



# Buckinghamshire County Council Select Committee

Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee

## Report to the Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee

**Title:** Modern Slavery

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**Cabinet Member sign-off:** Martin Phillips

### Purpose of Agenda Item

This report provides the Committee with an overview of the national and local context for modern slavery and duties and implications for Buckinghamshire arising from the Modern Slavery Act. Our specific duties are to respond to requests made by the Anti-Slavery Commissioner, to notify about potential victims, and to adhere to guidance on identification and support for victims. This report informs the Committee of the work that has been undertaken locally and further work planned.

### Background

Modern Slavery deprives people of their most basic human rights and freedoms, poses a huge risk to their health and wellbeing and is a major source of revenue for serious organised crime.

The definition for Modern Slavery is broad and comprehensive: '*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*)

There are enormous challenges with measuring slavery and it is widely accepted as a hidden crime. Victims are often unable to report their suffering or may feel too traumatised to do so even when the opportunity arises. Modern slavery is also believed to be one of the world's largest international crime industries, with massive associated costs to the taxpayer.

The Modern Slavery Act became law in March 2015. The Act encompasses a range of measures including several to increase identification of, and provide support to, victims. The Government has also published a Modern Slavery Strategy. In July 2015, the UK appointed Kevin Hyland OBE to be



the first Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. In October 2015 the Commissioner published a two-year strategic plan to combat modern slavery.

## Summary

Prevalence: Measuring the extent of modern slavery in the UK is extremely difficult. The two most reliable sources of data to measure modern slavery in the UK are the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and the annual strategic assessment published by the National Crime Agency (NCA). It is important to note that until July 2015, data only covers victims of human trafficking and not all referrals into the NRM result in individuals being positively identified as victims.

In 2014, 2,340 potential victims were referred to the NRM, a 34% increase from 2013. Potential victims of trafficking were reported to originate from 96 countries. The most common country of origin for both adult and child potential victims was Albania (20% and 17% respectively). The UK was the sixth most common country of origin overall, highlighting that internal trafficking remains a major issue. The below table tracks the types of exploitation identified; (*Report of the Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group on Modern Slavery, 2015*)

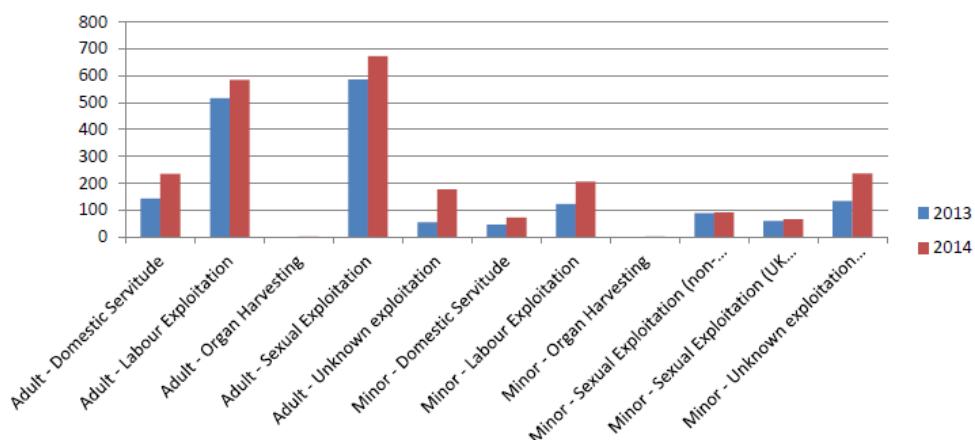


Fig 3: Comparison of NRM referrals by exploitation type in 2013 and 2014

However, we also know that the NRM accounts for a very small proportion of the likely number of victims of modern slavery, because it is a hidden crime. In 2013, the Home Office Chief Scientific Advisor estimated there were between 10,000-13,000 potential victims of slavery in the UK.

Within Buckinghamshire, we have extremely limited data to gauge the level of modern slavery. During the period of October-December 2014, 8 referrals were made by Thames Valley Police to the NRM (*Human trafficking-NRM statistics October-December 2014, 2015*). Locally to Buckinghamshire there have been recent high profile cases that included domestic servitude, sexual exploitation and labour exploitation. Using the national figures from the Chief Scientific Advisor, and a basic population size for the county, we can estimate that there will be approximately 100 victims of modern slavery in Buckinghamshire.

Cost: The International Labour Organization estimates that the total illegal profits obtained from the use of forced labour worldwide amount to over US \$150 billion per year. Human trafficking for



sexual exploitation, just one form of modern slavery, is estimated to cost the UK at least £890 million each year (*Modern Slavery Strategy, 2014*).

National Policy Context: Local action on modern slavery is guided by national legislation and strategies. The Modern Slavery Act was enacted in 2015. Measures include;

- Ensuring perpetrators receive suitable punishments for their crimes, face tough asset confiscation regimes and are included in lifetime offender management programmes.
- Providing improved support to victims by ensuring assets from offenders compensate victims, special measures to support victims in the criminal justice process, and ensuring victims are not criminalised if they have committed offences when enslaved.
- Providing statutory guidance on victim identification/services and creating a statutory duty for public bodies to notify the NCA about potential victims
- Introducing child advocates to support child victims and a ‘presumption of age’ clause to ensure victims are treated as children, where it is presumed they are
- Requiring large commercial organisations to report annually on the steps they have taken to ensure the prevention of modern slavery in their supply chains.

The statutory duty to notify the Secretary of State (Home Office) about potential victims of modern slavery came into force in November 2015. The duty is intended to build a more comprehensive picture of modern slavery, and applies to a number of statutory bodies including local authorities. Notification can be provided through the NRM, or (if the victim does not want to use the NRM) by submitting a report which may be anonymised. In all cases relating to children, a full NRM referral should be completed. Potential victims under 18 years of age should also be referred to the relevant Local Authority children’s services and the relevant police force should be informed and involved.

Prior to the commencement of the Act, the Government published its Modern Slavery Strategy. The strategy adopts the principles of Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare. A substantial part of ‘Prevent’ will be taken forward by local partners including Serious & Organised Crime Partnerships and Police & Crime Commissioners. The Strategy highlights the MASH model as an example of strong partnership working to share information and safeguard. The strategy also relates to child sexual exploitation. The Salvation Army is contracted nationally to provide support and safe accommodation for extremely vulnerable victims, however all victims of modern slavery should be supported by appropriate agencies. A national communications campaign has also been launched to raise awareness of the issue.

Alongside the Government’s overarching Strategy, the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner has published a two year Strategic Plan, with two immediate aims: to see an increase in the number of victims identified and referred for support, and to see an increase in the number of prosecutions and convictions for traffickers and slave masters. The Plan is framed around the international framework to combat modern slavery (Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Partnerships). The priorities are to:

- Improve identification of victims, enhance levels of immediate and sustained support
- Improve law enforcement and criminal justice response
- Understand and promote best practice in partnership working



- Engage with the private sector to encourage supply chain transparency and combat labour exploitation
- Improve international collaboration

The priorities include ensuring training is in place for frontline staff who are likely to see potential victims through their public-facing roles, encouraging local authorities to raise awareness and improving safeguards to prevent trafficked children going missing from care. The Commissioner stresses the importance of establishing and strengthening partnerships to tackle modern slavery, promoting best practice where it exists.

**Local Policy Context:** Given the far-reaching impact of modern slavery, we know addressing this issue is strongly linked to a number of other local visions and strategies. The vision for Buckinghamshire County Council outlined in the Strategic Plan 2015-2017 is that Buckinghamshire will remain a great place to live and work with one of the strongest economies in the country. A key objective is to work with partners to continue to improve the health and wellbeing of residents. Buckinghamshire's Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2013-2016 also has a vision to promote healthier lives for everyone in Buckinghamshire. There are obvious links to the work of both the Adults and Children's Safeguarding Board, and we know that the core aim of Buckinghamshire Children & Young People's Partnership is 'Together...Keeping Children Safe'.

The Safer & Stronger Bucks Partnership Board produces an annual Safer Bucks Plan, which is the Community Safety Agreement for Buckinghamshire. It outlines how the responsible authorities, such as the police, district and county councils, health and fire service; will work together to tackle crime and disorder. Its aim is to continue to make Buckinghamshire one of the safest places to live in the country. One of the four priorities for 2016-2017 is to 'tackle the exploitation and victimisation of vulnerable people, including radicalisation, modern slavery and child sexual exploitation'. It recognises that the hidden and unknown nature of these crimes is the biggest challenge for agencies that are looking to help people. The harm caused to victims is often significant and long lasting and the demand on services is great.

### **Key issues**

**Governance:** Appropriate governance arrangements for this agenda are critical. During 2015, work was undertaken to develop a joint protocol between the Safer & Stronger Bucks Partnership Board (SSBPB), Health & Wellbeing Board, Safeguarding Boards, Adults and Children's JET panels and the Corporate Parenting Panel. The protocol sets out principles around how these partnerships will work effectively together and defined specific governance arrangements for areas of thematic cross over, such as modern slavery. It has been agreed that strategic oversight of the modern slavery agenda within Buckinghamshire should reside with the SSBPB.

This work ran alongside a self-assessment undertaken by the SSBPB to address concerns raised in the summary of the Casey report on Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, following the Inquiry by Professor Jay on child sexual exploitation. The Casey report provided the SSBPB an opportunity to review its processes. The learning from this can be transposed to a number of new crime areas, including modern slavery.



Research: The SSBPB has commissioned the Jill Dando Institute (University College London) to undertake research on modern slavery in Buckinghamshire. The focus of the research is to estimate the extent of modern slavery locally, and then consider what is known about offenders, victims and places, and multi-agency responses to the subject. The intention is to provide clarity for partners on where to focus resources and what to prioritise when action planning. It provides some key recommendations around generating intelligence on potential victims of modern slavery and producing a multi-agency problem profile. The research is due to be completed in May 2016.

In 2015, the Police & Crime Commissioner commissioned a number of victim services across the Thames Valley. This includes a two year pilot Independent Trauma Advisory (ITA) Service. The purpose of the service is to provide emotional and practical support for individuals identified as experiencing exploitation/slavery. The schemes are running in Oxford (run by Elmore Community Services) and Reading (entitled 'Rahab' and run by The Mustard Tree). Findings from the pilot can be used to develop future services for victims. However at present, (other than for child sexual exploitation), we do not offer any local specialised services for victims of modern slavery.

Action Planning: The SSBPB undertook a simple stocktake of board members' current activity on the modern slavery agenda. This focused on the level of understanding by staff, appropriate training, support services for victims, partnership working and communication campaigns. The responses were varied across partners. Some teams have received training from Thames Valley Police and external agencies (such as the Human Trafficking Foundation), but there is agreement that more training is required. There is evidence of local problem-solving groups being formed by partners. This is extremely positive because it demonstrates its priority focus, and that practical steps can be taken to uncover any hidden crime. However there has been limited work with the local community to raise awareness of the issue. The SSBPB will use these findings to agree a delivery plan for modern slavery.

As a local authority we must ensure we are compliant with the duties and responsibilities placed on us by the Modern Slavery Act. Our specific duties are to respond to requests made by the Anti-Slavery Commissioner (Section 43), to notify about potential victims (Section 52) and to adhere to guidance on identification of, and support for victims (Part 5). In order to achieve these duties our implied actions should include appropriate training and communication for staff and the local community. Within its governance role, the SSBPB's implied actions should include ensuring other statutory bodies are providing notification of potential victims, and ensuring our partnership work supports victims, and prevents and disrupts offenders.

### **Resource implications**

There is currently no additional funding available from central government to support the implementation of the Modern Slavery Act or priority areas highlighted within the Strategy or Anti-Slavery Commissioners Strategic Plan. It is likely any training and communication campaign will follow a similar format to those undertaken for the Prevent Duty in the Counter Terrorism & Security Act 2015, and to tackle child sexual exploitation, with comparable financial and resource implications. Additionally the requirements to identify and support victims are likely to have a cost implication.



Within the Council's Community Safety budget for 2016-2017, all available funding has been allocated for domestic abuse services and there is no allocated budget for modern slavery. Funding will need to be diverted from existing programmes to meet this need if it is deemed a priority. There may be funding available from partnership resources but this involves a bidding process, and there is no guarantee we will be successful.

However, we also know it is imperative to tackle this issue. The recent high profile court cases for child sexual exploitation demonstrate the risks to victims and to our community if we do not seek to uncover and address hidden crime which often targets the most vulnerable members of our society. We also know there is a huge reputational risk for the County Council if we do not respond to this issue.

### **Next steps**

A delivery plan will be drafted and presented to the SSBPB in October 2016. The plan will incorporate findings from the stocktake, and research recently undertaken, along with nationally agreed priorities. It will focus upon training, raising awareness, support to victims, and preventing and disrupting offenders. The delivery plan will be written in consultation with the relevant Safeguarding Boards and Health & Wellbeing Board.

We will use the research presented by the Jill Dando Institute to ensure we prioritise activity within this plan. As yet, we do not know the extent of support required for victims, and types of slavery likely in Buckinghamshire in future. We do know that recent publicised cases of modern slavery have included domestic servitude in London, labour exploitation by travelling communities in Bedfordshire, and sexual exploitation in Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire with strong links to gangs and drug usage. The research will help focus our activity upon those who are most likely to be victims and offenders and in the most probable locations within our community.

There may be requirements for newly commissioned services as work progresses. Additionally, future case law may change our response to modern slavery. We will need to strengthen our relationships with new partners, and develop suitable local structures. For example the Government believes local Serious & Organised Crime Partnership arrangements will play an important role in co-ordinating work around modern slavery, so we must build appropriate links here. As our work develops and our understanding of the issue increases, our delivery plan will need to evolve accordingly.

