

MARCH 2019



HUMAN TRAFFICKING

*Background Research on a Community
Response in Oxford County*



This research project was made possible by funding from the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, (MCCSS) Rural and Remote Supports and Services.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH ON A COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN OXFORD COUNTY:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Human trafficking is a complex, multi-layered issue that leaves many victims in its wake in Canadian communities. According to United Nations and Government of Canada officials, incidents of human trafficking are on the rise and as noted no community is immune. In January 2019, Domestic Abuse Services Oxford (DASO) hired Social Planning Council Oxford to complete background research on a community response to human trafficking in Oxford County.

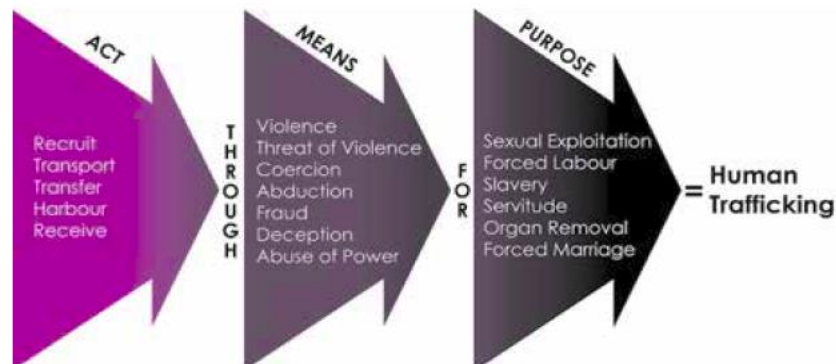
Through investigation, the project was ultimately trying to answer the questions:

1. **What is the most effective community response to human trafficking?**
2. **What key elements should a community response to human trafficking include?**

In order to answer these questions, it was necessary to understand the issue more broadly in terms of a review of existing literature but also to understand the local context and how agencies are currently responding to human trafficking through qualitative stakeholder interviews.

Literature Review

Defining human trafficking is a complicated task. It can often be referred to as “modern slavery” and exploitation that occurs in different forms: sexual, forced labour, servitude, slavery and the removal of organs (Government of Canada, 2012). All definitions include the elements of act, means and purpose.



(Sarnia Lambton Committee Against the Trafficking of Women and Children, 2015, p.10)

The Canadian Government highlights the essential aspects of protocols surrounding human trafficking in the national strategy. The four main pillars of response to human trafficking are:

1. **prevention** strategies;
2. **protection** of victims;
3. **prosecution** of offenders; and,
4. **partnerships** both domestically and internationally (Government of Canada, 2018 p.9-19).

In addition, the literature review noted that education, awareness, victim-led service provision, government involvement and funding as well as cooperation between organizations is essential for addressing the growing concern of human trafficking. Data surrounding vulnerable populations will

continue to provide insight as to where prevention is most needed as people who are socially and economically disadvantaged are at highest risk of being trafficked.

Some promising practices in Ontario were reviewed and can be drawn upon and monitored including the community collaborative in Sarnia Lambton and the London Street Level Women at Risk model.

Stakeholder Interviews

Themes that arose from interviews with 11 agency stakeholders in Oxford County include:

Theme	Understanding the Issue	Current Response to Human Trafficking	Community Response Suggestions	System Gaps
Sub-Theme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence • Awareness • Perceptions • Vulnerabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mandate/ Policies • Wrap Around • Identification • Self-determination/ choice • Approach/ relationships • What does safety mean • Justice system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition and scope • Collaboration • Know existing resources • Principles • Process • Existing structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training • Short term: housing, sexual assault centre, counselling/ mental health • Long term needs • Groups that may experience the system differently • Prevention • Remove barriers

In Oxford, it is unclear the number of people being trafficked, however, it is on the radar of all 11 agencies interviewed. Of those stakeholders, everyone’s mandate includes providing services to victims of human trafficking but some more directly and others indirectly. For example, those with more direct mandates related to human trafficking include, Victim Assistance Services Oxford County (VASOC), Children’s Aid Society Oxford, Police Services and St. Joseph’s Regional Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Program in London.

Wrap around services are provided by all eleven agencies to those who are being trafficked if they seek support. An approach that is open and the creation of a safe space was noted as critical, as well as a belief in and practice of self-determination-the person being trafficked decides what they want to do.

A number of comments from stakeholders were connected to awareness and knowledge of human trafficking in order to be able to increase identification of victims, but also to know the questions to ask and how to support a person. It is not surprising then, that many stakeholders recommended further training as part of a community response.

Stakeholders also emphasized the need for a common definition and guiding principles as noted in the recommendation section on page 3. Barriers in the system were highlighted by stakeholders including eligibility criteria, waitlists and assessment tools as well as guiding principles and perceptions held by some that are detrimental. System gaps were also highlighted and they included housing, access to sexual assault supports and mental health supports/counselling.

Recommendations for a Community Response

The following 11 recommendations for a community response to human trafficking are key elements or directions highlighted from the literature review, stakeholders and process learnings from the researchers and are for DASO and the community's consideration.

- 1. Agree on a common definition of human trafficking including whether or not this definition will extend to all different forms of trafficking**
- 2. Explore labour trafficking further**
- 3. Consider the formation of a group or collaborative to determine a community response**
- 4. Partners agree upon guiding principles if working together to address human trafficking**
- 5. Map existing support services for victims of human trafficking**
- 6. Consider the implementation of possible facets of a community response**

Recommendations for consideration that came from stakeholders include:

 - **Data** - common collection and the need for better, consistent data (consider using collection tools or at least having an agreed upon way to collect)
 - **Screening/Assessment** - consideration of formal screening tools that ask questions about human trafficking or agreeing to add a human trafficking assessment question to existing assessment tools
 - **Training** - mandatory, consistent and evidence-based training for people directly involved and also for targeted groups that may come in contact with people
 - **Situation Table** - explore the use of the situation table to coordinate the response for a human trafficking victim in its existing structure or with a modification. Consider the importance of common processes and consent forms.
 - **Outreach Worker** - explore the SLWAR London model further and consider a similar or adapted approach of a dedicated outreach worker.
- 7. Include an element of prevention in a community response**
- 8. Evaluate the community response**
- 9. Continue to monitor existing human trafficking strategies**
- 10. Further explore the questions that still remain**
- 11. Attempt to address larger systemic issues**

Next Steps

It is up to the will of the community to determine if and how partners will work together to address human trafficking in Oxford County. As noted, this background research is a starting point for conversation of how to move forward. DASO is committed to continuing this conversation and bringing partners together to discuss this critical issue and determine next steps.

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

In January 2019, Domestic Abuse Services Oxford (DASO) hired Social Planning Council Oxford to complete background research on a community response to human trafficking in Oxford County (see Appendix A for organization description). The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services had provided funds to DASO through the Rural and Remote Enhancement Fund, to improve access to crisis and community wraparound supports and long-term healing of women from rural and remote communities who are experiencing violence, including human trafficking. This can include an increase of community awareness and strengthening of cross-sectoral linkages and partnerships for improved and integrated services to clients.

Human trafficking funding like this is distributed to local communities as the Province of Ontario has a human trafficking strategy which is connected to a national strategy developed because human trafficking has been recognized as a significant issue worldwide. There are worldwide estimates that between 24 million and 40 million people globally are victims of human trafficking (Public Safety Canada, 2018). It is difficult to locate estimates from Canada and Ontario but that does not mean that a problem does not exist. Public Safety Canada reports that “human trafficking is a complex crime which is facilitated by many factors, including the vulnerability of particular populations to exploitation, and the demand for particular goods and services. For its perpetrators, it is a low risk, highly profitable endeavor believed to be one of the fastest growing crimes on a global basis, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).” (Public Safety Canada, *The Way Forward to End Human Trafficking*, 2018, p.2).

The National and Provincial strategy, the definition of human trafficking, including the various types of trafficking, such as sex trafficking, labour trafficking and forced marriage will be explored further in the literature review section of the report.

Oxford County, Ontario, has many strengths and existing services in the community that can be accessed that serve community members to meet their needs. The intention of this background research is to be a starting point for conversation to determine if community responders want to work differently to address human trafficking. This research project will lay a foundation for a future community response for victims of human trafficking in Oxford County. Partners can use this background research to move forward with confirming an Oxford specific community response and if interested work together to adopt a shared response through dialogues and education.

Research Questions

Through investigation, the project was ultimately trying to answer the questions:

1. **What is the most effective community response to human trafficking?**
2. **What key elements should a community response to human trafficking include?**

In order to answer these questions, it was necessary to understand the issue more broadly in terms of a review of existing literature but also to understand the local context and how agencies are currently responding to human trafficking through qualitative stakeholder interviews.

Limitations

As is noted below in the methodology section, the literature did not contain extensive evidence on the key elements of a community response. The literature review did help to set the context and provide

possible frameworks to consider. Also, due to scope of the project, the researchers were unable to review every single existing protocol in Ontario. It was difficult to identify what communities have protocols, as there was not a full list, and many community responses are still under development. It will be helpful to monitor these developing protocols and continue to learn from other communities.

For the qualitative interview portion of the research, those interviewed were agency based and there were no consultations with people who are being trafficked or have been trafficked. Although the project was intended to be broad in terms of scope of human trafficking, conversation generally tended to focus on sex trafficking with less mention of labour trafficking. Lastly, as this is a first step, the research did not result in a comprehensive overview of every service that exists in Oxford, however, it provides something to build upon.

At the conclusion of this research, a number of questions still remain such as: is a rural community response different than an urban response? Does a response to labour trafficking follow a similar pathway as a response to sex trafficking?

METHODOLOGY

Literature Review

A literature review was conducted to identify the existing conversations related to human trafficking in Canada and to set context for the issue. In addition, the researchers had set out to determine what key elements an effective community response or protocol include. The hope was to provide a lens to then review existing community protocols in Ontario. However, there was not a clear direction in the literature of what an effective response should contain. Further research in this field is needed to determine what the key elements are for success, which would require evaluations of community responses or protocols. It is understood that this is likely due to community responses to human trafficking being a newer development. The researchers selected a few community responses to review in more depth and speak with the leads of the coalitions responsible for the protocol if available.

Stakeholder Interviews

In total, 11 interviews with 18 people were conducted in February 2019. A listing of agencies that participated as stakeholders and description of the agencies is included in Appendix A. DASO identified key agency-based stakeholders in Oxford County that they felt may be connected first hand to the issue. This method was selected to get a sense of current issue awareness/perceived urgency, current response including mandate, policies etc. and recommendations from agencies on what a community response to human trafficking should include and system gaps. The assumption was made that a community response is desired-that people want to do something about trafficking, however, this assumption was tested through the questions posed.

In addition, further people were identified in the process that could speak to a community response including hospital staff, non-profit housing providers, truck stop and motel staff, organizations that are working with migrant workers. A recommendation is to continue these conversations with those who were not a part of the process to build the community response.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following is a literature review identifying the conversations regarding human trafficking in Canada. Using the existing literature, comprehensive community response protocols can be developed ensuring an adequate use of available resources and attention to the issues facing victims. Much of the literature on the topic of human trafficking identifies the importance of victim-centred approaches.

The understanding that service provision, as it exists currently, is fragmented and divided amongst many organizations and jurisdictions, in part drives the purpose of researching human trafficking responses across Canada. Data collection and research on protocol development is fairly new at all government levels. In fact, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police conducted its first Human Trafficking Threat Assessment in 2010. This overview was the first of its kind in identifying threats and trends with Canadian data and was a driving force for the further development of a national strategy (Government of Canada, 2012 p. 6-7).

Following this literature review will be conversations with local stakeholders and recommendations for a course of action in the community.

What is Human Trafficking?

A review of the literature has determined that there are several definitions of human trafficking. The need to have a “firmly established” definition was a recent recommendation of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights under the Government of Canada. A report from December 2018 titled “Moving Forward in the Fight Against Human Trafficking in Canada” states that human trafficking is a complex and multi-faceted issue “often referred to as modern slavery” and can take many forms (p.7).

Other agencies involved in research surrounding the issues of human trafficking use many working definitions. Below are a few examples, which in turn demonstrates how complex an issue human trafficking is, as defining it too narrowly or too broadly serves as a barrier in its own right.

The **United Nations in the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC)** defines “trafficking in persons” as:

“the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation” (UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2003 p.42).

This definition is complex and goes further to identify the definition of exploitation, which categorizes what other organizations understand as human trafficking as a whole. Exploitation, as defined by the UNTOC (2003) includes “exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or similar practices, servitude or the removal of organs” (p.43).

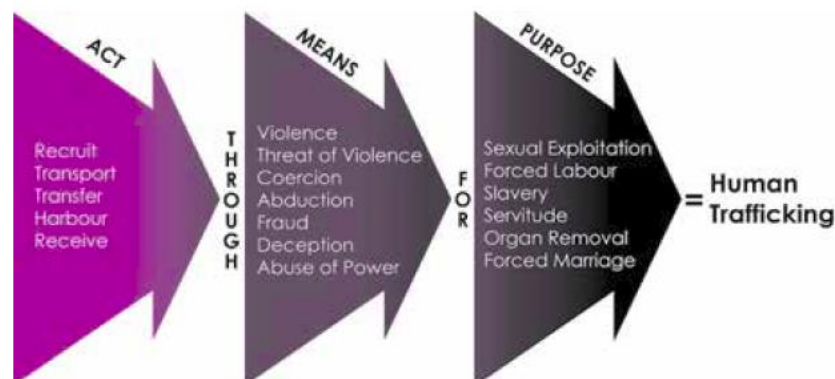
The Ministry of the Status of Women (2016) defines human trafficking in a manner similar to the UNTOC without as much detail. The Ministry states human trafficking is the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by improper means.” Those means are then defined further “such as force, abduction, coercion, deception, repeated provision of a controlled substance.” The purpose of any of these behaviours must then be “for an illegal purpose including sexual exploitation or

forced labour.” (Ministry of the Status of Women quoted in Peel Institute on Violence Prevention, 2018, p.3). This definition was adapted in part from the definition provided by the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General of Canada.

The Ministry of Justice and Attorney General of Canada (2015) developed the definition further to include the victim’s provision or offer to provide their services or labour as a result of the forceful or coercive exploitation. In addition, the victims could be acting in fear for their own safety or for the safety of someone known to them (quoted in Peel Institute on Violence Prevention, 2018).

Adding to the complex definition is the distinction between international and domestic human trafficking provided by the **Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)**. International human trafficking involves the trafficking process crossing an international border. The immigration status of the victim as well as the legal specifications of the border crossing itself is not applicable to this definition. Domestic trafficking occurs when all stages of the trafficking process occur within Canadian borders and again do not take into consideration the immigration status of the victim.

All of the definitions above include components of act, means and purpose as outlined in the Sarnia Lambton Committee Against the Trafficking of Women and Children booklet, 2015, p.10:



While the above definitions serve a wide scope, the intent of a victim centered community response protocol is to provide specific and tailored services to best meet the needs of those directly impacted by human trafficking. The widely casted definition, while helpful in including all recognized aspects of human trafficking, could potentially limit the provision of service by not recognizing the specialized needs of victims affected by different kinds of human trafficking.

How To Recognize Occurrences Of Human Trafficking

It is a difficult process to identify victims of human trafficking as the manipulative relationship between perpetrators of trafficking and their victims leaves cause for fear and abuse for coming forward with information. There are recognizable characteristics, however, in identifying victims. Malnutrition, poor hygiene, STIs, signs of sexual abuse, visible bruising or broken bones, major critical illnesses and symptoms of PTSD or other psychological disorders.

Outside of health related indicators, no personal identification or travel documents, little to no money and always being in the presence of someone else are all signs or red flags of human trafficking. The Sarnia Lambton Committee Against the Trafficking of Women and Children (p.15) have a comprehensive booklet with detailed information and important questions to ask when identifying victims of human trafficking. The section below highlights vulnerable populations most at risk to be trafficked in Canada.

Prominent Statistics Across Canada / Ontario

There are many established Canadian laws against human trafficking existing in the Criminal Code and Immigration and Refugee Protection Act 2002 (IRPA). The Canadian Criminal Code was amended in 2005 to include specified prohibitions. These amendments include provisions highlighting the offence related to “exercising control, direction or influence over the movements of a person, for the purpose of exploiting them or facilitating their exploitation.” As well, it is illegal to receive any financial or other material benefit “knowing that it is obtained by or derived directly or indirectly from the commissions of human trafficking.” Finally, related to those who are trafficked internationally, the “concealing, removing, withholding or destroying, for the purpose of human trafficking” of travel documents belonging to another person or a document that establishes another person’s identity or immigration status.” These amendments add to the scope of criminality tied to human trafficking related offences.

At the writing of a report for the Government of Canada in 2018, police reported incidences of human trafficking were on the rise. In 2016, human trafficking rates reported to police were 11 times higher than in 2010. There was a significant influx of cases reported between 2013 and 2015 (Government of Canada, 2018 p.22). A significant indication was made about the increase in cases specifically related to sex trafficking and forced labour and trafficking taking place across international borders. As with all police reported statistics, it would be too quick to judge whether the inflation truly reflects a jump in human trafficking incidences or if the process of reporting these crimes to police has increased, especially with improvements to surveillance and detection equipment.

Statistics from 2016 indicate that **in Canada 1,099 reported human trafficking offences took place between 2009 and 2016**. The majority of these offenses are reported from Ontario with Quebec and Alberta also registering a significant number of reports. Reports demonstrate **that the victims are most likely to be young women. 95% of cases involved women and 72% were under the age of 25** (Government of Canada, 2018 p.22). Of these cases, the accused were often males identified as being “boyfriends, friends or significant adults in the lives of the victims.”

The difficulty of using reported statistics in developing community response protocols is the lack of data specific to sex trafficking and labour trafficking. The results of police data are a combination recognizing human trafficking more generally. However, estimates suggest that the majority of those trafficked are sex trafficked (Government of Canada, 2012). The disaggregation of the statistics to represent victims of sex trafficking and labour trafficking is essential in developing service provisions best suited to the needs of the victims.

Another important aspect related to the underreporting of data includes the victim’s willingness or lack thereof to come forward. The National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2012) identifies many reasons as to why victims do not come forward. Some of these reasons include fear, lack of understanding of their position as victims of human trafficking, distrust of law enforcement and being unaware of their rights.

A benefit of having police reported data comes to recognition of groups most likely to be targeted or at risk of being trafficked. Populations identified as being socially and economically marginalized such as people impacted by poverty, social isolation, homelessness, child abuse, drug addiction, violent histories, mental health issues, low levels of education and lack of employment opportunities are more likely to be victimized in human trafficking. Further, these populations are most likely to include Indigenous women, girls and children, members of the LGBTQ2+ community, migrants, new immigrants, children in the foster care system and young children who have run away from home.

Identifying those who are most at risk of being victims of human trafficking provides insight into prevention strategies and targeted education programs potentially provided by agencies participating in

victim service acquisition. Prevention strategies such as increased awareness within these communities and comprehensive education on the seriousness of human trafficking are important to the development of community response protocols.

Government of Canada Response: The Four Ps

The Canadian Government highlights the essential aspects of protocols surrounding human trafficking in the national strategy. The four main pillars of response to human trafficking are:

1. **prevention** strategies;
2. **protection** of victims;
3. **prosecution** of offenders; and,
4. **partnerships** both domestically and internationally (Government of Canada, 2018 p.9-19).

In the interest of reviewing literature on response protocol, the protection of victims is important to identify the essential aspects of response protocols. The National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking identifies the unique physical, psychological and social needs of victims of human trafficking. The first recognized need is identification of victims and access to immediate medical services. The recognition of victims of human trafficking falls on the training and education of service providers within communities. Identified target populations should assist in providing starting points for screening and identification of victims.

The Government of Canada has also dedicated funds specific to development of victim services. Organizations with projects designed to help victims of human trafficking can receive funding to follow through with service development. Much of this development has been focused on improving education and awareness especially in populations most targeted by human trafficking perpetrators. Similar funds are available through the Ontario provincial strategy. The National Action Plan has also worked to create improved communication between frontline workers and other concerned parties (non-governmental organizations) in order to create streamlined processes for victim services.

While an action plan has been identified, many have critiqued the system in lacking appropriate victim protection and service provision. One of the major critiques of the allocation of funds through the action plan was the overemphasized involvement of Canadian Border Services Agency as many of the cases of human trafficking reported have appeared to be domestic, meaning there are significantly fewer cases of human trafficking victims crossing over international borders. The focus of funding and service provision should have been on agencies within Canadian communities serving victims of human trafficking.

Provision of victim services, while having involvement from the Government of Canada, are mainly the jurisdiction of the provinces. Western provinces have been at the forefront in creating preventative and protection strategies for victims. According to a report for the Committee of Action Against Human Trafficking National and International (2014), the absence of government programs and financial supports have left frontline workers and non-governmental organizations from different sectors creating initiatives and making trafficking a priority within their mandates. These responses have been localized and region-specific, often created without government support. There has been growth in the collaboration between these community initiatives and dedicated government response in the last decade, however, informal networks of community partners are still at the forefront.

HIGHLIGHTING EXISTING RESPONSES TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Sarnia Lambton

The information presented by the Sarnia Lambton Committee Against the Trafficking of Women and Children creates a clear visual of the complex need for service to support victims of human trafficking. Three levels of response are identified as crisis intervention, immediate needs and longer-term needs. Services within the crisis intervention stage include the need for accompaniment, transportation and assistance with documentation, provision of basic needs, access to crisis support and counselling as well as emergency funds. Legal and Police assistance may be required at this stage depending on the needs of the victim. Health care services are also needed as part of the first initial provision of support. Depending on the circumstances, language interpretation services should be available.

Supporting Victims of Human Trafficking

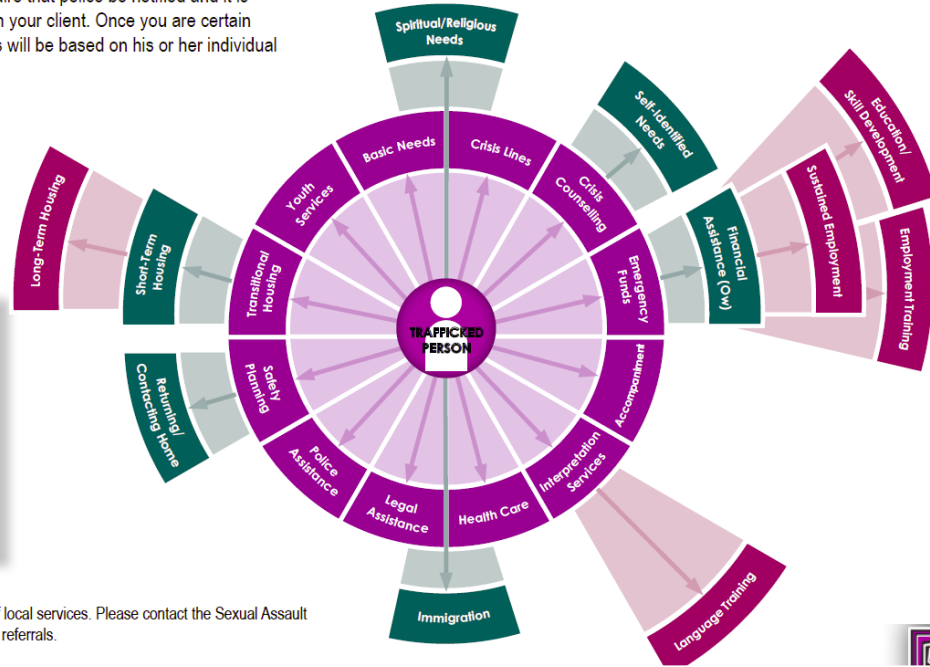
Depending on their experiences and needs, victims of human trafficking will require different services and supports at different points as they exit their trafficking experience. The most important and critical need after leaving such a situation is safety! Safety must be established before any other need can be met. When working with a victim, you need to determine whether law enforcement is required and this must be discussed with your client, as some may not want police involved. However, agency policies may require that police be notified and it is your responsibility to share this with your client. Once you are certain your client is safe, support priorities will be based on his or her individual needs.

The following section offers a general outline and description of what a victim of human trafficking may require and is divided into three periods of time:

- ▶ **Crisis Intervention:** during their trafficking situation or instantly after
- ▶ **Immediate Needs:** within the first weeks and/or months after leaving a trafficking situation
- ▶ **Longer-term needs:** the first year(s) after leaving the situation

Keep in Mind
Victims of human trafficking often do not fit specific mandates of various agencies and you may need to advocate for your clients in different ways to ensure they are receiving the supports they require.

Note: This section is *not* a directory of local services. Please contact the Sexual Assault Survivors' Centre for appropriate local referrals.



(Sarnia Lambton Committee Against the Trafficking of Women and Children Booklet, 2015, p.18)

The London Street Level Women At Risk Program

The Street Level Women At Risk (SLWAR) program is a housing first model, where women who are identified as at risk by London Police Service enter into the program and secure their housing of choice. They have noted that the majority of women involved in the program are or have been trafficked. The multi-agency collaborative program provides a rent supplement as well as support from a housing

worker. They will do whatever it takes to maintain a safe home (replace locks, alarm system, repair broken windows, every woman gets a phone). There are funds to cover all of these harm reduction pieces to minimize risk. In addition, the model includes a structure that incorporates a committee of women with lived experience that help to steer the program.

Ontario's Association of Children's Aid Societies

Many Children's Aid Societies across Ontario have contributed to the knowledge of the impact of human trafficking on young populations. Specifically, sex trafficking has been identified as the source of victimization within this group. CAS's have created strategies for developing service responses. Firstly, education and awareness remains as an important aspect of screening for victims of sex trafficking. In addition to educating relevant stakeholders, collaborative efforts for response are required across agencies and jurisdictions. Some of the identified agencies are police services, Victims Services, Victim Witness programs, trauma counselling, peer support, advocacy, health and medical units, addiction services and school personnel. Information sharing between these organizations is also crucial to the implementation of effective victim service strategies.

Residential Services in Large Urban Areas: A New Day, Covenant House Toronto, London Abused Women's Centre, Ontario Native Women's Association

Recognizing emergency housing needs of the victims of human trafficking, agencies around Ontario have provided access to residential services. With these services comes access to the necessary physical, psychological and social support in assisting victim's recovery.

A New Day in Ottawa provides a "non-judgemental, restorative residential program" aimed at improving the lives of those impacted by sex trafficking. Some of their services include: trauma counselling, job supports, educational and vocational training, transitional living supports, addiction counselling and other services identified as being pertinent to the recovery of victims.

Covenant House Toronto is credited in developing the Urban Response Model that focuses on providing prevention strategies as well as enhanced victims services, such as transitional housing programs and continued research and evaluation in the field.

The London Abused Women's Centre provides supports to women and children exploited in sex trafficking. Victims of sex trafficking must come to access this service on their own accord. Once involved in the programs with the centre, women have access to services needed in their recovery and transition back into their communities.

Gendered and racist targets have been identified in victims of human trafficking. The **Ontario Native Women's Association** has recognized a specific need for support services for Indigenous Women. The services they provide are available to Indigenous women in Thunder Bay as this has been a recognized area for increasing racism and targeting of populations for human trafficking.

These are only a few examples of agencies throughout Ontario providing services to victims of human trafficking. A comprehensive list of service providers throughout the province would be beneficial, not only for the purposes of research and development, but also for those seeking access to services in their communities. A need for a collaborative and comprehensive community response protocol is clear.

FINDINGS: THEMES FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The following themes emerged from interviews with 18 Oxford County service providers representing 11 different agencies in the community.

Understanding the Issue

EXISTENCE

Human trafficking is on the radar of all agencies that participated in this study. A number of participants indicated Oxford County's unique geography and how it contributes to the presence of human trafficking in our community because of the 401 and 403 corridor. Others noted that with the advent of the internet, no community is immune. Agency responses' ranged from stakeholders indicating human trafficking is a definite issue to others agreeing that it is an issue but questioning the magnitude because of the hidden nature and lack of data. One can speculate that this may have to do with their exposure to people involved in human trafficking (numbers served discussed below). One stakeholder said it is "definitely on our radar. It is happening here." Another reported "think we have [trafficking] but don't know for sure".

"We don't know to what extent it is a problem. It is a hidden problem. We don't have a handle on it."

"[It was] not on our radar five years ago when we did our strategic plan. Now realizing, holy cow, this is a bigger problem than we thought."

The hidden nature was attributed in some cases to the lack of staff awareness or their perceptions of who a trafficked victim would be, to the invisible nature of the population themselves (transient, may not be accessing services, and likely not to identify themselves). For example, it was noted by a couple of participants that they have supported someone that they were fairly sure was trafficked but this was not discussed openly. "We probably interact on a more regular basis than we realize."

Secondly, the majority of stakeholders reported that their agencies do not formally track the number of people that they support who are being trafficked with the exception of the police, Victim Assistance Services of Oxford (VASOC) and St. Joseph's Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Program.

"Not fully tracked as there is no code for sex trafficking in the eligibility spectrum [CAS]. Currently there is something about sexual exploitation but not human trafficking. If there was a code it would [draw] more attention to the worker and we would have data."

AWARENESS

Although trafficking is on all of the organizations' radars, it was noted that awareness of the issue as well as more specific awareness of approach and technique, vary greatly among team members. In some cases, informants noted that their staff have a "very general understanding and wouldn't be necessarily looking for it." Where others noted awareness that ranges from staff members that think it "doesn't exist to staff who have supported a client who is a survivor."

Another informant noted that her staff have the "knowledge and understanding to connect the dots and understand the complexity." Some mentioned that specific teams within their organization were more aware because of the nature of the work that they do (e.g.: crisis management) and have made

concerted efforts to keep the issue front and centre at team meetings. In the same vein, one of the police informants said that “officers think about it but need constant reminders and conversations because it is not top of mind.”

Some participants noted a definite increase in awareness as it is “relatively newer that human trafficking is out in the open.” This increase in awareness was attributed to in person and online trainings that some have had access to as well as general attention to the issue in the media with recent cases being discussed and broader awareness campaigns. Trainings that were mentioned included CAMH and the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General as well as local OPP posters and campaigns and training provided to various agencies and businesses such as hotel staff.

Many informants shared that often only one or two staff will be trained with the expectation that they transfer this knowledge-which is not always the most effective way to increase awareness and understanding. Awareness of the issue is one part of education but further specifics on how to recognize, how to approach, ask questions and what to do, are necessary components to address human trafficking as it is possible that staff do not pick up on the signs of human trafficking.

PERCEPTIONS

One could argue that awareness is tied to the public and individuals’ perceptions that are both accurate and inaccurate about the issue of human trafficking. There is a sense that there are broader community perceptions about human trafficking, with participants noting that they have heard from others that human trafficking “is not in my backyard” and that it is an urban issue.

“People tend to think it’s a city problem. It may go undetected because of this.”

Also, some informants indicated that there is a perception that people involved are “dirty or bad people”. One person noted that rural communities can often have a conservative outlook on issues that can lead to community members not being open to harm reduction approaches that allow for individuals to continue in their situation but minimize or reduce risk and harm to themselves. This may lead to approaches being about rescuing victims rather than self-determination. Even the varying use of language and the term “victim” was highlighted by some interviewees. This is ultimately tied to principles of a community response to human trafficking that will be discussed below.

As noted, human trafficking is very complex and each person involved is not the same and is not trafficked the same, however, the public and agency staff can have specific ideas about who human trafficked victims are which may be inaccurate. Discussion with stakeholders centred on the idea that people do not understand the issue and think that people who are trafficked are not from Canada when this is only 10% of victims (Government of Canada, 2012). This may lead to them not recognizing a person as being trafficked because they do not fit their idea of what someone who is trafficked should look like.

Similarly, people’s misunderstanding of the issue may mean that they only focus on labour trafficking or conversely sex trafficking and not look for labour trafficking (the smaller percentage). This could also be true for the idea that it is just women who are trafficked for sex. This will be explored further below.

VULNERABILITIES

The literature points to vulnerabilities being the common element in all those who are trafficked. Participants discussed this and the importance of knowing the vulnerability-vulnerabilities exist for many different reasons. This was not to say that people who are not part of specific equity seeking groups should be ignored but rather recognize the intersectionality between trafficking and race, indigeneity, poverty, sexual orientation. We need to “ask why a particular population is vulnerable.” Another noted

that we need to use a critical anti-oppressive lens to understand the intersectionality. A specific example was given of gay youth being lured for human trafficking when they shared online that they were not sure how to come out. Others noted those in the child welfare system being vulnerable or places such as shelters or group homes being locations for people to be recruited.

Examples of people that various agencies mentioned having supported through human trafficking include but are not limited to: youth, boys, LGBTQ2+ individuals, women with intellectual disabilities, indigenous people, people living in poverty or experiencing homelessness, someone awaiting witness protection from another community, and newcomers. A wide range of individuals were mentioned from a variety of backgrounds and were trafficked for sex and labour.

“We know that people who are vulnerable are at risk. We have to ask the right questions.”

Current Response to Human Trafficking in Oxford County

The following themes emerged from stakeholders relating to the current response in Oxford County to human trafficking. Information arose about mandates and number of people served to supports that are currently available. Some themes are highlighted as issues that have arisen when addressing human trafficking. One theme that did not emerge in conversation as often as was expected was related to substance use/drugs.

MANDATE/POLICIES

Human trafficking and serving people who are trafficked is within the mandate of every agency that was interviewed, however some directly and some more indirectly. This question was specifically asked because the literature indicated that some organizations do not have human trafficking in their mandate and will not serve people who are trafficked because of eligibility or complexities. Many of the organizations noted that they will help anyone (very open mandate) where others had specific eligibility criteria or mandates for particular issues such as addictions or particular populations (youth, women etc.).

For example, those with more direct mandates related to human trafficking include, VASOC, DASO, Children’s Aid, the two Police Services and St. Joseph’s Regional Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Program in London. VASOC has been mandated by the province to deliver services and funds to victims of human trafficking. As noted in the literature review, the Ontario Association of Children Aid Society’s completed a review and made recommendations for all children’s aid organizations in Ontario related to their approach to human trafficking.

Most interviewed do not track support to those who are human trafficked and indicated that they do not know how many individuals they had worked with. Others recalled one or two individuals that they knew for sure were trafficked and had supported in the past year. Others mentioned specific numbers that they had tracked through case management systems that indicated over the two years they had served 12 individuals. One organization in particular said that they felt the number of individuals that they had supported was not substantial, again, linking to perceived magnitude of the issue. A few informants recommended that organizations and the community as a whole work on how we track incidence and support.

Few organizations interviewed have direct policies that related to human trafficking. VASOC has a protocol/program standards from the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General that they follow. Other organizations reported that they have policies that may not be direct but that are supportive. For example, the Oxford County Community Health Centre has a policy related to not de-rostering patients.

This allows for long-term relationships to be built so people can “pop in and out and build trust over time”.

Others have existing structures in place such as St. Joseph’s with human trafficking screening practices/assessment and OPP with a liaison structure to support education of officers. However, it was noted by a few informants that there is not one agency that is responsible for coordinating the support services. Based on the mandate and procedures outlined in the provincial protocol, perhaps the role of VASOC should be explored further by community partners involved.

An interesting aspect of mandates relates to whether or not someone is a resident of Oxford. The nature of human trafficking means that people being trafficked are transient and may not qualify for services if they are not from here. For example, if someone requires shelter, policies of emergency shelters (both shelters for domestic abuse and people experiencing homelessness) may include criteria for someone being a resident of the County or they may give priority of a bed to someone from the County. VASOC noted that they will support a resident from the County and if someone is from out of the County they will assist them to get back to their home community. Other jurisdictional issues were raised related to areas that police cover and in some cases motels or truck stops being within the geographical boundaries of one police service but close to the other.

WRAP AROUND SUPPORTS

Many agencies mentioned a response of support for an individual being trafficked as wrap around- describing the current state in some situations and some respondents noting that the community wrap around the person as a recommendation.

“Wrap around supports. Same we would do with anyone else.”

Other organizations noted that they meet the individual where they are at and work to determine/identify their needs as it is really a case by case basis. In some discussions, participants put an emphasis on the person identifying their needs rather than the practitioner. What are their immediate needs in the situation and how can they either provide service or transfer to other agencies that could support this need? In some cases, there was conversation about what this transfer looked like: a contact person and number as compared to a direct introduction to another practitioner. This will be an important consideration in moving forward with a community response.

Without conducting a full gap analysis, there are a wide range of services available in Oxford County for victims of human trafficking. From these discussions with key stakeholders, a chart has been created that can be revised and built upon to indicate the services available in Oxford County.

Some examples of short term services to meet the needs that an individual identifies include: crisis intervention, income or financial support, safety, housing, food, personal or hygiene needs. Medical needs were also noted with a one person commenting that you “need the medical piece so the body is healthy, so the mind can heal.”

For longer term supports needed, counselling and longer term medical needs were mentioned. Employment or education was not specifically mentioned, however, this may have been implied in some conversations about wrap around services and meeting the person’s needs.

IDENTIFICATION

Numbers served as well as awareness are linked with identification of people being trafficked. One person noted that they felt in the past five years practitioners have been getting better at identifying human trafficking. Although some training exists from OPP and CAMH around signs to help identify

whether or not someone is being trafficked, one must be aware of these and it can be very difficult to make this connection and then ask the right questions or say the right things.

“[We had] one [human trafficked] client in two years, probably have had more but didn’t identify or we don’t ask the right questions.”

It was noted by a number of informants that the approach is so important in getting people to say that they are being trafficked. Things such as empathy and a relationship of trust as well as having conversations in ways that would not scare the victim such as not closing the door. These were things that were indicated by a number of participants that would be helpful to know. The fear of retaliation was also eluded to. “[The] officer has to be willing to say to the person that they think they need help and what can I do for you that won’t get you in trouble.”

Others noted ways to ask questions about human trafficking through assessment, although only one organization had an official policy to ask these questions through their intake or assessment. St. Joseph’s asks every person that comes through their doors about human trafficking. Questions in their screening include “has your partner asked you to be with someone else?”. If they answer yes, then the nurse delves further. This screening extends beyond just asking questions, they are looking for clues in everyone that walks in the door. Similarly, Public Health noted that when talking about STIs they often ask whether or not the sex was consensual or if they were paid in money or drugs for sex.

An added layer is that some people may not even be aware that they are being trafficked. This has been included in the literature in numerous case studies. Staff at St. Joseph’s noted that a lot of people do not know they are being trafficked. How do you support someone when they don’t know they are being trafficked?

“Some don’t identify as being trafficked. Don’t want to push too hard...want to give them options.”

There seemed to be some disagreement in statements regarding the duty to report once identified and whether or not human trafficking will always be connected to police. Some agencies indicated that they have supported people who were trafficked but that the police were not involved. In other cases, the agency was involved because they were connected to the individual after police involvement. Others indicated that once an identification had occurred that they contacted police because of “duty to report”.

However, it should be noted that without informed consent there is no “duty to report” unless the person involved is under the age of 16 and the duty to report is to CAS. This misconception will need to be examined further as partners enter into dialogue about a community response to human trafficking. (The justice system will be examined further below).

SELF-DETERMINATION/CHOICE

Self-determination and choice are connected to identification as well as the course of action that will be taken, and were discussed by the majority of informants. The element of choice was even noted in relation to the framing of the issue. Speaking specifically about sex trafficking:

“How do you identify the difference between willing to be in the [prostitution] industry versus being human trafficked...it’s blurred.”

Others noted the difficulty in distinguishing the above and understanding what is required to make this distinction. Also, if someone chooses to stay in their situation, one informant questioned “are you willing to support that?”

A number of people interviewed indicated the voluntary nature of the process once someone has identified that they are being trafficked and that they know what is best for themselves.

“Have to trust women to make the call on what they need for safety.”

“How do we get the message to victims what your rights are when you come forward?”

APPROACH/RELATIONSHIPS

Reciprocal trust and belief in self-determination can shape the approach that one takes when working with those who identify as being trafficked. A few informants noted the relationship built may even lead to someone identifying that they are being trafficked. Trust was noted as an underpinning of the all-important relationship between the individual being trafficked and the practitioner (including police). Three informants noted the importance of creating safe space and a “judgement free zone”.

“We provide space...creating safe space. Meet them where they are at.”

“They may not be ready to leave the situation. They may just want to talk to someone, a safe place to sit.”

One practitioner that has worked with a number of individuals that have been trafficked summarized that their approach is to question “how can we support your healing and moving forward?”

WHAT DOES SAFETY MEAN?

All key informants mentioned the need for safety and/or safety planning but what does safe or safety mean? “Break down safety. Consider all aspects-emotional, physical, choice over body.” One practitioner implored that we trust the person trafficked to define safety for themselves. Others noted that safety planning would be the first step they would undergo with the person. One organization spoke of safety planning being a strong skill set of staff.

In a lot of cases when digging deeper, safety connected to short term shelter or housing and getting the person to a safe place was noted as a priority. Where will people go and how quickly can they get there? In some cases, transportation is provided to relocate a person back to their home prior to being trafficked. Potential places of safety included DASO or shelters, shelters that specialized in human trafficking, with family or friends and hotels. A number of informants discussed the use of hotels for somewhere for people to go when leaving a situation but also the element of safety at a hotel was called into question. It was noted that hotels are used when crisis beds or shelter beds are unavailable but that this is not ideal.

“Need appropriate shelter; where to put people? Hotels are not safe and hospital is not appropriate.”

If employing harm reduction principles and self-determination, safety planning may include how to stay safe in one’s current situation. London’s Street Level Women at Risk initiative includes completing repairs to windows and broken doors and replacing locks. Safety also includes a cell phone for the people connected to the program. Locally, VASOC provides cell phones and phone cards to victims of trafficking that they support. OPP indicated that they have backpacks available that they hand out that contain safety items including a Tim Horton’s card with a phone number that people can call.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

A number of comments were made about policing as well as the court system. Many noted the great expertise that certain police services have related to this issue: “have to be attached to police as they are the experts.”

Also, the key role that police play in the process was acknowledged. There was, however, some contradictory comments noted about whether or not police will be involved in every single case as highlighted in the self-determination section. The following two statements highlight this contradiction. “This is a police issue. One way or another police are going to be involved.” “Most of the women we have supported in human trafficking have not been involved with the police.” The participants from London specifically noted the integrated approach between police and service providers. This includes a dedicated officer to women at risk and participation in triage assessment.

Existing partnerships with police were highlighted, with some of the services in the community ranging from intertwined processes such as with VASOC to a strong partnership with Canadian Mental Health through the MHEART program. Some agencies mentioned that they offer support to victims if the victim is having conversations with the police in the form of being present at the interview.

A number of people highlighted the training provided by the OPP to practitioners. Others discussed the approach that officers take when interacting with victims of human trafficking and training that may be useful.

“[Ensure] appropriate police response: best practice that is victim/survivor centred.”

“First response may be police. Need really good police training that is trauma informed.”

In addition to the London approach, other models were discussed including structures in place within police services, such as human trafficking teams and more of an emphasis on human trafficking in officer training –keeping it on the radar. One police service noted the lack of resources to have a separate team and the other noted the direction that will be coming from the province related to human trafficking approach and possible teams (still under discussion). OPP noted the opportunity to perhaps share resources with Woodstock Police and work jointly on human trafficking.

Other comments about the justice system centred around the court process. A few organizations mentioned that they will support people to go through the court process but it was noted that the process can be traumatizing.

“Don’t force people to decide in the moment-may not want to face offender. There is court support but the victim has no relationship with them. [It is a] long process to go to court and it can cause trauma.”

Community Response Suggestions

DEFINITION AND SCOPE

Through this research process, many participants questioned the definition of human trafficking that was being used and the scope of human trafficking that was being addressed. One respondent explicating said that in moving forward “we need a common community definition”. Questions were raised about whether or not this research and response will be focused on sex trafficking only or if it will include other types of trafficking such as labour trafficking and forced marriage.

Being that Oxford is rural, participants wondered whether or not we would have higher rates of labour trafficking and if this needs to be explored further. Questions about Oxford’s rurality were raised and whether or not a rural response would be different than an urban response to trafficking? Also, participants noted the focus on women when looking at the issue of sex trafficking but that men can also be trafficked and services and approaches for men and boys need to be considered. The complexity and blurriness of the issue was highlighted.

What became evident throughout this process is that each agency holds a piece of the puzzle. “It may be patchwork at the start” but people noted that a more coordinated or collaborative effort could be helpful to achieve the best support for an individual.

Beyond the outcome of supporting a victim, it should be noted that all but two agencies mentioned that a community response should include training (this is discussed further below in the gaps section). A few agencies also mentioned the need for prevention (see prevention section below) and that perhaps a collaborative could look beyond the scope of supporting the victim but to broader prevention efforts and align with the 4 p’s from the national strategy (prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships).

COLLABORATIVE

The majority of interviewees mentioned a collaborative or possible ways of working together to best respond to the issue. Existing partnerships were noted as well as successful collaboratives in Oxford such as addictions and the community health centre, CMHA and police or the Ingersoll Nurse Practitioner Led Clinic. These are examples of assets or strengths in the community that learnings could be gathered from or in some cases could be expanded or built upon.

There were a range in comments regarding the need for agencies to work together and different thoughts on how agencies could work together. Rationale for working together was highlighted through comments such as: “the reality is we have shared clients” and “all agencies are connected.” This is in combination with the fact that victims of human trafficking will likely have multiple needs and will have to interact with multiple services. Others discussed the need to work together as they are not experts in the area or may not be able to offer the appropriate supports for a person.

“Need all of the agencies to come to the table-not one agency can do this. [It] doesn’t rest with one. Need a collaborative approach.”

This was also parsed out further when a participant shared that we need to work better across sectors.

“How do we work as a whole to figure out the whole person? As individual sectors, we don’t do this well.”

“In our community everybody tries to be everything to everybody. This is not effective.”

Participants called for an agreed upon approach, with an agreed upon way of working together, where “partners come up with the mandate”. They also discussed the need to mobilize resources in an effective way.

“Need to better understand who can commit what. A formal collaboration, diverse in representation so that everyone owns the problem and the solution-need ownership. [...] Difficult to get commitment to pull it all together. We have to set aside our [agency] principles.”

This comment was echoed in another participant’s response: “people need to put turf aside -collectively support an individual. Set aside your issues.” Another respondent noted that we need to have the “ability to not be afraid to openly and honestly communicate to support the victim”. One participant went even further to suggest a multidisciplinary team being created to work with victims of human trafficking. Where others asked if there is an agency that would be willing to take the lead or coordinate. “Perhaps a one stop shop so survivor doesn’t have to navigate all these different services/systems.”

KNOW EXISTING RESOURCES

Something that was mentioned that connects with collaboration/coordination is the importance of knowing the agency resources that exist. This communication or information sharing of existing

services can build awareness of supports available. Participants noted this when asked about recommendations for a community response and indicated that part of a response is “connection to appropriate supports if they exist” and knowing who to call.

“Sometimes I wonder if we don’t ask because we don’t know what to offer.”

“Resources are slim and difficult to access.”

People noted that training could include who to call for the appropriate resources. “Know what services agencies provide” and “where to refer/seek out support”. For example, in conversation, a few agencies were surprised to learn that VASOC had a protocol and funds available to support victims of human trafficking.

PRINCIPLES

If agencies are to work together moving forward or if individual agencies are going to approach the issue, there were many comments connected to principles that should guide the process and work. As explored above, self-determination is a key principle noted by a large number of the participants but also mentioned in the literature. Other comments connected to this included that an approach must be “patient driven/patient focused” or client focused. Additional principles that were discussed by a number of interviewees include harm reduction and trauma informed practice. Harm reduction is connected to self-determination as reflected in the following comment:

“Harm reduction paves the way-embracing whatever the woman wants. Minimize risk because they are going to go in and out of being trafficked.”

Others discussed trauma informed practice and the expectation that practitioners, including police, have an understanding of trauma and the connection between trauma and in this case human trafficking.

The importance of immediacy or speed as a principle was also discussed by a number of participants in responding to the victim once they have identified. This was described as a rapid response and that there is a “narrow window of opportunity” to get the person from “unsafe to safe with their consent”.

“Get linked up quickly to the right people.”

“Has to be now. Housing can’t be 9-5, Monday to Friday.”

PROCESS

In some cases, organizations did specifically mention a protocol as part of a community response to human trafficking. What a protocol would look like or contain was not always expanded upon. Some referred generally to a protocol and others spoke to specific aspects of the process:

“Protocol to address where we can access housing in the immediate.”

Others spoke about the importance of clarity within a community protocol. Attention was drawn to other existing protocols in the community and how these are sometimes not referred to even though they exist.

As noted above, some agencies such as Victim Services, have their own protocols. Some participants indicated that it may make sense for each agency to have their own but then there be common elements or coordination amongst all. Common elements that could be considered include formal screening tools or information sharing systems. Others talked about the importance of not having two processes in place-not having one for police and one for others but that they be coordinated and not contradictory. This was expanded upon further when some participants discussed consent processes

and tracking. “People should only have to tell their story once” and there should be “a common consent process.”

“We need coordinated access-work differently, communicate differently. The VISPDAT includes human trafficking questions. We could use this assessment tool across all agencies-need commitment from all players. We could also use common information sharing systems like HIFIS4 for homelessness and trafficking.”

This specific recommendation would reform how agencies work and interact together from access to information sharing. Another organization connected the concept of knowing resources to process recommendations and wondered if a flowchart and tool could exist to “assist people of what steps to take, in yes/no language”.

EXISTING STRUCTURES

Just as people drew on examples of great partnerships as areas of strength, there was also mention of existing structures in Oxford County and how this could possibly be built upon. In this theme area, the most comments were made related to the situation table that meets weekly with a variety of agencies represented to problem-solve around a person that may be a common client to all those involved. Participants asked if the situation table may be a place where support and action could be coordinated. Others questioned if meeting weekly would not be a fast enough response. Some respondents did indicate that cases of people being trafficked had been brought to the situation table in the past.

Others mentioned existing protocols such as the sexual assault or domestic violence protocol for Oxford. They wondered if this could be expanded upon or examined for key learnings from the process. One participant noted that a neighbouring community of Grey-Bruce has an online clickable form related to sexual assault that all partners have access to. It shows best practices, defines terms and helps agencies through the protocol.

System Gaps

TRAINING

Questions related to recommendations for a community response as well as a bigger question about existing gaps in the system were asked of participants. In their responses, all but two of the respondents mentioned the need for training as part of a community response to human trafficking.

Some mentioned the need for mandatory training on human trafficking that is consistent across all providers in the County. Who it would be mandatory for would have to be clarified as well as number of staff to be trained, as it was noted that often one person will attend with the expectation of sharing back. Others pointed out specific groups that should be targeted for training: police, health centre, public health as examples. As mentioned above, the training that the OPP provides has been seen as valuable. “Did go to an OPP training that was geared to the hospitality industry and it was impactful.” Areas to be addressed in future training that were noted included how to detect or identify, knowing how to approach or discuss with the person, and knowing who to go to locally for referrals or supports. It was mentioned that this training should be trauma informed and evidence based.

“Need to be able to recognize human trafficking. Are we missing the window of opportunity?”

“Need more training around recognizing signs and then what.”

“Training that is specific to Oxford County’s context.”

SHORT TERM

In addition to the process recommendations noted above, a number of gaps in the current system were identified for a person in crisis or to meet their immediate needs once they have identified as being trafficked. They primarily centred around housing, the sexual assault centre and counselling/mental health supports. One participant did talk about the possibility of expanding the OPP backpack program with safety, food and personal hygiene items into Woodstock. Surprisingly, commentary about transportation to services did not arise in the interviews as often as was expected by the interviewer.

HOUSING

Although people noted that they could help victims come up with a safety plan, a number of them were concerned with having housing/shelter options that are safe for people to access. Both short term crisis stays or longer term housing or stability were mentioned as a gap area in Oxford. This is not surprising as it has been acknowledged by decision makers that Canada and the County are in a housing crisis. One participant noted that “housing always becomes an issue.” Referring to housing, one person said “where can we send people if no shelter?” One person captured this while discussing the counselling services they can provide: “you can do all the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy you want, but if not safely housed, can’t change behavior”.

Housing was seen as a basic need required immediately but that sometimes it is unavailable for various reasons and hotels are an option that are used. Eligibility for shelter may be a reason a person may not qualify or be turned away, as well as lack of beds. When specifically speaking about women’s shelters, people noted that DASO can be full or may turn away someone because of the agency’s eligibility criteria or the complexity of their needs. Sometimes a shelter may not be appropriate place or they may not be a good fit for the model of living communally.

“[Domestic Abuse Services Oxford] shelter is often at capacity. We have to turn people away regularly for shelter. There are limited local options for people fleeing violence.”

In addition, housing options need to be safe. A number of respondents brought this up as evidenced in the comments in the previous section about the use of hotels, but also were seen in comments related to shelters for people experiencing homelessness. A hotel or shelter may not have the security in place that is likely required. Also, certain groups of people such as youth may not feel safe in an emergency shelter and may do better in a transitional bed or different type of shelter.

SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE

Speaking specifically to sex trafficking, a number of comments were made related to access to the sexual assault centre. Currently, there is sexual assault counselling therapy available in Oxford through DASO, however, there is no sexual assault centre in Oxford and people have to travel to London to St. Joseph’s hospital for specialized sexual assault services such as forensic sample collection and counselling.

“Why is there not a funded sexual assault centre in our community, in every hospital?”

It was noted that Ontario is actually the only province with sexual assault treatment centres in Canada—there are no national standards of practice. A few interviewees made comments about the overall lack of funding for sexual assault support. In speaking to St. Joseph’s, they are looking at access across the Region and considering other options such as educating others to do the screening. They do currently use Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) or telephone counselling if people cannot travel to London. One agency noted that they will provide transportation to the sexual health centre in London (St.

Joseph's) and that police will also take the victim to London. Another person commented that there is no transportation to St. Joseph's.

COUNSELLING/MENTAL HEALTH

Counselling and mental health supports were noted as a gap area in Oxford County. It was acknowledged that Oxford County Community Health Centre has counsellors that do trauma counselling as well as outpatient services at the hospital that can be accessed by both men and women. St. Joseph's Sexual Assault Centre offers long term counselling and DASO has counselling for women residing in Oxford that have experienced sexual assault/abuse. Canadian Mental Health Association Oxford will do crisis counselling that is one session. VASOC has been able to use funds from the provincial human trafficking protocol to fund longer term counselling with a private counsellor. It was noted by a number of providers, that the waitlist is often long for mental health services with the exception of St. Joseph's which has no wait list.

In addition, the specialized counselling required for people that have been trafficked was emphasized by a few providers. One participant indicated that more psychiatry/psychology services are needed for human trafficking especially when co-morbidity or multiple mental health diagnosis exist.

Related to mental health and recovery, is the idea raised by a few key informants about a peer model. Although a peer model related to mental health and addictions exists in Oxford through Canadian Mental Health Association, the peers are not necessarily survivors of human trafficking. One participant noted the value that a peer program could bring:

“They have gone through it and come out the other side and their peer sees that they can come out the other side.”

LONG TERM NEEDS

Looking specifically at the question asked about long-term supports, it became evident that most supports currently available from the agencies interviewed are for immediate needs. Although longer term supports for employment and education exist in the community, it appears that referrals to these agencies are not usually made through the process of supporting someone who is trafficked as the interaction is usually more short term.

Something that perhaps needs to be fleshed out further and is connected to the other principles such as harm reduction, is the idea of when a process is complete or what is the outcome that is trying to be achieved with the trafficked person? One participant said that it is “not that you just identify and then leave”. If pursuing a process, this could be a principle to be explored further.

GROUPS THAT MAY EXPERIENCE THE SYSTEM DIFFERENTLY

Two groups in particular that were discussed related to gaps in current human trafficking supports in Oxford are those under the age of 16 and men and boys. A number of agencies have eligibility criteria set by funders and/or government that require that an individual is at least 16, including VASOC and DASO. St. Joseph's has 12 as its lower age limit. If a person under 16 identified as being trafficked, how would they be supported in Oxford County? Perhaps there are supports that exist that those interviewed just are not aware of. One participant noted an eligibility criteria that further restricted services for those under 16. The informant suggested that children's mental health services cannot be accessed if the person is currently in the court process. This is true at Wellkin for ongoing services during a custody and access dispute, however, people under 18 may access walk-in services at Wellkin for resources, ideas and strategies related to their mental health.

Secondly, a number of comments were made about the lack of supports for men and boys.

“There are not many supports for men. They are tailored to women... are for women only.”

“Nothing for boys. It is almost a cultural belief that [sex trafficking] is an individual choice for boys.”

Conversely, one person shared that they understand there are a lack of services for men and boys but the estimates indicate that the large majority of people who are trafficked in Canada are females or girls (men and boys are estimated at 30% of those trafficked (Public Safety Canada, 2018)). This begs the question, what supports or services would be offered to a man who identified as being trafficked? Where would he be relocated for safe housing? Perhaps he could be housed in the emergency shelter for people experiencing homelessness or a hotel, however, safety concerns about these two options were raised.

PREVENTION

A few participants discussed the need to move beyond identification and support of individuals and look at the bigger picture of prevention.

“We need to come up with a plan to deal with [human trafficking] but we all need to fight it.”

Other comments centred around public awareness campaigns such as the OPP campaign materials and specific targeted audiences such as youth. Education in the school system could include discussions of luring, internet safety and safety in malls and parking lots.

From a luring perspective, staff in places that have been known to be hotspots for luring such as emergency shelters and group homes, could consider being trained and having a heightened awareness. Also, those who may have vulnerabilities could receive targeted information.

REMOVE BARRIERS-LOOK TO THE LONDON STREET LEVEL WOMEN AT RISK MODEL (SLWAR)

A few people interviewed indicated that the London Model should be investigated, although it may not on first look be considered a human trafficking response. The London Street Level Women at Risk program is described in the community protocol section above as a housing first harm reduction model where London Police identify participants and supports are provided to secure and maintain housing and stay safe.

Others noted having an outreach worker which may be considered a similar model to SLWAR but not at the same scale or level of participation from all of the community partners that are involved in SLWAR. The thought that arose was if the community was considering a model like an outreach worker or SLWAR London model that existing structures or assets in Oxford could be built upon such as the Oxford County Community Health Centre’s Housing Stability Workers.

These models are really based upon removal of barriers for participants, whether that be eligibility or access. Services could possibly consider what barriers are in place for people to access their supports/services.

“Case management has to alter how they offer services. An example would be mobile counselling-offer services in home.”

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A COMMUNITY RESPONSE

It is clear based on the information provided in the literature and from protocols and programs in surrounding communities, that recommendations are required in creating a comprehensive strategy for human trafficking. Education, awareness, victim-led service provision, government involvement and funding as well as cooperation between organizations is essential for addressing the growing concern of human trafficking. Data surrounding vulnerable populations will continue to provide insight as to where prevention is most needed. Recommendations from key stakeholders also mirrored what was found in the literature.

The following recommendations for a community response to human trafficking are key elements or directions highlighted from the literature review, stakeholders and process learnings from the researchers and are for DASO and the community's consideration.

1. Agree on a common definition of human trafficking including whether or not this definition will extend to all different forms of trafficking

Stakeholders involved felt clarity around the definition of trafficking was necessary for community partners to work together. The group may consider adopting the United Nations' definition for consistency or look to other definitions highlighted in the literature review such as the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. Ultimately, whoever is moving forward on this needs to decide if a response will include all types of trafficking and if a response to sex trafficking is the same as a response to labour trafficking.

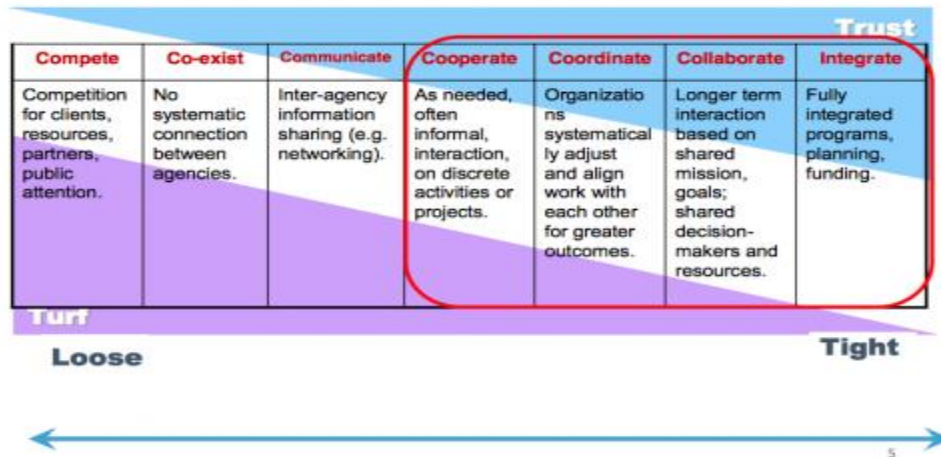
2. Explore labour trafficking further

The scope of this study did not allow for further investigation related to labour trafficking. In the interest of Oxford's rurality and migrant worker population, labour trafficking may be at a higher incidence in Oxford than in the rest of the province. The Public Safety Canada "The Way Forward to End Human Trafficking" report noted that "in Canada, low-wage and low-skilled migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse due to many factors, such as language barriers, working in isolated/remote areas, lack of access to support, and lack of access to information on their rights. Further, migrant workers who have work permits tied to a single employer may also suffer because of their precarious status." (Public Safety Canada, 2018, p.11).

3. Consider the formation of a group or collaborative to determine a community response

Through the stakeholder interview process, it appeared that there is interest and will to work together to collectively address human trafficking. This needs to be confirmed by partners and membership of a partnership would have to be considered. As discussed in the literature and in some comments from those interviewed, it would be beneficial to include those who are being trafficked or survivors in the development of a community response. Also, other partners that were not in the initial round of stakeholders identified such as hospital staff should be engaged.

THE COLLABORATION SPECTRUM



(Tamarack Institute, 2017, p.2)

When participants discussed collaborating or a collaborative, it is difficult to know how fully integrated they envision services and processes will be. If the community would like to see a “collaborative” response or approach, it may be helpful for the group to consider what their ultimate goal is (e.g.: to provide a seamless process for victims of human trafficking where they receive the supports they need quickly and are not lost along the way). Once the goals are determined, figure out what needs to be done to achieve that goal including where on the collaboration spectrum the group wants to be (do they envision co-operation or fully integrated programs?).

4. Partners agree upon guiding principles if working together to address human trafficking

As noted through discussion, the principles that guide the process are paramount and need to be examined openly. As noted in the literature review, a victim centred approach is key to a human trafficking response. Determine to what extent self-determination and harm reduction will be guiding principles in the process. In addition, the misconception about duty to report has to be further explored by partners. Examples of guiding principles can be seen in the Government of Canada strategy as well as the Sarnia Lambton Committee Against the Trafficking of Women and Children. Once principles are agreed upon the model to pursue may be more evident.

5. Map existing support services for victims of human trafficking

A possible first step for partners to complete would be to take the chart that was started of existing resources and have all partners verify the information. This chart includes services offered as well as eligibility criteria and availability in terms of days and times services are offered to consider how many 24-7 services exist. Also, included in this chart is provincial and national telephone lines that can be accessible for people for support. Other organizations that were missing from the initial discussion could be included in the process. Define how people are currently flowing through the system and what this looks like (direct hand-offs from one partner to another or provision of a phone number). Consider if this process is satisfactory or what the most ideal flow would be. Are there eligibility criteria that could be loosened or waved in an emergency situation?

6. Consider the implementation of possible facets of a community response

Once existing supports have been mapped and goals outlined, the group has a number of possible strategies to consider. As indicated in the literature review, there is not a recommended protocol to

adopt for a community, however, there are processes and learnings that can be considered for implementation. For example, if the group is looking for a collaborative approach Sarnia Lambton's model and collaborative process would be of value to consider. For a comprehensive strategy, consider the 4 ps as laid out in the national strategy. Recommendations for consideration that came from stakeholders that would fit into the 4 ps approach would include:

- **Data** - common collection and the need for better, consistent data (consider using collection tools or at least having an agreed upon way to collect)
- **Screening/Assessment** - consideration of formal screening tools that ask questions about human trafficking or agreeing to add a human trafficking assessment question to existing assessment tools
- **Training** - mandatory, consistent and evidence-based training for people directly involved and also for targeted groups that may come in contact with people such as health inspectors or emergency shelter operators
- **Situation Table** - explore the use of the situation table to coordinate the response for a human trafficking victim in its existing structure or with a modification. Consider the importance of common processes and consent forms.
- **Outreach Worker** - explore the SLWAR London model further and consider a similar or adapted approach of a dedicated outreach worker.

An interesting consideration for the above recommendations would be to examine the use of existing structures. For example, is there a current data collection system that could be used individually or collectively (figuring out how terms will be defined so all are collecting the same thing)? Is there existing training that can be built upon or made mandatory with a systematic process for ensuring targeted people are trained? Is there a screening or assessment tool such as that used by the sexual assault centre or VISPDAT that can be used by all for common assessment? Or are there a few questions that each organization could include in their assessment tool? Is the situation table the right venue for human trafficking to go to or is there a different way of coordinating a response? Does there need to be one person or agency that is responsible for coordinating? Could existing outreach workers expand their understanding and practices to incorporate human trafficking into their specialty/scope?

7. Include an element of prevention in a community response

As noted in the recommendation above, prevention is a pillar in the Canadian National Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy. A few stakeholders mentioned the need for a prevention component, although the majority focused on the crisis response for the victim. Stakeholders suggested education in schools and also for individuals that may be vulnerable to being trafficked. Prevention efforts could build off of awareness campaigns being developed in London by the London Abused Women's Centre and at En Route locations along the 401. In addition, the United Nations and the province have campaigns and an awareness day. There are many exciting campaigns and educational approaches that can be adapted or promoted.

8. Evaluate the community response

Whatever model or approach that is selected to address human trafficking should be evaluated to determine its effectiveness but also contribute to the body of knowledge. An evaluation framework should be created at the very beginning when the model is determined.

9. Continue to monitor existing human trafficking strategies

A number of strategies that are being implemented across the province are in their early infancy and others that are newer are starting to evaluate and look at their outcomes. Communities such as Peel are starting to work on a strategy and the process and outcome from this should be monitored. In addition, a new national strategy is projected to be released in winter 2019. The new strategy will be based on results from the previous strategy's evaluation and consultations that were conducted.

The recommendations highlighted above in this Oxford-specific report are similar to recommendations that were made through the national strategy's evaluation. "The evaluation further stressed several key issues and gaps, such as: further focus on labour trafficking; a centralized data collection mechanism; a national referral mechanism; and greater support for victims and vulnerable populations." (Public Safety, 2018, p.9). It is important to stay apprised of the new strategy as there may be elements that could be adopted or principles to consider.

10. Further explore the questions that still remain

As this a starting point, questions arose throughout the process that can be further explored to assist the group in moving forward. Some questions to possibly revisit are: Is a rural response different than an urban response? Although transportation was not discussed at length, how should transportation be addressed in a community response? Does a response to labour trafficking follow a similar pathway as a response to sex trafficking? Does a community response require dedicated resources? (financial and human resources) Or can it be done within current funding and structures? Why did addictions or substance misuse not come up much in conversation despite the evidenced connection and how should this component be built into a community response?

11. Attempt to address larger systemic issues

A number of larger systemic issues such as lack of housing and the housing crisis in Oxford and the waitlist for mental health supports were raised by stakeholders because these community issues are ultimately intertwined with human trafficking and a response to human trafficking. A number of local initiatives exist or are under development to address these larger issues, however, it is important to stay apprised of these and to share with community partners acting on these issues, the connection between human trafficking and other systemic concerns.

NEXT STEPS

It is up to the will of the community to determine if and how partners will work together to address human trafficking in Oxford County. As noted, this background research is a starting point for conversation of how to move forward. It is a hope that these recommendations can be a useful guide in this process.

Domestic Abuse Services Oxford is committed to continuing the conversation and bringing partners together to discuss this critical issue and determine next steps.

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Appendix A - Description of Agency Services (Stakeholders Interviewed)

Please note: The following information was compiled from websites, brochures, etc. and may not be accurate or up to date.

DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES OXFORD (DASO)

Research Sponsor but also interviewed.

A safe, comfortable space for women, children and teens impacted by domestic abuse and/or homelessness in a 21-bed high security shelter located in Woodstock, serving all of Oxford County. Transportation can be arranged.

Programs and services include a 24-hour crisis/help/support line, community-based counselling; sexual abuse/ assault counselling; community outreach; specialized programming for children and adolescents exposed to abuse; violence education/prevention. All services are free of charge, confidential and accessible.

ADDICTION SERVICES OF THAMES VALLEY

Addiction Services of Thames Valley is a community based service. Our agency operates in co-operation with local addiction, mental health and health care providers, through the Thames Valley region of the Southwest Local Health Integration Network

We provide screening, assessment, treatment planning and addiction treatment services to persons who are concerned about substance use and/or internet, gaming disorder or problem gambling. We provide support, education and treatment for family members.

CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION (CMHA)-OXFORD

As the nationwide leader and champion for mental health, CMHA facilitates access to the resources people require to maintain and improve mental health and community integration, build resilience, and support recovery from mental illness.

CMHA branches across Canada provide a wide range of innovative services and supports to people who are experiencing mental illness and their families. These services are tailored to the needs and resources of the communities where they are based. One of the core goals of these services is to help people with mental illness develop the personal tools to lead meaningful and productive lives.

CAS OXFORD

The Society serves and promotes the best interests, safety and well-being of children and the integrity and diversity of our families and communities.

OPP – OXFORD

As an organization, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) commits to working continually to earn the confidence of the citizens of and visitors to Ontario—a confidence that will not be taken for granted. The OPP fulfills this commitment by providing the best and most professional service possible and by striving to build a culture of trust, and open and honest dialogue, with the communities it serves and among the people it employs.

OXFORD COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Everyone matters...

Everyone working together to build healthy communities throughout Oxford County by providing health care, support and education that works for you.

OXFORD COUNTY, HUMAN SERVICES

Oxford County takes an integrated approach to helping clients. Our focus is one client, one file, one client service worker.

Finding, understanding and applying for social and community services can be a challenge -- especially when someone is already facing difficult times. That's why the Human Services professional team considers many different factors when helping a client: income, education, health, transportation, employment, safety/legal, and shelter.

By focusing on overall quality of life, the Human Services team can help clients find out about other community programs and resources that can help meet their needs. Our goal is to provide great service while helping clients enhance their quality of life and contribute to their community.

SOUTH WESTERN PUBLIC HEALTH

Southwestern Public Health works together with its partners to ensure the health of the whole community. Formed in 2018 by the merger of Elgin St. Thomas Public Health and Oxford County Public Health, Southwestern Public Health serves a population of about 200,000 across Oxford County, Elgin County and the City of St. Thomas.

ST. JOSEPH'S SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TREATMENT PROGRAM

Renowned for compassionate care, St. Joseph's Health Care London is one of the best academic health care organizations in Canada dedicated to helping people live to their fullest by minimizing the effects of injury, disease and disability through excellence in care, teaching and research. St. Joseph's Regional Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Treatment Program provides care at the time of the assault and in the months following the initial incident. We can help address your medical, emotional and safety concerns in a caring and supportive environment.

VICTIM ASSISTANCE SERVICES OF OXFORD COUNTY

Victim Assistance Services of Oxford County is dedicated to providing confidential, emotional support, practical assistance and community referrals to victims of crime, tragic circumstances and disaster. Specially trained Victim Assistance Services volunteers are available 24 hours a day to empower individuals to reestablish control and begin the healing process.

WOODSTOCK POLICE SERVICE

The members of the Woodstock Police Service are committed to preventing crime and maintaining the public's peace while fulfilling our sworn duty to "Protect Our Community" in true partnership with the citizens of the community of Woodstock.

Appendix B - Interview Questions Asked

ISSUE AWARENESS AND PERCEIVED URGENCY

1. Do you think that human trafficking is an issue in our community? Is it on your radar? Please explain.
2. How would you describe your staff's general awareness of human trafficking? Have they had any training?

CURRENT RESPONSE

3. Is it within your mandate to serve victims of human trafficking?
4. Have you supported any victims of human trafficking in Oxford? If so, how many across what timeframe? Do you have a method for tracking?
5. What is your current response to human trafficking? Protocols/policies that you have in place for identification? Referral etc.? Who do you refer to?
6. Hypothetically speaking, how would you work with a victim of human trafficking so that they receive the supports that they require?
 - What would you or your staff do to meet their needs in the crisis (during their trafficking situation or instantly after)?
[>prompts: accompaniment, basic needs, crisis counselling, emergency funds, health care, interpretation, legal assistance, police assistance, safety planning, transition housing/shelter, youth services, transportation]
 - What would you or your staff do to meet their immediate needs (within the first weeks and or months after leaving a trafficking situation)?
[>prompts: financial assistance, short term housing, immigration status, returning/contacting home, self-identified needs like addictions counselling or childcare]
 - What would you or your staff do to meet their longer term needs (the first years after leaving the situation)?
[>prompts: sustained employment, language training, long-term housing]

COMMUNITY RESPONSE RECOMMENDATIONS

7. What do you think that a community response for victims of human trafficking should include?
8. What do you need to be able to identify and support victims of human trafficking?
9. Are there any gaps or supports/services that are missing in the community to serve victims of human trafficking?