



TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION STRATEGY

RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form must be returned with your response.

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
- Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

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The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
- Publish response only (anonymous)
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We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

No

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

CONTENT OF THE STRATEGY

1. Section 1 (pages 4-8)

The overall **Vision** of the Strategy is to eliminate human trafficking and exploitation.

The Strategy sets out **three Action Areas** that will help us to achieve this vision.

These are

- Identify victims and support them to safety and recovery
- Identify perpetrators and disrupt their activity
- Address the conditions, both local and global, that foster trafficking and exploitation

Do you agree that these Action Areas taken together will help to achieve the vision?
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Yes/No (Please highlight your answer)
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Are there any other comments you wish to make?
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The most significant part of the strategy for VSS is ensuring that victims of human trafficking and exploitation are identified, supported and enabled to recover from their experience in a safe environment. We recognise the importance of the remaining two action areas (identifying perpetrators and disrupting their activity, and addressing conditions that foster trafficking and exploitation) in achieving the vision of eliminating human trafficking and exploitation.
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2. **Section 3 (pages 11-24)** of the Strategy covers each Action Area and sets out

- what is already happening,
- what we need to improve and
- what actions we will take.

2.1 Action Area 1 (pages 13-16) deals with identifying victims and supporting them to safety and recovery. Do you think the particular actions listed on pages 15 and 16 will help in achieving this?

Yes/No (please highlight your answer)
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Please expand on your response if you wish to.

VSS welcomes the actions set out by the strategy within Action Area 1 (identifying and supporting victims).

Any approach to the identification and support of victims of human trafficking needs to be truly victim-centred, encompassing an awareness of the issues facing victims of this crime. As such, we applaud the needs-based and person-centred approach within this area of the strategy, reflected in the action to create processes/pathways aligned around victims' needs. Services provided to victims of human trafficking should be enabled to take action to meet these needs, in addition to doing as much as possible to prevent the possibility of future exploitation or trafficking of that person.

Most significantly, support provided to victims of human trafficking should not be process-driven, as is currently the case. Victims of this crime, as with any other, should be afforded the opportunity to use support services at any time in their journey, so multiple offers of support should be made, where deemed appropriate. Support services should also be flexible in their approach, and neither time restricted nor dependent on the National Referral Mechanism. This flexibility should be provided in relation to the level and type of support provided, from intense, accommodated support, to outreach services to allow for the natural process of recovery.

As noted in the VSS Manifesto 2015-19¹, there is currently insufficient provision of psychological services dedicated to people affected by the trauma of crime in Scotland. We welcome the strategy's commitment to offer specialist psychological assessment, formulation and therapy as appropriate to all adult victims of human trafficking recovering in Scotland, but stress that access to psychological treatment in the aftermath of crime should not be dependent on crime type or other factors such as age, gender or where the victim lives. To ensure that all victims of crime who have suffered trauma receive the help they need, when they need it, we would call for the services mentioned in the strategy to be available to all victims of crime who have suffered trauma.

We agree with the intention to raise awareness amongst the general public through a publicity campaign, but also believe it is vital that the rights to information, support and safety and protection measures provided through this strategy and the Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2014 are communicated to trafficked victims in a manner that guarantees their awareness and understanding.

It is concerning that victims of exploitation alone are not currently covered by existing support arrangements, and as such, we are pleased to see within the strategy's actions in this area a commitment to consider how such victims should be identified and supported. VSS looks forward to taking part in future discussions around how support can be put in place for victims of exploitation.

¹ <http://www.victimsupportsco.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/VSS-Manifesto-2015-19.pdf>

Is there anything you would add to Action Area 1 on identifying victims and supporting them to safety and recovery?

It is our experience that many victims of crime may require information, support and time before they feel ready to report the crime to the police, if ever. We know that this crime is particularly under-reported. It would be reasonable to assume that those who have been trafficked and exploited may be more reticent than the average victim to report the crime, especially considering the prevalence of high levels of mistrust in authorities with human trafficking victims, often brought about by the traffickers themselves. Victims also may take time in recognising that their situation to be one of trafficking. It is therefore crucial that support services are available to suspected victims of trafficking who do not wish to involve the authorities at that time. It is our view that the strategy would benefit from increased emphasis on the point that support is not dependent on the victim's engagement or cooperation with criminal justice agencies or other processes, such as the National Referral Mechanism.

2.2. Action Area 2 (pages 17-20) deals with identifying perpetrators and disrupting their activity. Do you think the particular actions listed on pages 19 and 20 will help in achieving this?

Yes/No (Please highlight your answer)

Please expand on your response if you wish to.

Is there anything you would add to Action Area 2 on identifying perpetrators and disrupting their activity?

2.3. Action Area 3 (pages 21-24) deals with addressing the conditions that foster trafficking and exploitation. Do you think the particular actions listed on page 24 will help in achieving this?

Yes/No (Please highlight your answer)

Please expand on your response if you wish to.

Is there anything you would add to Action Area 3 on addressing the conditions that foster trafficking and exploitation?

3. Section 4 of the Strategy (pages 25 to 30) deals specifically with children.

Do you think the particular actions listed will improve support for children in Scotland?

Yes/No (Please highlight your answer)

Please expand on your response if you wish to.

Is there anything you would add to this Section?

4. Section 5 of the Strategy (pages 31-34) sets out the measures we plan to use to assess the progress that has been made with the Strategy.

Do you agree that these measures will be effective in measuring progress?

Yes/No (Please highlight your response)

Please expand on your response if you wish to.

Are there any that you would add?

5. When we implement the Strategy we will want to do that by focusing on victims; by working in partnership; and by always looking to improve what we are doing. Pages 4-8 of the Strategy give more background information on this.

Do you have any views on the best way to implement the Strategy?
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Please see our answer to question 2.

GENERAL

6. Do you have any other comments you wish to make?

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