

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY PANEL

DATE	05/01/2023
REPORT OF	Janice Spencer, Director of Children's Services
SUBJECT	Modern Slavery Update
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIM

Having effective and robust arrangements in place to identify Modern Slavery, support potential victims and assist in bringing perpetrators to justice through multi agency enforcement activity is paramount. Tackling Modern Slavery Supports the Council Plan priorities, namely people should: -

- enjoying good health and wellbeing
- live in a safe environment and have their say about things that are important to them and participate fully in their communities.

The Council, as a responsible authority has duties under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to take an active role in reducing crime and disorder in the local area as part of the statutory Community Safety Partnership arrangements.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sets out the current Partnership approach to tackling Modern Slavery across North East Lincolnshire and provides an update on progress.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

It is requested that the Communities Scrutiny Panel consider the content of this report and make any recommendations for consideration to the North East Lincolnshire Modern Slavery Partnership which links into the wider Safer arrangements of the Community Safety Partnership, Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safeguarding Adults Board.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

1.1 What is Modern Slavery?

1.2 As set out in the Local Government Association "Modern Slavery A Council Guide", Modern slavery is an umbrella term, used to describe human trafficking, slavery, servitude and forced labour. Someone is in slavery if they are:

- forced to work through, coercion, or mental or physical threat
- owned or controlled by an 'employer', usually through mental or physical abuse or the threat of abuse
- dehumanised, treated as a commodity or bought and sold as 'property'
- physically constrained or have restrictions placed on their freedom.

1.3 Servitude is similar to slavery, in that a person is under an obligation to provide a

service which is imposed on them, but there is no element of ownership.

1.4 Forced work is defined as ‘work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the person has not offered themselves voluntarily and is typically found in a number of different industries including manufacturing, food processing, agriculture and hospitality.

1.5 Human trafficking is when men, women and children are moved and forced into exploitation. The movement could be international but also within the country, from one city to another or even just a few streets. A person is a victim of human trafficking even if they haven’t yet been exploited but have been moved for the purposes of exploitation.

There are several broad categories of exploitation linked to human trafficking, which can include:

- Sexual exploitation
- Labour exploitation
- Domestic Servitude
- Debt bondage
- Child related crimes such as child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation
- Criminal exploitation – forced begging, illegal drug cultivation, organised theft, and related benefit frauds
- Forced or sham marriage

1.6 **The Legislation**

1.7 In March 2015 the Government enacted the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The Act consolidated and clarified existing modern slavery and human trafficking offences and increased the maximum sentences for committing these offences to disrupt activities and bring to justice modern slavery perpetrators.

1.8 **The Council’s Role**

1.9 Councils can play a key role in tackling modern slavery. Their role can be separated into four distinct areas:-

- Identification and referral of victims
- Supporting victims
- Community safety and disruption activities
- Ensuring that the supply chains Councils procure from are free from modern slavery.

1.10 The Act includes a number of provisions for local authorities. Section 52 of the Act places a duty to identify and refer modern slavery child victims and consenting adult victims through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in order that they receive appropriate support.

1.11 Section 43 of the Act states that specified public authorities (including Councils) have a duty to cooperate to strengthen safeguards against modern slavery by

protecting vulnerable people from exploitation and reducing the harm caused by modern slavery through improved victim identification and enforcement support.

1.12 **National Referral Mechanism (NRM)**

1.13 The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the framework by which potential victims of human trafficking and modern slavery are identified and supported. The NRM was introduced in 2009 to meet some of the UK's obligations under the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings.

1.14 The aim of the NRM is to:-

- lift victims out of situations of exploitation
- provide them with a short period of intensive support and specialist care
- put them in a position where they can begin to rebuild their lives with increased resilience against future exploitation

1.15 Potential victims can be referred in to the NRM by a wide range of 'first responders' (including the Police, Local Authorities and certain non-governmental organisations). The case will be managed by one of the 'competent authorities' (either the National Crime Agency or the Home Office). The competent authority will first decide if there are 'reasonable grounds' to believe that the person is a victim (the 'reasonable grounds' decision) and, if the decision is positive, will proceed to investigate the case and decide whether, on the balance of probabilities, the person is a victim (the 'conclusive grounds' decision).

1.16 The competent authority aims to make reasonable grounds decisions within 5 days of receiving a referral and emergency support is available for potential victims who would otherwise be destitute during this time. A positive reasonable grounds decision entitles the potential victim to a 'reflection and recovery' period for a minimum of 45 days, and until the conclusive grounds decision is made. During this time, adult victims receive accommodation and subsistence, specialist support including counselling, access to physical and mental health care, and signposting to services including legal aid. Child victims are supported by local authorities under their statutory safeguarding duties.

1.17 When the conclusive grounds decision is made, those adults with a positive decision receive a further 14 days of 'move-on' support, and those with a negative decision receive support for a further 2 days. This 'move-on' support period is in place to help victims to safely transition out of NRM support.

1.18 In cases where a potential victim has been identified but they do not want to be referred into the NRM, a duty exists to notify the Home Office so as a wider intelligence picture can still be established.

1.19 **Our Local Arrangements**

1.20 Locally, a multi-agency Modern Slavery Group chaired by the Local Authority was established in 2018 and works in partnership to prevent and disrupt modern slavery and engage with communities and local organisations to raise awareness.

1.21 **Local Strategy**

1.22 Based on the cross-government strategy for modern slavery whose framework has been successfully used in both serious and organised crime and counter terrorism, the strategy follows the “4 P” components that shapes our approach providing clear direction with key objectives including:

1.23 ***Pursue***

- Refresh of the local problem profile.
- Community consultation to provide insight of current awareness.
- Targeted intelligence led multi-agency enforcement activity.
- Develop stronger links with local communities to raise awareness and increase reporting of suspicious activity

1.24 ***Prevent***

- Continue targeted communications campaigns to further raise awareness and engagement amongst partners, businesses, and local communities.
- Promote successful enforcement activity to further raise awareness of Modern Slavery.
- Deliver targeted training to help raise awareness and promote victim identification.
- Identify those at greatest risk to prevent and reduce harm.

1.25 ***Protect***

- Develop a local process for determining swift “conclusive grounds decisions” in relation to child National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referrals to mitigate further risk from harm.
- Establish Humber wide housing protocols for victims at risk of being re-exploited.
- Ensure appropriate partnership mechanisms are in place to safeguard potential victims, including appropriate accommodation provision

1.26 ***Prepare***

- Develop the Modern Slavery Champions network to assist to raise awareness and be a point of contact within their organisation.
- Consider victim feedback to enhance support provide
- Continue to develop a network of ‘first responders’
- Ensure the North East Lincolnshire Modern Slavery Partnership is accountable and has effective governance and leadership arrangements in place.

1.27 **Governance**

1.28 The implementation of this strategy and action plan continues to be overseen by the Modern Slavery Partnership. Progress and performance is monitored

by the Safer arrangements of the North East Lincolnshire Community Safety Partnership, Safeguarding Children Partnership & Safeguarding Adults Board with additional scrutiny & assurance provided by North East Lincolnshire Council Scrutiny & Leadership arrangements.

1.29 **Humber-Wide Arrangements**

1.30 The Local partnership is also linked to the Humber Modern Slavery Partnership, to ensure that best practice is shared and opportunities for wider Humber collaboration are maximised.

1.31 **Prevalence**

1.32 Information supplied by Humberside Police for North East Lincolnshire for the period April 2021-March 2022 indicates that were 42 intelligence submissions and 35 offences recorded. Criminal exploitation remains the highest recorded offence accounting for 23 of the 35 offences recorded.

1.33 There have also been 24 referrals into the National Referral Mechanism (10 adults and 14 Children) with 19 identified as being criminally exploited, primarily linked to County Lines activity.

1.34 **PROGRESS**

1.35 **Establishment of Operational Group** – During 2022 a multi-agency Operational Group was established to share information and utilise local intelligence to provide appropriate and proportionate responses to modern slavery concerns. The Operational Group took part in Operation Aidant which visited 6 nail bars and 4 car washes across the North East Lincolnshire area. This helped to reinforce to businesses that local agencies will act upon intelligence and undertake speculative visits and wider enforcement activity where necessary.

1.36 **Online Communications** - A number of online communication campaigns were undertaken during the 2021-22 period to raise awareness of child exploitation and county lines. The online communications campaigns were received positively and enabled opportunities to answer questions from concerned residents. They had an overall online reach of over 180,000 with over 5,700 engagements. Targeted online communications remain an integral part of the strategy to raise awareness around Modern Slavery and how to report.

1.37 **Links to Safeguarding Children** – Practitioners undertaking work to protect children from Child Criminal Exploitation are well versed on the links to Modern Slavery and the requirement to report. Arrangements to support young people identified as victims of modern slavery are well established with support mechanisms in place via the GRAFT (Gaining Respect and Finding Trust) Team who support young people identified as being exploited and the wider Multi Agency Child Exploitation mechanism (MACE).

- 1.38 The multi-agency GRAFT Project and MACE arrangements ensure that a collaborative approach is taken to safeguard children with robust links to Humberside Police to ensure intelligence and robust enforcement action can be taken to bring perpetrators to justice.
- 1.39 The local National Referral Mechanism (NRM) process for making conclusive grounds decisions around young people is now also well established. The creation of a Modern Slavery Co-ordinator within children services has strengthened this response, with weekly NRM consultation panels to provide advice and guidance in a timely way and to ensure close collaboration with the Humberside Police Modern Slavery Team.
- 1.40 The local Child NRM Panel has made 25 conclusive grounds decisions enabling swifter support for children and young people.
- 1.41 **Procurement & Supply Chains** - A joint NELC and ICB (former CCG) statement on modern slavery and human trafficking is in place and ensures as part of all procurement processes, information will be requested from all providers to set out evidence of their plans and arrangements to prevent slavery in their activities and supply chain." All Modern Slavery statements within tendering processes are checked for compliance.
- 1.42 **NEXT STEPS**
- 1.43 **Training & Awareness** – Raising awareness around Modern Slavery is paramount so a targeted approach to training & awareness remains in place. An audit is currently being undertaken to identify remaining gaps around training and awareness within agencies so remaining staff can receive training appropriate to their role
- 1.44 **Problem Profile** – Whilst Humberside Police have developed a local problem profile, it is evident that there remains opportunity to develop the profile further to incorporate a wider range of information and intelligence to build up a richer picture. This profile will be developed in 2023 and include wider partner input and community consultation.
- 1.45 **Modern Slavery Champions** – Similar to the arrangements for Preventing Violent Extremism, individuals undertaking the Modern Slavery training are asked to consider being a Champion within their service/organisation. This involves receiving additional training when appropriate and being the conduit for distributing key messages as and when they need to be communicated. To date we have 57 Modern Slavery Champions across several organisations.

1.46 **CONCLUSION**

- 1.47 The partnership arrangements within North East Lincolnshire to tackle and raise awareness around Modern Slavery remain robust and strong. This is recognised by the Humber Modern Slavery Partnership, with North East Lincolnshire acknowledged as a forerunner across Humberside.
- 1.48 Local arrangements will continue to develop, utilising best practice in order to better identify potential victims and undertake coordinated activity moving forward.

2. **RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

- 2.1 The Partnership place-based approach to tackle the issue of Modern Slavery linked into the wider Humber Modern Slavery Partnership enables risks to be mitigated and opportunities for collaboration and best practice to be considered.
- 2.2 Modern Slavery is recorded on the Council's Risk Register and has a residual profile risk rating of *medium* with a controlled profile risk rating of *low* due to the range of control measures and actions in place to manage the risk.
- 2.3 The Council and wider Partnership approach to Modern Slavery also meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.

3. **REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATION**

- 3.1 There are positive reputational implications for the Council resulting from a proactive approach to tackling modern slavery. It will reassure members of the community and other stakeholders that the Council understands its statutory duty and is proactively taking steps to make the area safer in accordance with our strategic aims. Key communication messages around Modern Slavery form part of the overall strategy to raise awareness and identify potential victims and perpetrators.

4. **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no financial considerations in relation to the current partnership approach to Modern Slavery. All current victims are supported via the National Referral Mechanism and current partnership activity can be managed within existing resources.

5 **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 As mentioned earlier in the report, a range of practitioners and partners undertake work to protect children from Modern Slavery and Child Exploitation with strong identification and established support mechanisms in place. This enables a robust approach to safeguard and support our most vulnerable children.

6 CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There is no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from this report.

7 MONITORING COMMENTS

7.1 In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

8 WARD IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Modern Slavery has the potential to impact all wards across North East Lincolnshire

9 BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None

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