July 25, 2019: PLASP Meeting

PLASP featured at events three weekends in a row in June/July which are covered on the PLASP webpage.

- June 29 was the Ormskirk Freedom Day (roadshow).
- At a social justice event in Bury on July 6 we had the Freedom Bus, Journey to Freedom and a stall. Of interest to us, Andy Burnham (Mayor of Greater Manchester) raised the issue of Homelessness and its ramifications. Increasingly we see homelessness as a major aspect of vulnerability to trafficking.
- The Liverpool event on July 13 was very successful even without the Freedom Bus or the Journey to Freedom experience. There were many visitors to our stall and some people were taking leaflets and then returning to find out more about modern day slavery after visiting the Slavery Museum. Given the location and the positive response from the public PLASP may run another event in the same place with both the Freedom Bus and Journey to Freedom.

The next roadshow (Freedom Day) is Blackpool on August 21 which will feature the Freedom Bus but not Journey to Freedom. The Lytham Kite Festival is the week before so there will be no PLASP kite on August 21. The Lancaster roadshow (Freedom Day) is on September 21 with hopefully a Cathedral service on the Sunday.

At the Anti-Slavery Commissioners’ national meeting, the new Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Sara Thornton, outlined her four priorities for the UK:

- improving victim identification and support
- effective prevention, including examining efforts to build the evidence base through research on modern slavery, and how this impacts and informs policy
- an enhanced law enforcement and criminal justice response
- engagement with the private sector to ensure that supply chains are free of slavery

The Modern Slavery Police Transformation Unit annual report to March 2019 can be seen [here](#).

The Freedom Bus features in the [Unseen Helpline Annual Assessment 2018 report](#) in which the Pan Lancashire Anti-Slavery Partnership says: “Modern Slavery is a hidden crime and so as a key part of the work of the Pan Lancashire Anti-Slavery Partnership, we are committed to raising awareness and helping to spot the signs. Over the past year we have held a number of events in towns across Lancashire, engaging with the public around this important issue. By working in partnership with Unseen, we have been able to promote the 24/7 confidential Modern Slavery Helpline. This offers a safe and credible way for people to seek advice and report concerns. As a result of the awareness raising and the use of the Helpline, we have seen a real increase in the numbers of victims being identified and supported. One of our most eye-catching tools we use is the Freedom Bus which displays the Helpline number and other key messages as it drives around the streets of Lancashire.”
The Modern Slavery Act 2015 has been under an independent review. The government has published its response to the review and launched a public consultation to gather views on proposed measures intended to increase transparency and compliance, and extend the scope of the legislation, particularly to public sector organisations. Mark Burns-Williamson OBE Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire strongly encourages all PCC colleagues to take part in the consultation and cascade to forces and partnership networks. This is a significant opportunity to influence Modern Slavery Act legislation to ensure all private and public sector organisations are working to eradicate slavery from their businesses and supply chains. The deadline for responses is 12 September.

On supply chains, Staffordshire have what is regarded as the model pledge to combat trafficking in supply chains. Lancashire started a draft but our Mission Statement already goes beyond the Staffordshire pledge. A related idea would be to have a strapline stating commitment to eradicating modern day slavery. Suppliers would be asked to click a link and state their own commitment. The Government has said it is going to do more on enforcing anti-slavery statements and that it won’t accept bids from non compliant companies. There is an encouraging and mounting groundswell on tackling modern day slavery in supply chains.

The National Slavery Helpline figures for the first quarter of 2019 show upward trends in calls, webforms, cases and victims. There have been 9 victims in Lancashire, 4 labour exploitations, 2 sexual exploitation and 3 unknown. You can see the full report here
Awareness of County Lines is increasing, as is its acceptance as a form of human trafficking. This has skewed the figures which makes comparisons over time more difficult.

PLASP needs to develop a Victim Care Pathway, one of our more difficult tasks. We need to do much more for victims but one issue is existing local authority responsibility and the importance of not cutting across that. We may have something to learn from the Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) which is about safeguarding victims of domestic violence. There is recognition that there is a tripartite aspect to victim safeguarding - victims, witnesses and perpetrators. Few perpetrators are charged though many are arrested. In developing a good Victim Care Pathway an idea is to review cases known to us and ask what more could have been done.

Many victims need an interpreter which can be very difficult, particularly when a victim is from part of a country e.g. India where there are many different languages. Alarmingly, human traffickers have been recruiting interpreters for the purpose of re-trafficking victims during face to face appointments. The Salvation Army has offered advice:

- Never leave the interpreter alone with a victim, especially in waiting rooms or reception areas.
- This includes not just visually but also within earshot to ensure no subtle communication is taking place.
- Please ensure victims leave at different times to an interpreter.
- Be wary of any interpreting activity that seems out of the norm or not in keeping with what is being asked to be interpreted.
- If a victim looks distressed in the presence of an interpreter, cease the session immediately.
- Unfortunately, even interpreters with full references, qualifications and DBS checks may still be involved in trafficking gangs, so if you have any doubts or hesitation about the quality of an interpreter, please tell your language service provider immediately.

Sion Hall and Ed Saville have been to Cumbria and presented to the Cumbria Safeguarding Board. Cumbria have asked for training and trainer training. Discussion on training led PLASP to consider how training should be promoted generally, given its importance, particularly for front line staff e.g. in jobcentres.

North East is going to use a tailored version of our Toolkit.

The Soroptimists have done “grab bags” for victims. They contain basic clothing and toiletry requirements, pre-packed and ready to go. Might we fund say a dozen for victims in Lancashire?

West Division now has a liveried vehicle which will have an official launch. Hopefully there will be funding for one for each of the other two divisions.
The Modern Slavery Helpline has produced a fold out leaflet offering help to potential victims of human trafficking. It is in English, Bulgarian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, Slovak, Spanish Vietnamese, Chinese and Kurdish. At the back are tear-off slips with the Modern Slavery Helpline number.

The National Crime Agency has been looking at restricting access to adult websites. The two largest websites for accessing prostitutes have come to an agreement with the NCA that they will take on alerts and flag assaults. Lancashire Police has sex worker Special Points of Contacts (SPOCs) in its divisions and they are seeing increasing referrals from National Ugly Mugs, a pioneering, national organisation which provides greater access to justice and protection for sex workers who are often targeted by dangerous individuals but are frequently reluctant to report these incidents to the police.