

Operation to tackle FGM and forced marriage honoured at awards

A joint operation between police and Border Force has been highly commended at the World Class Policing Awards.

Operation Limelight focuses on raising awareness of forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) at the border and safeguarding potential victims.

This summer, Operation Limelight focused on flights between the UK and destinations where there is a high prevalence of forced marriage. The operation involved engaging with airport staff and the general public on how to spot potential signs of abuse and how to report their concerns. Intelligence was also used to identify potential victims entering or leaving the country.

As part of the operation, the UK worked closely with counterparts in the United States to run corresponding operations at US airports.

The judging panel said that Operation Limelight was 'a major safeguarding operation that has warned (and possibly deterred) many thousands of suspects and victims and has now been replicated across multiple US cities'.

Tim Kingsberry, Regional Director at Border Force said:

We are naturally delighted with this award which recognises the progress that we have made through joint working between Border Force and the Metropolitan Police.

FGM and forced marriage are abhorrent crimes which we are committed to tackling both here in the UK and also through our ongoing work with overseas partners.

The joint Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office Forced Marriage Unit provided support related to a possible forced marriage in 1,764 cases in 2018. The cases dealt with came from 74 different countries.

As at June 2019, 2149 Forced Marriage Protection Orders and 418 FGM Protection Orders have been made since their introduction (2008 and 2015 respectively) and in February the first person was convicted of FGM in the UK.

Following operations in the UK, the USA adopted Limelight as an intervention tactic, delivered in 14 US cities in 2019. This led to the development of the Proclamation of Interagency Support for Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) Investigations Between UK and US Law Enforcement, signed at the US Embassy on 30 August 2018, a far-reaching agreement for US and UK law

enforcement to share intelligence to enhance our knowledge of, and response to FGM.

Inspector Allen Davis, Metropolitan Police lead for Operation Limelight, said:

Harmful practices such as FGM and forced marriage are global issues that have considerable local impact.

Operation Limelight seeks to raise awareness of harmful practices, identify vulnerability and safeguard those at risk and I am extremely pleased that it has been recognised by the World Class Policing Awards.