

# Responding in Newcastle

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# Our experiences

- Involved in multi-agency modern day slavery operations for a number of years
  - Op Haven – 2015, Op Border and Op Caspian – 2016
  - Op Hamish, Op Bridler, Op Cluster and Op Cluster 2 – 2017
  - Op Caritas, Op Lancia – 2018
- Additionally many people have self presented or been rescued during the course of the council business
  - Low but steady numbers, some very high needs, over a short period of time



# Council decision

- As a Council we have a responsibility to support victims of Modern Day Slavery (MDS)
- Needed to
  - Develop and implement ways of working that held a person at its centre
  - Recognise the requirement to house and support people who have been made homeless
  - Acknowledge the impact MDS support has on council budgets and resources



# Planning context

- Provide emergency accommodation for up to five working days while individuals are assessed and requests are made for them to enter the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)
- Pre-planned support strategies are essential to ensure provisions are in place for the large numbers predicted in planned operations.
- Respond to the needs of different types of people
  - women and men exploited for labour,
  - sexual exploitation of women, and
  - victims of domestic servitude
- Recognise that one size does not fit all, and a flexible accommodation solution is needed



# Victim Strategy

- Hierarchical strategy for all those who present as victims and the accommodation type and layout is integral to its delivery
  - Initial and ongoing Safeguarding within either a victim reception centre (VRC) or specialist accommodation.
  - Support from all appropriate agencies to identify and address social care, health and welfare needs.
  - Provide Evidence for prosecution through the completion of Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interviews in a supportive environment.



# Accommodation Options

- Homelessness accommodation
  - this type of accommodation cannot be guaranteed;
  - victims may not be deemed as being Statutorily Homeless
  - resource is in high day-to-day demand
  - accommodation is also not designed to support a multi-agency approach of this type.
  
- Could not rely on this being available so...



# Dormitory style accommodation

- Unoccupied council offices
- Beds, a communal area, showers, table tennis/cards and multiple ABE suites
- Accommodation was suitable for certain situations
- Deemed un-suitable for victims who have additional vulnerabilities or



# Self-contained flats

- Felt that we could do more
- Provide more appropriate alternative accommodation
- Long-term low demand void properties identified
- Allocated to support the council's MSTE response



# Multi-agency approach

- Partners brought together for operational planning meetings
  - NHS England and Newcastle Gateshead CCG
    - onsite GP medical assessments with mental and sexual health support
    - Northumbria Police who conduct ABE interviews at the VRC and manage the site
    - British Red Cross who provide victim support
  - Council services including
    - Strategic Housing Team who manage the allocation, refurbishment, repairs and management of the properties in partnership with Your Homes Newcastle
    - Adult safeguarding who carry out victim assessments.
    - Homelessness Housing Advice Team.
    - Adult Safeguarding, Child Initial Response Services and Domestic Violence teams to provide advice on the potential needs of victims and appropriate use of the VRC
    - Resilience Planning Team who co-ordinated the approach.



# Additional support from

- Tyne and Wear Fire Rescue Service who provided advice and materials to ensure the flats were fire safety compliant
- Teams working with migrants who have no recourse to public funds
- Environmental Health who undertook housing assessments and provided fire safety advice



# Regional Use

- As MDS operations often cross boundaries it was recognised that partners could not support multiple VRCs
- Memorandum of Understanding was established between local authorities to allow all victims, irrelevant of location to be housed in the Newcastle VRC
  - Ordinary Residence
  - Social care and housing assessment



# Our experiences

- Dormitory or self-contained
  - Large spaces and small spaces
- Recreation opportunities
  - Potential to link in with Leisure Services colleagues
- Working with partner agencies
- Specialist spaces



# Moving forward

- Developing multi-agency Modern Day Slavery strategy
  - Childrens Safeguarding Board
  - Adult Safeguarding Board
  - Safe Newcastle Partnership
- Understanding how to better exercise all our duties and powers to support victims of this crime



# Questions?

