for that the London Safeguarding Children Board is the potential increase in trafficking associated with London hosting the 2012 Olympic Games. Evidence from previous Games and other major sporting events suggests that.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE WORK

The London Safeguarding Children Board's work on child trafficking and the emerging findings from the trafficked children pilots provide some important recommendations that the Joint Committee may wish to consider.

Gender impact assessments

Gender impact assessments should be undertaken with every licensing application for adult entertainment premises—in the same way that child impact assessments are undertaken by Local Safeguarding Children Boards. Evidence links an increase in attacks on women in areas where such clubs operate. The London Board suggests that trafficking could be an element of the assessment and that training for licensing officers would enable them to identify potential trafficking when visiting premises.

Provision of safe accommodation

Safe accommodation is important in helping minimise the risk of child victims going missing from care. Child victims continue to be at risk from the serious organised crime networks that employ a range of techniques to try and ensure a child re-establishes contact with the trafficker if a child is in the care of a local authority. The pilot project has identified the importance of being able to provide a safe environment for the child and an opportunity to build trust as being critical in order to minimise the risk of children going missing from care.

Further work in understanding why this is the case is required along with the development of a mutable option safe accommodation package.

¹ Other pilot authorities are: Kent, Manchester, Slough, Solihull, Glasgow, and Newport.

Local specialist support

Providing professionals with access to specialist support is another key finding from the trafficking pilots. The model developed through the pilot sees local authorities nominate a local professional and assist him/her to develop specialist knowledge in relation to trafficked children. This local trafficked children lead will act as an adviser to other professionals and the lead professional in cases where the concerns in relation to a child are related to trafficking. A “trafficked children lead” could be a joint-funded post and could support staff in more than one LSCB area.

Age assessments

Assessing the age of a victim of trafficking can be necessary because a child may have documents which are false, or belong to another child, in order to make them appear younger or older. The age assessment process can be lengthy and distressing for the child, and may result in them missing out on services and protection as agencies consider who should take responsibility. Subsequently, the new London guidance states that the child must be given the benefit of the doubt and be provided with full protection as a child victim of trafficking until his or her age can be verified.

New assessment tool for identifying child victims of trafficking

Current LSCB and competent authority referral and joint working arrangements will benefit from enhanced information sharing protocols and a child centred multi agency safeguarding training package. The toolkit developed as part of the pilot project contains a joint assessment tool and referral form to assist local professionals in both assessing the needs of the child, the continuing risks that they may face, and referring their case to the United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC), as a competent authority or the UKBA as a competent authority.

The assessment was created within a children’s services team and enhanced by the multi-agency ACPO victim identification group, and is also being used by the Home Office. Child trafficking sits within the child protection framework with early identification through assessment forming a critical first stage in safeguarding a child. Reasonable and conclusive grounds decisions within the context of the Council of Europe’s Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings play an important role in safeguarding a child, as through a children’s services assessment and outcomes process lead to a clear definition of a child’s experience and also defining the needs of a child within the statutory service provision.

Assessment Framework/Common Assessment Framework

Children are unlikely to disclose they have been trafficked, as most do not have an awareness of what trafficking is, may be too frightened of their traffickers or may believe they are coming to the UK for a better life. It is likely that the child will have been coached with a story to tell the authorities in the UK and warned not to disclose any detail beyond the story, as this would lead them to being deported. To assist professionals in all agencies to recognise the signs that a child may be trafficked as early as possible, the London toolkit provides a matrix of risk assessment indicators and links these to the CAF process and the national Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families.

Potential impact of 2012 Olympics

An emerging issue for that the London Safeguarding Children Board is the potential increase in child trafficking associated with London hosting the 2012 Olympic Games. Evidence from previous Games and other major sporting events suggests that incidence of child trafficking rises in line with the increased movement of people into host cities. Children are largely trafficked for sexual exploitation and child labour (including forced begging).

CONCLUSION

London has had a significant influence on national thinking around support for victims of child trafficking for a number of years, and seeks to continue to do so through the new toolkit and pilots. The initiative integrates immigration issues for children with their right to be safeguarded and their welfare promoted under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004. The toolkit should further raise awareness of child trafficking and give frontline professionals and their managers in all agencies, in London and across the UK, the tools they need to identify and respond to child victims.

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