Evaluation of the modern slavery Local Authority Pathway pilots

YHRMP ID
381
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Aims

In October 2017, the Home Office (HO) piloted new approaches in six local authority areas (Birmingham, Derby, Croydon, Leeds, Nottingham and Redbridge). These aimed to identify best practice in supporting victims to transition out of National Referral Mechanism (NRM) support and to help them link up with local services. This evaluation aimed to illuminate best practice in those areas based on the pilots' results around four aims: independence, safety, community links and integration, and sustained accommodation.

Methodology

The evaluation relied on a set of mixed methods:

- qualitative methods: two rounds of interviews and a lessons-learned workshop
- quantitative methods: based on data returns on referral numbers, demographics of those referred and referral assessments.

Key issues

All the pilots had a duration of between 12 and 20 months and different approaches were adopted in each site. For example in Leeds, a coordinator and two specialist advocacy workers supported integration, and access to local services. Activities to support development and resilience were also offered.

- Referrals: of the 173 referrals into the pilot, 30 were rejected for reasons such as no suitable housing being available, and victims having no recourse to public funds. Some pilots struggled to attract referrals initially, with one possible reason being a lack of awareness on the part of NRM support providers. Also for those pilots that weren’t close to NRM safehouses, this had a significant impact on their ability to attract referrals, as victims may not wish to resettle in a new location. London based pilots struggled to access private rented accommodation due to the high cost of rent. However, the Leeds project was more successful – the local authority commissioned an external organisation to run the pilot, which was already supporting modern slavery victims as part of the Victim Care Contract, and therefore was able to refer service users from that service

into the pilot.

- Demographics and support needs: about two-thirds of accepted referrals were men, and the most common age group was 25-34 (just over one third). Around two-thirds needed support to find accommodation; more than one third needed support to access work; about one third needed support to access training, and about three-quarters did not speak English fluently. Other issues that the pilots provided support with were health including substance use, financial issues including benefits, and legal advice.
- Accommodation: some pilots faced problems securing housing. There was an example of an innovative partnership to address this issue in the Birmingham pilot, where a housing charity was commissioned to provide short-term housing stock for the pilot while securing long-term tenancies. In Leeds the pilot subcontractor was able to use its own housing stock while permanent tenancies were arranged through the local authority.
- Timing of support: interviewees felt that there was a better transition from NRM support if pilots began work earlier with the NRM support provider or outreach services. They also highlighted the importance of longer-term support for victims after leaving the NRM.
- Modern slavery awareness: it was found that awareness of modern slavery among other services could be raised by the pilots, resulting in improved local authority strategies. For example the pilot in Leeds helped the local authority to establish governance arrangements and improved

partnership working between stakeholders (through the Leeds Modern Slavery Board, a multi-agency group).

Conclusion

- Accommodation should be near NRM safehouses to provide stability to help victims recover and regain independence.
- NRM and post-NRM support providers should work together in order to create a smoother transition for victims. By working together earlier on issues such as housing, finance and healthcare, providers can better understand the victims' needs.
- A lack of interpreters was felt to have impacted the effectiveness of support offered by the pilots.
- Post-NRM services need to be able to offer longer-term support based on victims' needs.

Interviewees felt they had successfully increased awareness of modern slavery victims which resulted in improved local authority strategies.

Recommendations

- Post-NRM services and NRM support providers should engage early, to improve the transition for service users.
- NRM and post-NRM providers should improve information sharing, so that post-NRM support services have enough information about individuals on referral.

- Availability and location of housing stock should be improved.
- Modern slavery awareness raising work should be undertaken with relevant support services, including health and addiction services. It was found that the criteria for accessing these services were often not met by modern slavery victims.

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