SI London Chiltern Region

Regional Meeting and Human Rights Day Celebration

Saturday 12th December2020 10am - 1pm via zoom.

Guest speaker:

**Kimberley Lamb, Head of Bedfordshire Violence and Exploitation Reduction Unit (VERU)**

Kimberley was introduced by Assistant Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Sharn Basra.

Sharn outlined the initial development of VERU following a successful bid to the Home Office for funds to develop this service some 3 years ago. 18 similar services were initiated across the UK and to date Bedfordshire VERU is the only one led by a woman.

Kimberley had previously been working in partnership with a variety of community groups, charities and organisations in several ways and was a critical friend to the local police Force. She is very well respected within all of these groups for her commitment, her professionalism and her caring nature. Someone who gets things done!

Kimberley:

Kimberley shared a little of her background with us which she felt influenced her future career plans and civil actions.

Kimberley was brought up in London by her grandma along with her brother as their mother experienced mental health issues and addictions and was unable to care for them. She spoke about having free school meals and having to sit at a table with other “free school meal children" and the shame she felt about this.

As a small eight-year-old girl Kimberley witnessed a knife crime murder when one woman stabbed another in front of her. It was very confusing and upsetting to her that nobody would assist or talk to the police about this incident.

As a result of these issues Kimberley feels very strongly about social equality and works hard to alleviate it and get all areas of the community involved in reducing violence and exploitation. VERU very quickly became embedded in all Bedfordshire Police, Community and social strategies across the board. Kimberley also sits on various Home Office boards and groups therefore influencing National as well as local policy development. Her team of 6 staff have extensive and comprehensive knowledge of all aspects of violence and exploitation and regularly use this to educate and inform others.

Kimberley spoke a little about the very difficult issue of gang culture, county lines and resultant cases of modern slavery in using children as young as nine years old to store and/or distribute drugs, guns etc. Bedfordshire like many counties in the UK has huge problems with this type of crime and the increasing exploitation of young people both male and female. One of the most important and influential aspects of her role is being one of the “voices of youth and for youth” working in conjunction with many individuals and the local community groups. One aspect that Kimberley sure about is that it is essential to engage with both the exploited and their exploiters in order to get young people to understand what is happening and try to alleviate the conditions causing this situation. Kimberley’s eloquent and engaging manner has to be a great asset to this important role along with her understanding of the issues and hidden causes of them.

The idea of a **VERU Village** was very interesting and requires all the agencies, the community, churches, multi-faith groups and many others to come together under one umbrella to address the difficulties and put something more rewarding and effective in their place. I loved the idea of equine therapy! I know that Kimberley will achieve that village before too long.

With thanks to Pauline Panter for this report that supports the Power Point presentation on the website [www.sigbi.org/london-chilterns/2020/11/09/hr-day-2020](http://www.sigbi.org/london-chilterns/2020/11/09/hr-day-2020)