

Justice Committee

Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Bill

Written submission from the Scottish Police Federation

The Scottish Police Federation (SPF) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Bill; is fully supportive of its intentions and believes that this is an area of significant criminal activity which has a profound impact on victims and communities across Scotland.

The Financial Memorandum incorporated within the explanatory notes identifies a number of areas where the Bill may result in increased costs but generally concludes that there will be no additional costs to the Police Service.

Whilst it could be argued that as costs to the service are in terms of resources which the service already has, the SPF believe that many of these resources are stretched to capacity. With the increased pressures already placed on a reducing budget it would be remiss of the SPF not to identify areas of increased costs and resourcing to the service. These are identified below:

- As with any change to or introduction of legislation there is a requirement to produce and deliver training to Police Officers and staff.
- The introduction of prevention and risk orders will require to be managed and some system for this purpose produced and implemented in order to deal with the applications for, recording and breaches of these orders. There will also be increased demand for seizure of property and assets and application for their forfeiture most of which will fall on the service.
- Any increase to the numbers of crimes of this nature detected/reported will impact on the costs for translation services which currently come from the police budget for witnesses/victims and offenders alike.
- Increased focus on these offences is likely to result in increased tasking for local uniform operational policing which in many areas is already stretched to its capacity. In addition the resourcing of units to deal with these offences will almost certainly come from local operational policing further reducing this capacity. Even if resources come from other non-public facing police roles, this will in turn diminish the capacity and effectiveness of those roles.
- Partnership working is key to the success of delivering the intentions of this Bill however in the past we have seen a disproportionate amount of the work and costs falling on the service and we would like to see a commitment from partners involved in this area to share the workload and costs. For example and whilst supporting the measures to support witnesses and victims, we believe there is a real potential for witnesses to flee and the expectation to trace them (with all the time and resource this will demand) to ensure their personal safety and to aide prosecution will inevitably fall on the police service.
- Whilst at this time the numbers of prosecutions are relatively low, the introduction of this Bill is likely to increase these numbers (which we welcome) however it will not decrease the police workload in other areas so the net effect will be higher demand.

As with anything new it is difficult to accurately assess costs and resources but providing increased powers and making prosecution easier will inevitably result in increased numbers of reports/prosecutions and increased costs to the service and we believe that to suggest its introduction would result in no increased costs to the service is inaccurate.

In conclusion the SPF whilst fully supportive of the content and intention of the Bill believes that the costs to the service need to be accurately identified at a time of reducing budget and increased demand.

Calum Steele
General Secretary
24 February 2015