



Safer and Empowered Communities Forum
Wednesday 21 February 2024 at 10am
Zoom Meeting

Present:

Eloise Wilson (EW) (Chairperson)	CVS Falkirk & District
Lynsey Hansford (LH)	CVS Falkirk & District
Kerrie Hoggan (KH) (Minute Taker)	CVS Falkirk & District
Carolyn Dick (CD)	Dates n Mates
Nicola Bruce (NB)	Community Justice Partnership
Navneet Sandhu (NS)	LinkLiving
Claire Hughes (CH)	Transform Forth Valley
Lou Carberry (LC)	LGBT Youth Scotland

Guests:

Gemma Ritchie	Adult Protection Lead Officer, Falkirk Health & Social Care Partnership
Pamela Correa-Martinez	Project Co-ordinator Equality & Engagement, Central Scotland Regional Equality Council (CSREC)
Joy Gillespie	CEO, Survivors of Human Trafficking in Scotland (SOHTIS)

Apologies:

Derek Allison	Falkirk Foundation
John Hosie	Tamfourhill TRO and Hub

1. Welcome and Introductions

EW introduced herself, welcomed Forum members present and advised the meeting was recorded via Zoom. Introductions were made and apologies noted as above.

2. Previous Minutes and Action Tracker

The minutes of the meetings held on 22 November 2023 were approved as an accurate record of meeting.

It was noted that there were two open actions on the tracker:

- Schedule a future information session on trauma and community justice.
- The Forum requested attendance at the meeting by a representative from the Community Planning Partnership.

Both of which were progressing and would be presented later in the year.

3. CVS Falkirk & District Update

EW provided an update on CVS Falkirk & District activity. The full update can be accessed [here](#) and the following points were highlighted:

- i. A consultation on Martyn's Law, the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill would take place on Thursday 29th February [**post meeting note**: this has now taken place and feedback can be viewed [here](#)].
- ii. The 10th annual Falkirk Funders Fayre would be held on Tuesday 19th March in Grangemouth [**post meeting note**: this event has now taken place and feedback and be found [here](#)].

4. Protecting Adults Against Harm

EW introduced Gemma Ritchie, Adult Support & Protection Lead Officer, Falkirk Health & Social Care Partnership (HSCP).

Gemma drew attention to her presentation, which was available on the CVS Falkirk & District webpage [here](#). She also shared two videos one covering General Harm and the other Sextortion [**post meeting note**: the videos were circulated to Forum members via email on 23rd February 2024].

The following additional points were shared:

- i. Seven of the outcomes that the adult support and protection team work on were listed in slide two and Gemma shared how these link to the purpose of the Safe and Empowered Communities Forum. With community work focussed on enabling individuals to be better able to protect themselves and reducing risk of harm in communities.
- ii. Tuesday 20th February was National Adult Support and Protection Day 2024 and the local Health and Social Care Partnership celebrated that and issued a number of press releases to raise awareness of services.
- iii. The goal of the General Harm video, HSCP posts and the Adult Support and Protection (ASP) Newsletter (which can be linked via the presentation) were part of an awareness raising campaign and Forum members were encouraged to share these.
- iv. Coverage was captured by the Falkirk Herald and various social media channels, links could be accessed via the presentation.
- v. The background to the Sextortion video was shared and Forum members were encouraged to watch it. Sextortion was where adults were extorted for money by the threat of sharing sexual images. The number was ever increasing, particularly among younger people and could have devastating effects which might mean individuals become an adult at risk.
- vi. The final slide outlined five bullet points which outlined key advice for social care practitioners, taken from the [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) and acknowledged the importance of reporting which some people might be reluctant to do, due to shame

or guilt. Consequently, it was important to ask the questions and have the conversation.

A discussion took place following Gemma's presentation, and the following points were noted:

- I. The volume of Sextortion approaches was noted, some of which come from phishing exercises and some targeted privately or on group forums, together with other online scams, phone calls, including romantic scams related to dating apps. Organisations were encouraged to share the video with their users and encourage them to speak up and report these incidents.
- II. The correlation between this form of extortion and sexual exploitation was cited as a risk, together with the initial extortion not necessarily originating online. Rather this is a power imbalance where people are being coerced, which could be in the context of human trafficking.
- III. CH shared that funding to offer digital life skills training had been secured by Transform Forth Valley which included coverage of these risks, including ensuring the staff were aware of risks.

Action: Gemma to link up individually with CD and Joy outside the meeting to discuss specific support and risks for their service users.

Gemma was thanked for her comprehensive overview of a complex, harmful, and hidden area.

Gemma left the meeting.

5. Third Party Reporting Process

EW introduced Pamela, Project Co-ordinator Equality & Engagement with the Central Scotland Regional Equality Council (CSREC).

Pamela outlined the following key concepts related to Hate Crime – Third Party Reporting:

- i. The reporting of a Hate Incident leads to an investigation to determine whether it is a Hate Crime, which is defined as (a) a Criminal Offence eg. Assault, damage to property; (b) Perceived by the victim, or another to be motivated, wholly, or partly, by malice or ill-will; or (c) it is driven by a perceived protected characteristic (even if not true).
- ii. The five protected characteristics are: Race (nationality, ethnicity, or skin colour), Religion, Sexual Orientation, Disability, or Transgender Identity.
- iii. The Hate element does not require evidence to be recorded, but the Police would ask a) Who perceived the incident to be hate related, (b) Why they did, and (c) What impact did the incident have. It was important to explore the report, not challenge at this stage.

- iv. If a hate incident does not meet the threshold to be a hate crime, there is no prosecution, and outcomes may vary.
- v. Hate incidents can be reported via 999 or 101, in person at a Police Station, at a Third-Party Reporting Centre, via text to 999, via the Keep Safe Scotland app, via Contact Scotland – BSL – Video Relay Service.
- vi. Third-Party Reporting Centres are available for those not comfortable talking to the Police, they offer a free and confidential service and their locations can found [here](#) with different centres focussed on specific groups eg/ CSREC is focussed on ethnic minorities.
- vii. It was important to stress to victims and witnesses that they did not have to tolerate hate incidents and it was important to understand what was happening in communities and to inform Hate Crime Law & Policy at a higher level.
- viii. If a case goes to court, special measures could be offered to protect the victim.
- ix. The steps/information gathered during the reporting procedure were:
 - a. Is there currently a danger?
 - b. What is the type of incident.
 - c. Is the report about you or someone else?
 - d. Would the victim and/or witness prefer to remain anonymous?
 - e. Details of the victim and their preference regarding contact.
 - f. Details of the person reporting the incident.
 - g. Details of the incident.
- x. Reporters were encouraged to record as much information about the incident as possible and hold on to any evidence.
- xi. After the form has been completed a reference number would be assigned to the case; the Police would be in touch within seven days; support could be provided from the Third-Party Reporting Centre if desired and it may also assist in identifying evidence and important elements of the incident.
- xii. If Police decided to make a charge, the case will be passed to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).
- xiii. Victim Support Scotland could offer free, independent, and confidential support with this process.
- xiv. For details of timescales for reporting of incidents, please contact [CSREC](#) or a Third-Party Reporting Centre.

Pamela closed her presentation with a quote from the American writer Ernest J Gaines “Why is it that, as a culture, we are more comfortable seeing two men holding guns, than holding hands” as encouragement to not become desensitised to these issues.

6. CVS Falkirk & District – Safeguarding Support

LH summarised the support CVS Falkirk & District could provide on safeguarding support and she made the following key points:

- i. Safeguarding starts at the beginning of any relationship, the main goal being to mitigate the risk of future harm to children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

- ii. CVS Falkirk & District provides support with the application for employees and volunteers to become members to the PVG Scheme in line with the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007).
- iii. The application for a PVG is currently free for volunteers for registered and eligible voluntary organisations through Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Services.
- iv. There are three stages (a) Registration, (b) Signatory, and (c) Provision of Certificate.
- v. They had a statutory basis and make sure that connections were made between different organisations and that any restrictions are known.
- vi. Support could also be provided with the creation of Safeguarding Policies, Policy Statements, Risk Assessments and more bespoke to each organisation.
- vii. These contact key elements: responsibilities of staff and volunteers, clear pathways for reporting concerns and information on what is 'concerning', clear accountability via a named person, safeguarding lead or similar.
- viii. All organisations were encouraged to consider appropriate insurance, robust recruitment processes, a culture of openness and honesty and to note that safeguarding was everyone's responsibility, and everyone was at risk.
- ix. LH had been involved in a piece of work called 'What is you're Right' led by Child Protection Scotland and heavily influenced by survivors of child sexual abuse and how it could be prevented. Details could be found on the Child Protection Scotland Facebook, #WhatIfYoureRight and a video can be accessed via Facebook [here](#).

7. Raising Awareness: Survivors of Human Trafficking in Scotland

EW introduced Joy, CEO, Survivors of Human Trafficking in Scotland (SOHTIS) who outlined that her goal was to start a conversation with the Forum and the broader area of Falkirk around the risks and incidences of human trafficking.

The following points were noted:

- i. The three main elements of the work of SOHTIS were
 - a. Prevention, Identification and Recovery work.
 - b. Long term support for survivors built on a person-centred trauma informed service, currently supporting c.100 people across Scotland
 - c. Influencing policy
- ii. That this was everybody's business, and that there are people that could walk alongside you.
- iii. Human trafficking was one of the most misunderstood crimes in Scotland 'hidden in plain sight' and was essentially the buying and selling of men, women and children for financial gain or profit.
- iv. Incidences were growing, but not necessarily identified.
- v. It was a devolved matter in Scotland.
- vi. It crosses all sectors one third of people recovered in Scotland were children and young people, and the second highest group across the UK were British Nationals, particularly men.
- vii. People were most commonly exploited in the following areas:

- a. Labour exploitation – as a consequence of financial crisis and in, such as, the social care sector which is of most concern.
- b. Criminal exploitation – most likely to include children and young people, could include ‘cuckooing’, forced begging, cannabis cultivation and county lines.
- c. Sexual exploitation
- d. Domestic servitude
- viii. And the main drivers were:
 - a. Poverty
 - b. Displacement – moving to a new county
 - c. Homelessness or unstable accommodation
 - d. Poor mental health
 - e. Criminal Justice system
 - f. Learning difficultiesEssentially anyone who is vulnerable, is at risk.
- ix. What works in this area was:
 - a. A joined-up approach, across all sectors. There had been lots of evidence in England and Wales in forming local partnerships for these issues. Which has also helped to identify underlying issues.
 - b. Training and equipment
 - c. Referral pathways
 - d. Robust safeguarding policies
 - e. Good access to second tier support

Several organisations in Falkirk had contacted SOHTIS and Joy was keen to pull these together and gather local intelligence on what is happening in Falkirk.

The [unseen app](#) or 08000 121 7000 could be used to report instances of modern slavery & exploitation. Joy could be contacted on joymg@sohtis.org

Joy was thanked for an informative introduction and prompt to start a conversation.

Action: Contact EW if interested in attending an in-person session on human trafficking.

8. Any Other Closing Business

There being no other business, the meeting was closed.

Post Meeting Note: All presentations, plus links to the Community Action Plans, were shared via email to the distribution list on 23rd February 2024.

**Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 22 May 2024,
10am – 12pm**



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