

What steps should the Council take to ensure it fully meets the responsibilities under the Modern Slavery Act 2015?

A Report by the Transport, Economy & Communities (TEC) Select Committee

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From the Inquiry Chairman

On behalf of the inquiry team, I would like to pass on our sincere thanks to those who gave up their valuable time to talk to us and provided us with a greater insight into this important area of work.

Councils have a key role to play in tackling and modern slavery, including identifying and supporting victims and working in partnership locally to do so.

We are reassured by the efforts that we, and our partners in Buckinghamshire are putting into this policy area and their dedication to drive this important work forward.

During the course of the inquiry into the Council's duty, we were very pleased to hear of the significant development that funding had been secured to set up a pilot victim service in Buckinghamshire, provided by RAHAB, which will start in March 2018.

In the light of this positive step, we have agreed that the planned second stage of our inquiry is no longer necessary and that a review in six months, as part of the Select Committee process, would provide a robust review of the pilot service.

This report summarises our findings and makes eight key recommendations which focus on the steps that Buckinghamshire County Council should take to demonstrate its moral commitment and leadership in this key policy area and its compliance with its duties under the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

-Steven Lambert 23rd January 2018



Methodology

- See scope in [Appendix 1](#).

We held two evidence sessions and heard from:

- Head of Community Wellbeing and Lead Officer for Community Safety
- Cabinet Member for Community Engagement
- The Heads of Safeguarding at BCC (Adults and Children)
- A BCC Social Worker working in the Swan Unit (CSE)
- Written evidence from BCC Executive Directors
- Thames Valley Police(Investigations lead, and Anti Slavery Coordinator)
- Manager of Rahab, (Victim Service in Reading).

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking. Traffickers and slave drivers coerce, deceive and force individuals against their will into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.’ (Modern Slavery Strategy, 2014)



Modern Slavery; Its Closer than you think and the Council has a key role to play.

The Council's strategic priority of “safeguarding our vulnerable” is a commitment to protecting slavery victims as vulnerable people (regardless of legal duties). This crime is, and will be, affecting vulnerable residents and children in Buckinghamshire.

- This film developed by the Independent Anti Slavery Commissioner explains the Council role: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=>
- This film, developed by the Home Office, includes information on how to spot potential victims, how they may be exploited and what can be done to help free the UK from Modern Slavery.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jv1H_fAoOG4
- The LGA released [guidance](#) for Councils on 21st December 2017. We had completed our evidence gathering and complied our recommendations by this time. We were reassured that the recommendations we made were in line with those highlighted within this guidance (see appendices).



Local Context

The police told us that:

- It is **estimated there are 2500** victims in the Thames Valley.
- However, only 24 NRM referrals for this year – significant underestimate.
- No understanding of prevalence in Buckinghamshire specifically.
- Ages of victims range from 17-59.
- Last year in Thames Valley, **the majority of victims were UK nationals**. Nationalities include Vietnamese, Nigerian, Gambian, Sudanese, Eritrean, Polish, Ugandan, Cameroon, British, Chinese, Ivory Coast
- Predominant exploitation types are Labour Exploitation, Forced Criminality and Sexual Exploitation.

The role of the local authority is identification and reporting of victims; training and awareness to improve identification; submission of intelligence to police; support for victims - adults and children, tackling perpetrators as part of a multi-agency approach (LGA and the Independent Anti Slavery Commissioner).



National Context:

- The Home Office estimate between 10,000-13,000 victims of modern slavery nationally, but likely to be a significant underestimate.

Modern Slavery Act 2015. Section 52 imposes obligations on local authorities.

- Identified as one of the specified 'First Responders'. This imposes a ['duty to notify'](#) the Secretary of State if there are reasonable grounds to believe a person may be a victim of trafficking or slavery.
- If the individual is happy to be identified you make a referral to the [National Referral Mechanism](#) (NRM), which records victims and provides them with access to tailored support and protection for a set time. Children are mandatory referrals.
- If the individual wishes to remain anonymous you should complete a duty to notify form (MS1 form), providing intelligence.

Care Act 2014 : Modern slavery included as a category of abuse. Duties include e.g. duty to promote well-being including protection from abuse and neglect (section 1) and to carry out s.42(1) safeguarding enquiry.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act places a duty on local authorities to consider crime and community safety in all its decisions.



Summary of Findings 1

Strengths

- ✓ The Adult Exploitation Strategy 2017-2020 (includes modern slavery) was agreed on 2nd November 2017 by the Safer Stronger Bucks Partnership Board.
- ✓ An Anti Slavery Partnership Network was established in May 2017, combined with Adult Exploitation network in Oct 2017.
- ✓ Funding secured for a victim service to be piloted in Bucks, to start in March 2018.
- ✓ Approx. 375 people trained (multi-agency).
- ✓ Attendance at a LGA conference on Modern Slavery in January, demonstrated that proactive partnership activity in Buckinghamshire is progressing at a good pace.



Summary of Findings 2

Weaknesses

- ✘ Lack of a corporate modern slavery statement/statement of intention
- ✘ Lack of widespread awareness amongst staff about how to identify and report victims of modern slavery (only 64 out of 375 were BCC staff).
- ✘ Lack of accessible (website) information, guidance for Council staff on the duties, their role and the process for referring victims.
- ✘ Lack of dedicated leads and corporate data collection.
- ✘ Current lack of a victim service and understanding of prevalence.



Key Findings: Council Strategy and Plans 1

Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act:

- Deals with transparency in supply chains and requires “commercial organisations” with an annual turnover of more than £36m to publish an annual “slavery and human trafficking statement”.
- S54 does not currently apply to the public bodies. It is, however, good practice for public bodies to publish statements. TVP is producing one, other local authorities, have done so (see appendices for examples).
- The Council has not yet published a corporate modern slavery statement. However, the procurement process asks suppliers to identify how they meet the S54 requirements.



Key Findings: Council Strategy and Plans 2

Section 17 of Crime and Disorder Act (CDA):

- The Head of Community Safety told us that Business Units Plans should identify risks of modern slavery within their services and how these will be managed.
- This would fall under the obligation for all Council services to consider modern slavery under the duty imposed under S17 CDA.
- Current Business Unit plans do not explicitly identify risks of modern slavery within the service and how they will be managed. The Head of Safeguarding told us that their plans would incorporate specific reference in the 2018/19 plans.
- TEE told us, they have an action in their service outcomes, in relation to the prevent agenda, to: “Enhance crime awareness ...by providing training ...” which could be considered for modern slavery.



Recommendations – 1&2

The Committee felt that the Council should follow good practice and produce a statement. The statement should express the Council's attitude to modern slavery offences and set out expectations of Council staff and those with whom we do business.

Recommendation 1: That the Council prepares a statement on anti-slavery and human trafficking which should be published on the Council's website and reviewed annually. Examples and guidance can be found in the appendices to this report.

To support this statement;

Recommendation 2: That Business Unit Plans should explicitly identify any potential risk of slavery and human trafficking and the steps that will be taken to manage that risk.



Key Findings: Training and Awareness 1

The committee heard that:

- There is a lack of awareness of the role of Council staff in meeting the S52 duty.
- 375 multi-agency people trained - only 64 of these were BCC staff.
- Home Office resources are available to raise awareness within local authorities.
- Adult safeguarding have received no referrals this year and only had 1 last year; National Crime Agency figures for NRM and MS1 referrals over the last two years shows BCC have not submitted any MS1 forms, and only 1 NRM referral.
- There is currently no guidance on the Council intranet for staff about modern slavery, how to identify and report victims, nor links to the NRM/MS1 forms.



Key Findings: Training and Awareness 2

- All of our witnesses emphasised how safeguarding teams are crucial to identification of victims within the Council.
- The Heads of Safeguarding and the manager of Rahab told us that the current lack of awareness means that;
 - a) victims may not be recorded through the NRM (e.g. often the case with children, who are automatically supported via statutory safeguarding criteria);
 - b) there is a risk that adult victims who don't meet statutory criteria are overlooked.
- Unless staff identify them as a modern slavery victim, then opportunities to signpost them to relevant help will not be initiated and NRM/MS1 forms will not be completed.

Council staff play a crucial role in identifying signs of slavery in their everyday work. We need to foster professional curiosity to encourage the identification and reporting of victims.



Recommendations – 3,4,5

Recommendation 3: That the Council should develop a training strategy for modern slavery and roll out training across the organisation. The strategy should:

- Identify who should be trained, for whom training should be mandatory and what the training needs are (e.g. first responder, frontline staff)
- Prioritise training for frontline staff in safeguarding teams and first responders.
- Identify the best approach to training (e.g. face to face, online, e- learning, awareness campaigns).
- Identify other key stakeholders/partners who should receive the training (the committee's further inquiry work may inform this).

Recommendation 4: That an internal awareness raising campaign for all Members and Council staff be initiated imminently, using resources available to local authorities on the government website (information can be found in the appendices).

Recommendation 5: That the Council should introduce a clear process and guidance for completing the national referral mechanism form and notification of potential victims of modern slavery form MS1. This guidance and links to the referral forms should be accessible on the Council's website.



Key Finding: Referrals and Data Collection 1

The Committee heard that:

- The Council does not currently have an agreed approach to recording of data of the NRM/MS1 referrals it makes as an organisation.
- Reading Borough Council collect data internally enabling them to monitor sources of referrals, and identify training needs through lack of referrals from service areas.
- Importantly, it is a record of those who do not agree to the NRM that require recording (should complete MS1 form), to better understand prevalence in Reading – a key issue e.g. Jan 16 - Nov 17 the NRM data suggested 6 victims but Rahab had 135 in Reading.
- This data is required to inform the level of service required going forward (Adults safeguarding and Rahab).



Key Finding: Referrals and Data Collection 2

- In Reading, dedicated first responders are responsible for collecting data on referrals made in their service areas. Heads of Service are the designated single points of contact and first responders for modern slavery.
- Thames Valley Police have single points of contact across the force who are dedicated first responders, and fully trained in completing NRM referrals.
- The benefits of this approach are; it promotes joined up working; key liaison points; easy to identify who to train when someone leaves (Rahab).
- The Council does not currently have an agreed approach to first responders (Community Safety).



Recommendations – 6,7

Recommendation 6: We recommend that the Council should agree an appropriate approach to designated single points of contact for modern slavery and first responders across the whole of the Council. First responders should receive mandatory training on their role and the process for completing the NRM referral process.

Recommendation 7: We recommend that an agreed data collection process should be introduced to record internally, the referrals made to and by the Council. Dedicated lead officers/first responders should be responsible for collecting this data, which should be collated centrally by adults safeguarding.



Key Findings – 4 Victim Support Service 1

The Heads of Community Safety and Safeguarding told us that:

- There is currently no victim service for Modern Slavery or Exploitation.
- This was a significant hindrance from the police perspective.
- If we are to successfully support victims, encourage them to go through the NRM and identify offenders we need to have a service tailored around the victim and their complex needs. (Adults Safeguarding, Rahab).
- In the later stages of our inquiry we were informed that the Council's Community Safety team had successfully secured funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner to pilot a victim service in Bucks which will start in March 2018 (which will be delivered by Rahab).



Key Findings – 4 Victim Support Service 2

The Head of Community Safety and the Manager of Rahab (who will be delivering the service) told us that:

- The main focus of the pilot service will be to shape the service and level required by identifying potential prevalence.
- A victim service will play a significant role in ensuring that potential victims do not slip through the net (from all witnesses).
- Adults safeguarding will be able to identify people who do not meet their statutory criteria and refer them into the victim service.
- Adults safeguarding, unlike children's, do not offer long term support, their role is to signpost people.

Whilst we spoke a lot about the good practice of Reading, we recognise that Bucks have developed their response in the absence of a pilot victim service up until this point.



Recommendation – 8

The Committee recognise the significant value of having a dedicated victim support service, and we are really pleased that there will be a pilot service running in Buckinghamshire from March 2018.

We were told that the focus of the pilot will include establishing prevalence, identifying the need, shape and demand for a service going forward.

In light of this positive development, the Committee agreed that the second stage of the inquiry was no longer necessary. We will review the progress of the pilot service and the level of demand (prevalence) after 6 months.

Recommendation 8: We recommend that the pilot Victim Support service should be evaluated at 6 months and a report presented to the TEC Select Committee on the progress and outcomes of the pilot service.



Other Observations

Members believe that strategies for modern slavery should not be separate for children and adults. Whilst there is a joint protocol that seeks to set out how boards will work together, it was recognised by children's safeguarding that they need to improve joint working with the adults strategy (in particular around Transitions; children's to adults services).

We felt that a test purchase exercise may be appropriate once the victim service is established, to test the council's processes and pathways from a victim perspective to ensure they are fit for purpose.

A key issue highlighted was missing children and unaccompanied asylum seekers. TVP are starting a pilot in Oxfordshire to look at this issue.

In Hampshire, Children's safeguarding complete an age assessment and trafficking assessment at the start, to identify if individuals are victims of modern slavery. This could be replicated in Bucks.

Raising awareness of Modern Slavery within schools and education providers, who are well placed to identify potential child victims would be valuable.



Appendices

1. [Inquiry Scope](#)
2. [Evidence Session 12th September Webcast](#)
3. [LGA Modern Slavery Information and Guidance for Local Authorities](#)

4. **Modern Slavery statements – Recommendations 1 and 2:**
 - [Guidance on producing Modern Slavery Statements.](#)
 - [East Lindsey City Council](#)
 - [Nottingham City Council](#)
 - [Yodel](#)
 - [Marks and Spencer](#)

5. **Recommendations 3 and 4**
 - [Home Office Guidance for Modern Slavery](#)
 - [Home Office Awareness](#)
 - [Salvation Army Toolkit](#)

6. **Recommendation 5:**
 - [National Crime Agency Figures for NRM and MS1](#)
 - [MS1 form](#)
 - [National Referral Mechanism referral form](#)

