

# Modern Slavery Strategy Cheshire

2017-19





## Foreword

### I am proud to present our new Modern Slavery Strategy on behalf of Cheshire Police and our four local Councils

Across the region, we recognise the reality that trafficking, slavery and exploitation is not a problem of the past. It is happening right here, right now - and we will not tolerate it. The time has come for concerted, co-ordinated action to ensure that children and adults are protected.

The purpose of this document is to set out our strategic approach in how we intend to continue to develop the good work already happening locally. Aligning with our Police and Crime Plan 2016-21, it will help us to work collectively and collaboratively to prevent, identify, disrupt, stop and eradicate modern slavery in all its forms, and will result in our boroughs being an even safer and happier place to live.



**David Parr**  
Chair of the Protecting Vulnerable People Board

## What is modern slavery

**Modern slavery can and does have a devastating and lasting impact on victims, children and families in countries all over the world, including our own.**

It is by its nature a largely hidden crime, but the Government recently estimated that between 10,000 and 13,000 people are currently being subjected to some form of modern slavery in the UK - and, although some may be more vulnerable to exploitation than others, it is an issue unrestricted by age, gender or background.

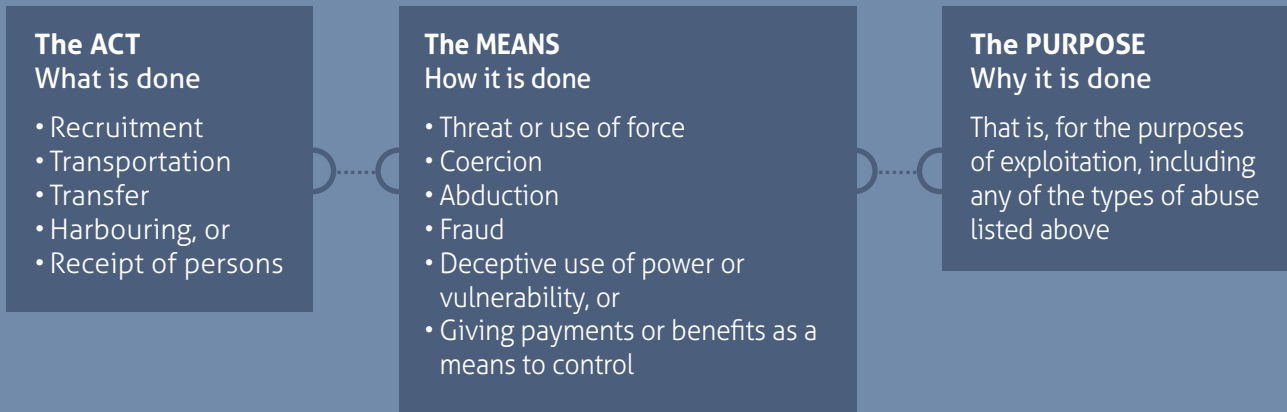
The term 'Modern slavery' captures a whole range of types of exploitation, many of which occur together.

These include, but are not limited to:

- **Trafficking**  
involving the transportation, recruitment, receipt or harbouring of people for purposes of exploitation (sexual, forced labour, slavery or organ removal) using immoral means, including violence, threats, deception, coercion, abduction or bribery. Trafficking is not to be confused with smuggling, which is initiated with the wilful agreement of a person actively seeking to move without detection, so does not involve coercion or threats
- **Sexual exploitation**  
including sexual abuse, forced prostitution and the production of child pornography
- **Forced labour**  
with victims being forced to work long hours for little or no pay, in poor conditions and under threat of violence to them and/or their families
- **Domestic servitude**  
where a victim is forced to work in a private household, usually performing domestic chores and childcare duties
- **Child slavery**  
In addition to forced child labour, this can involve child trafficking, forced marriage and child domestic servitude
- **Criminal exploitation**  
The exploitation of a person to commit a crime or combination of crimes, such as shoplifting, cannabis cultivation, drug trafficking and other similar activities.

Common to all of the above will be the abuse of power or vulnerability to coerce people into a life of exploitation, servitude and inhumane treatment for the personal or financial gain of others. An important distinction between children and adults, however, is in the issue of consent to their treatment. In cases of child slavery, consent is irrelevant. It is a consideration in identifying adult, however - but is also irrelevant if the adult has been deceived or coerced

The internationally recognised definition for human trafficking is the Palermo Protocol definition. **In order to prove an offence of human trafficking, three elements need to be established:**



In the case of children (those under 18 years old), the 'means' element does not need to be proved; only the Act and the Purpose. Currently, the most commonly identified area of trafficking across our boroughs relates to Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). We already have strategies to address CSE and Children Missing From Home and Care - available at: [www.proceduresonline.com/pancheshire](http://www.proceduresonline.com/pancheshire) - both of which have very strong links to child trafficking and, consequently, the priority areas for all three of these issues are related. There are also connections to gang-related activity, with people being criminally exploited for example, and Cheshire has undertaken to support a number of unaccompanied asylum seekers in recent months. We need to remain vigilant to the safeguarding risks that many of these and others present

## In the United Kingdom

In the UK in 2015 **3,266 people** were identified as potential victims of trafficking

This is a **40%** increase on 2014

**53%** of those victims were female

**47%** of victims were male

The 3,266 potential victims identified originated from 103 different countries

**The six most prevalent were:**

- Albania
- Vietnam
- Nigeria
- Romania
- The United Kingdom
- Poland

# Modern Slavery

**42%** of reported trafficking victims were victims of sexual exploitation

**24%** of reported domestic servitude victims were children

**36%** were subjected to forced labour

Modern slavery has a huge economic impact, not just social

It was recently estimated to cost the UK over £890m a year

## How it can happen

Perpetrators of modern slavery constantly adapt their tactics to evade detection. They will target vulnerable, hidden or marginalised groups, with many victims coming from backgrounds that make them reluctant to seek help from authorities. These can include; unaccompanied, internally displaced children; children accompanied by an adult who is not a relative or legal guardian; young women and girls; former victims of modern slavery or trafficking; adults who are vulnerable due to substance misuse issues, debts (in their country of origin or as a result of their illegal migration); mental health problems or learning disabilities; homelessness, or other factors

It is important to note - as statistics on the previous page illustrate - that victims of modern slavery originate from the UK and overseas. However, there are relatively common methods often adopted for those who are trafficked and exploited from abroad

Typically, a person trafficked and exploited from overseas comes from a situation of poverty and lack of opportunity and gets an offer of an apparently good job, with good working conditions, in the UK. Often, the victim has to take a loan from an agent to pay for the journey and towards 'recruitment fees.' When the person arrives in Britain, the job and the conditions they are faced with bear no resemblance to those they were promised. Their passport is taken away and they are told that it will only be returned once their loan is repaid. However, given the victim's lack of control or clarity around how much, or even if, they will be paid, this represents an indeterminate amount of time

Violence and threats - against the victim, their children and their family at home - are common practice, and traffickers will often know and target the community they come from and know their families.

## The Modern Slavery Act 2015

The Modern Slavery Act, the first of its kind in Europe, received Royal Assent in March 2015. The Act consolidates slavery and trafficking offences and introduces tougher penalties and sentencing rules. Changes will ensure that the National Crime Agency, the police and other law enforcement agencies have the power they need to pursue, disrupt and bring to justice those engaged in human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced labour. It also introduced measures to enhance the protection of victims.

A new Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner has been appointed whose role it is to encourage good practice in the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of slavery and human trafficking offences, as well as the identification of victims of those offences. This new legislation applies to the whole of the UK.

### The Act

- Enables the Secretary of State to actively regulate agencies in relation to the identification and support of victims - a new **duty to notify** authorities of concerns, for example
- Allows for the introduction of independent child trafficking advocates
- Introduces new civil restriction orders, including a new reparation order to encourage the courts to compensate victims where assets are confiscated from perpetrators
- Brings in a new statutory defence for victims who are compelled to commit crimes
- and requires businesses over a certain size and threshold to disclose, annually, what action they have taken to ensure there is no modern slavery in the business or supply chain.

The Modern Slavery Act also extends the scope of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) framework. The NRM exists to identify potential victims, ensure that they receive appropriate and effective support and make it easier for the agencies involved to co-operate and share information. Further details are outlined in the 'How to report suspicions' section on the final page of this document - along with details of the anonymous duty to notify (MS1) form should an adult victim be unwilling to be identified and provide their personal details

Indicators of trafficking and slavery are contained within the form and there is no minimum requirement for justifying a referral, so staff are encouraged to do so. All completed NRM forms are sent to the UK Human Trafficking Centre, which will assess and make a decision on whether an individual is a victim of human trafficking or modern slavery

The powers introduced by the new Modern Slavery Act in no way contradict or supersede those already available through existing legislation, such as the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, which should also be considered in conjunction with it.

## What is already happening across Cheshire

A number of victims and perpetrators of modern slavery have already been identified across our boroughs, reinforcing the sad reality that modern slavery exists here, today, just as it does in others parts of the UK.

It is commonly accepted that a majority of crimes of modern slavery are unidentified, under-reported and there are very significant barriers to victims identifying themselves, including a fear of reprisal. Regionally, a number of targeted operations have been conducted in communities and settings which, based on intelligence, are deemed to be areas of higher risk, in order to identify victims and perpetrators of crimes under the Modern Slavery Act

The challenges of identification, even in these operations, can be considerable; including where individuals are being forced and controlled, as opposed to being subjected to poor or illegal working conditions.

The following operations have been police led, but we have adopted a partnership approach with support from the community as well as a wide variety of professionals, including experts from housing, social care, safeguarding, health and the fire service.

## Operation Argo

Operation Argo was initiated following community intelligence about a group of Lithuanian nationals who were living in houses of multiple occupancy, which were in a poor state. They were employed by a Lithuanian national who would collect them and drive them to locations around Chester, where they would then have to deliver Charity bags. They would be left in those locations, regardless of the weather, until they were collected some time later and paid a minimal amount of money. The jobs were advertised on Lithuanian web pages on the internet. The Operation focused on rescuing the victims, but agencies struggled to provide them with support as they wanted to work in the UK and didn't identify themselves as victims.

## Sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation is a growing issue and is happening all over the UK. Cheshire is no exception and law enforcement agencies are seeing that this is particularly prevalent within the Romanian community, with organised crime groups setting up 'pop-up' brothels. Some traffickers pay for short-term, private rented accommodation, including hotels and holiday homes, through websites such as booking.com, Airbnb or similar; while others use low-cost housing as a base, rotating women in and out of the premises. Adult websites such as Adult Works or Viva Street are used to advertise the services of the women, and those women are usually accompanied by a minder, often described as a partner of one of the women. In Cheshire, the ages of women involved in this kind of prostitution has varied between 19 and 44.

## Child sexual exploitation

A young person in receipt of care services was recently identified as a victim of Child Sexual Exploitation, when it became apparent that a perpetrator had arranged for a taxi to pick her up from her placement and take her to his house. This also constituted trafficking as she was missing from home and coerced into entering the property of an adult.



## Operation Libertus

### Phase 1 - Car washes

A large scale operation was launched in June 2016 focusing on the unregulated carwash industry. Over 60 premises were visited and 164 people spoken to. Many workers claimed to be paid under the national minimum wage, and almost all were foreign nationals. A number of illegal workers were removed from premises and a car wash operated within a supermarket car park in the Congleton area was closed down by their Compliance Manager. None of the workers spoken to identified themselves as victims and much of the information acquired from the operation related to national minimum wage issues. Some of the non-EU nationals provided information of how they had been smuggled into the UK in the back of lorries.

### Phase 2 - Nail bars

In October 2016 six premises were visited in Chester and Ellesmere Port with partners from adult safeguarding, children's safeguarding, housing, immigration and health. Most of the workers told professionals that they were employed on a trial basis, which is why they did not have contracts and were not provided with payslips. One child was rescued and a Public Protection Order was initiated. He was placed under the custody of children's social care but, unfortunately, later went missing. Two adults were detained under the Immigration Act for overstaying their visas, but there was insufficient evidence to arrest anyone for Modern Slavery offences.



In a small number of cases, individuals have been identified as victims and have been referred and supported through the NRM. This has included both adults and children who have been subject to a range of types of modern slavery. Sometimes victims have been identified only after being arrested for a crime that they had been forced into. One young man of Vietnamese origin, who was transported from a nearby city each evening and forced to work on a cannabis farm through the night, was never told, and did not know, where he was living or working. There is increasing recognition within police operations and criminal justice services of the potential that people involved in crimes may be victims, and they are offered the necessary support

These operations not only illustrate that modern slavery remains a very real issue today, but reiterate our strong desire to make life better for all of those affected. A wide range of agencies have, and will continue to be, on hand to protect and support these extremely vulnerable individuals; and operational plans for both children's and adult services will follow this Strategy to ensure that our response is as effective as possible.

These must, and will, include key performance measures so that we can monitor our progress against the priorities identified within this Strategy; retain what works well, but allow ourselves the flexibility to make adjustments in any areas that we need to.





## Our vision

For everyone in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington to live a safe and happy life free from slavery and exploitation in all its forms.

## Priorities

Our vision will be delivered through four priorities:

Embed the Modern Slavery Act into mainstream activity

Improve awareness, understanding and identification

Develop a positive protection and support system for victims

Hold perpetrators to account and promote appropriate prosecutions



## Priority 1

### Embed the Modern Slavery Act into mainstream activity

#### Why?

Modern slavery involves the abuse and coercion of vulnerable people. As such, it constitutes a safeguarding issue and, learning from our work around CSE, Forced Marriage, FGM and radicalisation, agencies across Cheshire are well placed to tackle it effectively. However, it presents a great number of overlapping issues and crimes which require a strong, coherent partnership response. It is essential that all of us across the public sector recognise that protecting people from slavery and exploitation is everybody's business, and part of our day job as professionals who work continuously to safeguard and support those at risk.

#### How?

Secure the strategic commitment of all relevant local agencies to protect victims and prosecute perpetrators.

Maximise links between the policies and strategies that deal with exploitation, homelessness and other relevant issues.

Ensure that information is shared, both locally and nationally, through the NRM and other channels for effective co-ordination and services.

## Priority 2

### Improve awareness, understanding and identification

#### Why?

Modern slavery is a hidden and greatly under-reported crime. The overwhelming majority, if not all, victims are extremely vulnerable, scared and feel powerless to speak out, so it is up to professionals and members of the community to identify and protect them. This can only happen if we understand that modern slavery is happening, recognise the signs and know what to do when we see them.

#### How?

Raise awareness across our communities, and faith and voluntary sectors, to help them identify where there might be issues and ensure that they know how to report.

Train our staff to recognise the signs of modern slavery and know what to do about it, including a consistent use of the National Referral Mechanisms.

Maintain an awareness of risks and put measures in place to mitigate them appropriately and effectively.

## Priority 3

### Develop a positive protection and support system for adult and child victims

#### Why?

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) grants a minimum of 45-day reflection and recovery period for victims of human trafficking or modern slavery. However, longer term support is extremely inconsistent locally - as it is across the UK - and the vulnerabilities of victims are often re-exploited as soon as protection and support interventions come to an end. It is therefore crucial that we create a system which enables not only effective but sustainable support for everyone affected, understanding the particular risks associated with them.

#### How?

Ensure there are clear and robust safeguarding policies in place to identify and support those affected.

Establish a consistent and co-ordinated operational partnership approach to deal effectively with reports and disclosures as they arise, with consideration of the potential impact of public service intervention.

Develop a comprehensive range of services and other options capable of effectively supporting people throughout their recovery.

## Priority 4

### Hold perpetrators to account and promote appropriate prosecutions

#### Why?

Modern slavery can and does have a devastating and lasting impact on victims, children and families. Those who perpetrate it must be held to account, in order to protect those who are being harmed and to reduce the risk of future exploitation.

#### How?

Ensure that partners are able to share information about perpetrators and victims as effectively as possible.

Provide victims with practical and emotional support throughout the criminal justice process.

Actively monitor prosecution rates, including appropriate benchmarks from other similar areas, to highlight themes and trends and ensure that we are resolute in our disruption of offenders.

## Signs of human trafficking and modern slavery

Identification of victims is crucially important for a variety of reasons. **As the case studies on Page 4 illustrate, large scale organised activity is resulting in the exploitation of people living and working in our area.** Some of those people, and undoubtedly many more than we have been able to identify, are also victims of modern slavery; but most do not consider themselves to be victims. It is imperative that we do not allow this abusive behaviour to be thought of as acceptable - or even normal - by them, simply because others, knowing how vulnerable they are, have used it to their own advantage.

There is no definitive list of signs or factors that will bring this form of exploitation to light, but it is useful to be aware of some general indicators which could be present.

**A person, or people, may:**

- Be confined or limited to a particular home, workplace or other area
- Not have the appropriate clothing for the work they are being expected to do
- Have injuries consistent with abuse or other controlling measures
- Appear undernourished or particularly unkempt
- Have limited or no contact with friends and family
- Appear in fear of their employer, or of authority - or display signs of psychological trauma, such as PTSD
- Have limited or no access to bathroom facilities
- Be unable to provide common documentation such as a passport or payslip in the context of trying to access products or services
- Be a child who is missing from home
- Be involved in gang and/or drug-related activity
- Have migrated to the country to seek asylum
- Be homeless
- It may also/alternatively be that a property is a cause for concern; potentially overcrowded; curtains always drawn; letterbox sealed; has CCTV installed; or restricts access

All of the above must be considered against the circumstances that a person might reasonably expect of the situation at that time. Some or none of the above may be present, but suspicions should be reported.

## How to report suspicions

There is a **legal duty on certain agencies** (listed below and known as 'first responders') **to report victims of modern slavery** to the Secretary of State. Cases involving children must **always** be referred through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), which is in place to help support potential victims. Adult victims should always be offered - but are not obliged to accept - support via an NRM referral, which can only be made with their signed consent. However, the **duty to notify** the Home Office still applies if adult victims are unwilling to provide their details, and this should be done through an MS1 form.

**NRM forms (separate forms for children and adults)**

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-trafficking-victims-referral-and-assessment-forms](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-trafficking-victims-referral-and-assessment-forms)

### MS1 form

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/duty-to-notify-the-home-office-of-potential-victims-of-modern-slavery](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/duty-to-notify-the-home-office-of-potential-victims-of-modern-slavery)

These forms only apply to the 'first responder' public authorities detailed in section 52 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, which include local authorities, the police, Salvation Army and NSPCC.

[www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/about-us/what-we-do/specialist-capabilities/uk-human-trafficking-centre/national-referral-mechanism](http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/about-us/what-we-do/specialist-capabilities/uk-human-trafficking-centre/national-referral-mechanism). However, other agencies and the public are still encouraged to report suspicions and can do so by calling the **Modern Slavery Helpline** on **0800 0121 700**, the **Police** on **101** (999 in an emergency) or **Crimestoppers** anonymously on **0800 555 111**.

Residential providers and foster carers will receive specific support around trafficking for individual children and young people to reduce risks and protect them from harm.

## Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in audio, braille, large print or other formats. If you would like a copy in a different format, in another language or require a BSL interpreter, please email us at

**[equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)**

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