

## **Women's Forum**

Minutes of a meeting of the Women's Forum held at on Tuesday 31 January 2023 at 11.00 am.

**Present:** Pauline Woodhouse and Cllr Anna King (Co-Chairs), Bree Lamb, Chris Carr, Dawn Thomas, Morcea Walker, Jon Harte, Fiona Hinks, Katy Johnson, Nikki Brown, Rachel Duncan, Emma Ling, Neelam Aggarwal, Ryan Griffiths, Sally Wood, Mavis Mundirwa, Anjona Roy, Eleri Neale, Cllr Danielle Stone, Rachel Packman, April Ventour-Griffiths, Diviya Terry, Pindy Kaur, Olivia Hickman, Debs Burns, Debbie MacColl

### **Welcomes, Introductions and Apologies**

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting around the screen and around the table. Apologies were received from Cllr Rosie Humphreys, Tina Collett and Christine Morgan.

#### **56. Code of Conduct**

#### **57. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

#### **58. Modern Slavery**

Modern slavery can affect anyone but the presentation was more specific around women for this presentation.

What is it? People are treated as slaves, they are owned and forced to work long hours for little rewards. There is often debt bondage.

Human trafficking is the movement of people, within the UK as well as into/out of. They are tricked into thinking there are better opportunities at the destination.

The purpose is to make money out of the victims. The reasons they get drawn in is often poverty, lack of education/employment, wanting to improve themselves and the lives of their children.

Modern Day Slavery Act 2015 gives law enforcement the tools to fight modern slavery and ensure perpetrators can receive severe punishments for their crimes as well as enhance the support and protection of victims.

Types of work include

- Nail bars
- Brothels
- Cleaning companies
- Care homes
- Factories
- Car washes

- Restaurants
- Traveller sites
- Farming (including Cannabis farms)
- Vegetable picking
- Building sites
- Begging
- Employment agencies

Jon stated that it was thought that there were 15-20 females in NN1 at this very moment being exploited through adult websites. Particular business models were seen, revolving women, particular Chinese women, around different properties. It was difficult to find out the addresses and often undercover operations were carried out to enable safeguarding. It consisted of plain clothes officer making a booking, being told to go to a certain location at a certain time before making contact again, then being told the property address, probably being watched for the last steps. They would then identify themselves and be joined by other officers. People would be separated and safeguarding checks completed. Women would be made aware of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Most people say they are not being controlled and are happy with the situation.

Both male and females are exploited with factories - there is a massive factory industry in the county and the employment market is very good. Some of the factories are open to third party referrals where employees are given a bonus if they introduce a new employee. The person then gets a family member or someone else over, sets them up and gets the bonus. In most situations that is fine, but sometimes the person can be charged a great deal for very inferior accommodation, the person bringing them over can often be the person setting up the bank account and then take control of it. In a lot of cases what they are earning here is a lot more than they did at home and they do not realise how much money is being scammed from them. An example recently where a factory became concerned about a worker and when they shared with the worker how much they had earned so far (about £10k) the worker broke down as they had only received about £1.5k and had been oblivious.

Signs of someone being exploited include

- No bank card
- No passport or ID
- Bonded by debt
- Illegal entrant
- Limited social contact
- Restriction on movement
- Lacking access to medical care
- Vulnerable
- Unable or reluctant to give accommodation details
- Threats of being handed over to the authorities

Barriers

- Unaware they are a victim
- Unaware there is help available

- Language barriers
- Controlled movement
- Scared in case they are arrested and/or deported

The National Referral Mechanism supplies a safe house for free where someone can stay for up to 45 days and get access to support relevant to their situation. For more information on the NRM - [National referral mechanism guidance: adult \(England and Wales\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Anjona stated that there had been some really good initiatives to support sex workers such as SWAN which was axed, she wanted to highlight Hope for Justice who offered free training for the voluntary sector. Also, there had been no prosecutions following a multi-million pound investigation in the county and NREC had not received any referrals either. Jon responded that Hope for Justice was a very good organisation. Prosecutions were very low in such cases as they received very few reports and usually victims did not see themselves as such, just wanted out of the situation and did not want to come up against the controller. This meant that other pieces of evidence needed to be looked at making everything very difficult and time consuming.

Neelam stated she fully understood the difficulties but how did people know what help was available. Jon stated that a lot of work had been done to make the information available in different formats and languages but it was difficult to cover all eventualities and welcomed any help/ideas to get messages out.

Cllr Russell asked what support was available for sex workers since SWAN had finished. Jon stated that SWAN was set up for street sex workers rather than those being exploited and the first step was to get them out of the situation then to offer NRM.

April asked if there were any stats around familial exploitation bearing in mind how low prosecutions were generally and would the victims still be able to access NRM. Jon responded that yes they would be offered NRM and be subject to the same referral process never mind the type of exploitation and the threshold was very low. Jon did not have any stats but would try and get them. The group thanked Jon for a very interesting and informative presentation.

## 59. **Future of the BAME sub group**

The group had been set up following some members bringing an issue to the forum that black & brown service users were not getting support from agencies even though the agencies were applying for funding to do so. The group was to look into the services available to black and brown women, identify gaps and report back to the Forum. Pauline thanked the group for everything it had achieved but wanted to discuss the future of the group and where it should go from here.

There was much discussion about the good work it had achieved and how there was very much a place for it going forward. Anjona, Mavis, Rachel and April put forward a very strong case for the group to continue as a group in its own right rather than a

Forum sub-group. Rachel stated that it would be a better fit to feed into the County strategy. Anna stated she would be attending the Board meeting that afternoon and would feed back.

60. **International Women's Day 2023 Update**

Debbie stated that this was shaping up to be the biggest event so far at full capacity with 31 stands booked in as well as 2 workshops and a fairly full programme of entertainment. Anjona stated NREC would not be supporting the event due to the display for the Queen. The shortlisted Inspirational Women would be invited to a reception at 1pm in the Jeffrey Room to give them the opportunity to meet each other and the judges, before being brought downstairs for the presentation and announcements to be made on the stage. This was taking into account the feedback from both the shortlisted women and attendees of the event from the previous year.

Cllr Stone stated that there were a lot of other events going on and could there not be a list circulated to members of all the events. Debbie responded that she did not have the capacity to research everything but would put the call out and create a list.

61. **Community Information Exchange**

Cllr Russell asked if anyone had a contact for the Umbrella Fair Women's Centre – Dawn to find out and get back to her.

Chris introduced herself as a new member. Her background was with the police until 1994 and was now Chairman of NCFWI (Northamptonshire County Federation of WI's) who had over 3,000 members. She was glad to be part of the Forum, impressed by the energy in the room and was looking forward to International Women's Day.

Morcea reported that the carnival was scheduled for 10 June and the theme was Celebrating the People Who Came with the parade following the usual route from, and back to, the Racecourse.

Cllr Stone informed the group that Labour women would be running a training day for women wanting to be a Town or Parish Cllr. Parish Cllr was a non-political role. Refugee week was 18-25 June with a series of seminars and an event at the Guildhall on 22 June where all organisations who do something in support would be invited. The most important thing to show refugees was a welcome and a show of solidarity.

April – Promoting TACT – Talk abuse & cultural trauma for women who identify as black or brown.

Lightening the load podcast - [Podcast | Creating Equalz](#)

Training professionals in misogynist awareness and hate towards black women.

Supporting Divya who was starting a second programme of DA recovery toolkit for black and brown women and a speaker at NREC's event on 6 March (details below).

Pindy stated she was glad to be back attending the forum. The foodbank was serving hot food and food parcels. They were setting up a women only gym, also cooking and yoga which had mainly women attendees. Rooms were available to hire with a 50% charity discount. An event was being held at the Museum on 16 April, 10-4 around Sikh Heritage and Well Being. If anyone wanted a stand please get in touch.

Anjona –

Already held NREC events – Racism in Cricket: Empire at Work & A Quiet Legacy of Holocausts Against Disabled People

Upcoming event - Gender based violence and immigration – online 6 March 12 – 1.30pm - <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/gender-based-violence-immigration-tickets-533470152587>

Mavis – awareness around DA talk every Wednesday 8-9 – opportunity to discuss culture and how things play out.

IWD event on the last weekend in March with the theme Breaking the Cycle with lived experience speakers.

Sally – FSB online Event for IWD – 8 March, 10.30 – 12 Embrace Equity  
[International Women's Day 2023 - Embrace Equity | FSB, The Federation of Small Businesses](#)

Ryan – several funds had opened up – check the website for more details.  
[Northamptonshire Community Foundation \(ncf.uk.com\)](http://ncf.uk.com)

Neelam – events at Weston Favell Parish Hall

7 March 5-7pm – Festival of Holi

11 March 5-7pm – Dhulendi – Festival of colours – wear something old! 😊

IWD 31 March Chia and chat group. An inspiring young lady had been identified as the keynote speaker.

Emma – Royal & Derngate were hosting Dance Mind running 2 elder dance classes for the over 60's for 3 terms. For more details - [Dance Elders: A Contemporary Dance Programme For Over 60s - Royal & Derngate \(royalandderngate.co.uk\)](http://royalandderngate.co.uk)  
Bursaries were available.

## 62. **Date of Next Meeting**

11am Tuesday 30 May 2023 – at the Guildhall and on Teams.