

**FROM: JULIE WILSON
ORGANISED CRIME BRANCH
24 AUGUST 2016**

Claire Sugden

**INV: 1118/2016 – REQUEST FOR MEETING FROM NGO INVISIBLE TRAFFICK
AND INVITATION TO LAUNCH INVISIBLE TRAFFICK'S LOCAL TELEPHONE
HELPLINE**

Issue: Response to invitation from Gayle Bunting, Director of local NGO, "Invisible Traffick". A previous holding reply issued on 29 July.

Timing: Routine. [Private Office to note: Alison Grundle has suggested that the Minister may wish to discuss this with her before replying].

Presentational Issues: Gayle Bunting's letter indicates that Invisible Traffick intends to launch its new telephone helpline around 18 October (Anti-slavery Day) and has invited you to officially perform the 'switch on'.

We believe the national helpline provides a more effective and comprehensive service.

FOI Implications: May attract an exemption under the FOI Act 2000 – free and frank provision of advice.

Financial Implications: N/A

Legal Implications: N/A

Legislative Implications: N/A

Justice Comm. Referral: N/A

Executive Referral: N/A

Recommendation That you note the attached briefing which highlights concerns about the helpline and respond using the draft reply at Annex A.

Background

Gayle Bunting, Director of Invisible Traffick (IT), wrote on 7 July asking to meet with you to explain the role of IT, what they are working on currently, their aspirations for the future and to discuss IT's response to DOJ's ongoing consultation on the Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery Strategy. Her letter also sets out IT's plans to establish a local telephone helpline for victims of human trafficking around 18 October and invites to you perform the official switch-on at their call centre in Newtownards. A holding reply issued on 29 July. A substantive draft response is attached at Annex A.

Invisible Traffick

2. IT (formerly known as Freedom Project Ireland) is a registered charity that was launched in 2012 with the aim of eradicating modern slavery in Ireland. The organisation is represented on the Department's Engagement Group on Human Trafficking and is made up of volunteers. Till recently much of the focus of IT's work has been on raising awareness of trafficking and modern slavery and on education. In 2014 IT launched a primary school education resource, "Visi's World", which looked at modern slavery issues in an age appropriate manner, using the Fair Trade movement. The Department has previously supported some of this work: we helped to promote their resource; helped with the launch of a schools' competition; and we funded the translation of the education resource into Irish. In 2014 IT indicated that it intended to establish a telephone helpline for victims of human trafficking. In other more recent discussions with us they have also advised that they hope, in time, to open a day centre which would provide support to victims of trafficking and modern slavery.

IT's telephone support helpline

3. The aim of IT's proposed helpline is to help identify victims of human trafficking in Northern Ireland (with a view to extending into the Republic of Ireland at some point). As well as identifying victims, the intention is that the helpline would also be used to build relationships with and provide support to individuals beyond the initial point of contact.

s.35(1)(a)

4. IT first made the Department aware of its plans for a 24/7 Northern Ireland helpline in July 2014 - shortly after the launch of the UK's national Modern Slavery Helpline. IT argued that as the Modern Slavery Helpline was UK-wide it lacked sufficient focus on Northern Ireland and that victims might be wary of calling a government-run or -affiliated helpline.

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s.35(1)(a)

s.35(1)(a)

6. Representatives of OCTF statutory partners also made clear that providing support and assistance to IT in establishing the helpline and training volunteers could not be a major priority for them, given other pressures on their time and resources.

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National UK Modern Slavery Helpline

9. As noted above, the UK Government already has in place a Modern Slavery Helpline which launched in July 2014 and which also covers Northern Ireland. This helpline has to date been operated by NSPCC and provides a means for people to report suspected cases of modern slavery and to connect victims with support services.

10. Beyond its initial inception phase some concerns arose about its effectiveness and about low levels of usage. As a result, earlier this year the Home Office announced plans for an enhanced helpline to launch later this year (also around 18 October). The enhanced national helpline has been developed in partnership with the US NGO Polaris, with an initial £1million funding from Google and will be run by the national UK charity "Unseen". Unseen's development has included arrangements for sustainability of resourcing.

11. DOJ officials, along with PSNI's Human Trafficking Unit, held a teleconference last week with the UK helpline's director, Justine Currell. It is intended that the national helpline will go beyond the provision of advice and crisis helpline to victims. The enhanced model is based on the US national helpline, where a small team of trained operators are available to answer calls in more than 200 languages. Survivors can also use other means of communication, e.g. text message, to request help. The data collected through these calls is then analysed and can generate intelligence that is shared with law enforcement. The helpline has already established strong links with other police forces and is exploring with police in Durham how it can use their technology to upload information to the Police National Database. PSNI were reassured by the meeting and are supportive of this national helpline. Justine intends to visit Belfast on 30 September to present to the OCTF subgroup and will meet with other stakeholders, including PSNI and healthcare officials, to discuss data sharing protocols. We also hope to arrange a meeting between Justine and Gayle.

12. We continue to believe that this UK wide helpline is the best model for Northern Ireland

1535(4)(A)

Launch dates

13. Gayle has indicated that IT hopes to launch its helpline around 18 October (the date has not yet been finalised but 18 October is EU Anti-Slavery Day and there will be a series of events and initiatives across the UK and Northern Ireland to mark it and to raise awareness of modern slavery). You have been invited to perform the "switch-on".

14. Justine has advised that the national helpline will have a soft launch on 3 October with a formal launch again around 18 October.

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Draft response

15. The draft response at Annex A notes the commitment and dedication of IT's volunteers and welcomes the valuable work that they have been doing to raise awareness and to educate people across Ireland about human trafficking. It also reiterates some of the concerns that have been previously raised with Gayle about duplication of service.

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16. In response to Gayle's request for a meeting, we suggest that you could instead attend part of one of the Engagement Group meetings where you could meet with all of the NGOs together and hear more about what they are each doing. The next Engagement Group meeting is on 22 September and your Private Office is provisionally holding this for you. Alternatively the Engagement Group will be due to meet one more time before Christmas.

Recommendation

17. You are invited to note the background to Invisible Traffick's proposal for a telephone helpline and the concerns we have about it and to respond to Gayle Bunting using the draft at Annex A.

Julie Wilson
Head of Organised Crime Branch
☎22655

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FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



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Our ref: INV/1118/2016

Gayle Bunting
Invisible Traffick
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3/ August 2016

Gayle,

Thank you for your letter of 7 July about my Department's 2016-17 Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery Strategy and about the launch of Invisible Traffick's telephone support helpline.

Since you wrote, I have had an opportunity to learn more about the excellent work that Invisible Traffick is doing to raise awareness of human trafficking and modern slavery and to educate children and the wider public. I hope to attend one of the Engagement Group's meetings presently. I think that group would provide a useful forum in which to meet you so that I can hear about the valuable work you and other partners on that group are doing.

In your letter you have set out your plans for a new Trafficking Support Helpline for Northern Ireland and have invited me to perform the switch-on when the helpline formally launches. Whilst I am very grateful to be offered this opportunity and I commend your commitment to assisting victims and making a positive impact in their lives, I have concerns about the helpline that mean I cannot formally endorse it.

As you know, the UK's national modern slavery helpline, which already extends to NI, is currently being enhanced. I recognise that there have been some reservations about how that helpline has been used to date but I believe the enhancements including the development of a data analysis function, will significantly improve its effectiveness and value. I remain of the view that the national helpline will provide the best service for victims of modern slavery in Northern Ireland.

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE JUSTICE MINISTER



I acknowledge that you have put effort into training your volunteers but I think it unnecessary to duplicate what the national helpline will deliver.

- 354(a)

Justine Currell, the Director of the UK's Modern Slavery Helpline will be in Belfast on 30 September and perhaps a meeting with her and my officials would be helpful.

- 354(a)

Again, I thank you for your commitment to this issue and for the work that you have been doing in partnership with my Department and the Engagement Group and I look forward to meeting you within that group.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Claire Sugden", written over a horizontal line.

CLAIRE SUGDEN MLA
Minister of Justice