STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Stockport Council Modern Slavery Statement 2026/27

Preventing, protecting and detecting through service delivery, procurement and contract management





Ambitious Stockport, creating opportunities *for everyone*

Introduction

Scope of the modern slavery statement

Stockport Council's 2026/27 Modern Slavery Statement sets out the steps the council is taking, and plans to take, to reduce the risk of modern slavery and human trafficking in its services, businesses and supply chains. Its primary focus is procurement, contract management and supply chain assurance. It also explains relevant awareness-raising, reporting and safeguarding arrangements where these support the council's overall approach to identifying and responding to risk.

The statement should therefore be read alongside, rather than as a substitute for, the council's wider safeguarding and partnership activity on modern slavery. That wider work seeks to protect colleagues, residents and communities from exploitation and to ensure concerns are identified and responded to through appropriate safeguarding and reporting routes.

In July 2025, the Stockport Safeguarding Adults and Stockport Safeguarding Children Partnerships published their Modern Slavery Strategy on the council's website. The strategy builds on previous partnership work and continues to promote training, workforce development and multi-agency awareness across Stockport.

What is modern slavery?

Modern slavery is a serious and often hidden crime in which people are exploited for another person's gain. It can include slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, labour abuse in informal or gig economy settings, criminal exploitation, online-enabled control, debt bondage, cuckooing[1] and human trafficking. Although the forms of exploitation vary, the common feature is that a person is used, or intended to be used, without respect for their rights, freedom or safety.

Perpetrators may be private individuals, people operating small businesses or members of organised criminal networks. For adult victims, exploitation will usually involve coercion such as threats, force, deception, debt, dependency or abuse of power. Children and vulnerable people may be exploited even where coercion is not immediately visible. Modern slavery can involve movement across borders, but people can also be exploited within their own country or local community.

Types of Modern Slavery

Modern slavery takes many different forms. Prevalence of different types of modern slavery will vary by region and change over time. In the UK exploitation is commonly grouped into several broad categories, summarised below. In each case the victim may or may not have been moved (trafficked), either from another country, or within the UK, to be exploited.

<u>Labour exploitation</u>

Labour exploitation usually involves unacceptably low pay, poor working conditions or excessive wage deductions. Modern slavery however involves more than poor pay and conditions. In order to constitute modern slavery, there will also be some form of coercion, meaning that victims cannot freely leave for other employment or exercise choice over their own situation. Where the perpetrator is taking advantage of a child or vulnerable person, however, an offence can be committed even without the element of coercion.

[1] Cuckooing describes a situation where criminals control another person's home without their consent for the purpose of enabling criminal activity.

Domestic servitude
Domestic servitude typically involves victims working in a private family home where they are ill-treated, humiliated, subjected to unbearable conditions or working hours or made to work for little or no pay. The victim could be used in this way by their own family members or partner. Again, it is difficult for them to leave, for example, because of threats, the perpetrator holding their passport or using a position of power over the victim.

Sexual exploitation
Victims are coerced into sex work or sexually abusive situations. This includes child sexual exploitation. Victims may be brought to the UK on the promise of legitimate employment, and they may be moved around the UK to be sexually exploited. In some cases, they may know they will be involved in sex work but are forced into a type or frequency they did not agree to. Victims are usually female but can be male.

Criminal exploitation
This is exploitation of a person to commit a crime for someone else's gain. For example, victims may be coerced into shoplifting, pick-pocketing, a sham marriage, benefit fraud, begging or drug cultivation (e.g., cannabis farming). Cases involving 'County lines' activity and child criminal exploitation remain a significant national and local concern. 'County lines' relates to drug gangs in large cities expanding their reach to small towns. Gangs will often exploit young and other vulnerable individuals by getting them to transport substances. Mobile phone 'lines' are used to communicate drug orders.

Organ harvesting
Forced removal and trafficking of human organs is another type of modern slavery that occurs globally. The first, and to date only, UK case relating to intended organ harvesting resulted in three people receiving substantial prison sentences in May 2023 for conspiring to traffic a man into the UK to remove his kidney.

Modern Slavery Act 2015
Under UK legislation, modern slavery offences can attract a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. Section 52 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 places a duty on specified public authorities, including councils, to notify the Home Office when they encounter an individual they believe may be a victim of slavery or human trafficking. Notification routes, including the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), are explained in Appendix 2 and in more detail on the Government website.

NRM or Duty to Notify referrals should not replace safeguarding action. Council staff should continue to follow local safeguarding and reporting processes wherever there are concerns that someone may be at risk of harm. These local routes are also set out in Appendix 2.

Section 54 of the act relates to modern slavery statements. It requires commercial organisations with an annual turnover of £36 million or more to publish and review annual statements setting out the steps they are taking, or intend to take, to ensure that modern slavery is not linked to their business or supply chains.

Immigration and Asylum Bill 2026[2]
Stockport Council, as part of its commitment to transparency, ethical procurement and continuous improvement, has taken the decision to publish annual modern slavery statements. There is, however, no legislative requirement to do so – councils and other public sector organisations are not currently required to publish such statements.

At the time of writing, Parliament is considering the Immigration and Asylum Bill 2026. If passed in its current form, it would extend requirements relating to modern slavery statements to public authorities above a budget threshold that would be confirmed at a later stage (but is likely to include most councils). It would also introduce a financial penalties regime for non-compliance.

There is currently no confirmed timetable for the bill to become law. However, if it is passed, this may happen in late 2026 or early 2027. Councils are unlikely to be required to publish compliant modern slavery statements immediately. The first legally required statements may therefore be due in late 2027 or early 2028.

The council will therefore continue to monitor the progress of the bill and its requirements closely, to ensure future versions of its modern slavery statement are compliant with any new legislation.

Current trends relating to modern slavery

National context
The latest available Home Office National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and Duty to Notify Statistics cover the year from 1st July 2025 to 30th June 2026. During this period, 25,373 potential victims of modern slavery were referred to the Home Office, the most referrals in a year since the NRM began (and is a 5% increase on the 24,108 referrals in the 12 months to the end of March 2026).

- UK nationals were the most commonly referred nationality, accounting for 22% (5,548) of all referrals.
- The next most commonly referred nationalities were Eritrean (13%; 3,220) and Somali (11%; 2,741).
- Where age was known, 70% of potential victims were adults and 30% were aged 17 or under.
- And 74% of referrals related to males, 26% to females.
- Overall, victims were most commonly referred for labour exploitation (38% of all referrals). Almost half of the adult referrals related to labour exploitation. Criminal exploitation, however, was the most common type of exploitation relating to referrals of under 17s (48%).
- 'County lines'[3] accounted for 8% (1,994) of referrals and 76% of these involved male children.
- Around 82% of referrals relating to non-UK nationals involved adults. By contrast, 72% of referrals relating to UK nationals involved people aged 17 or under.

[2] Immigration and Asylum Bill 2026

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Stockport context
Recorded modern slavery-related activity remains relatively low in Stockport. Between April 2025 and March 2026, Greater Manchester Police (GMP) logged 28 modern slavery enquiries relating to Stockport, compared with 36 in 2024/25 and 38 in 2023/24. These 28 enquiries accounted for 5.1% of the 550 modern slavery enquiries recorded across Greater Manchester, although the originating district was not recorded in 122 cases. The Stockport enquiries were categorised as follows:

- Criminal exploitation, including one case of cannabis cultivation: 18 enquiries, or 64.3%.
- Labour exploitation (5; 17.9%).
- Sexual exploitation (3; 10.7%).
- Domestic servitude (1; 3.6%).
- Unknown (1; 3.6%).

For this purpose, an enquiry means any crime, incident, intelligence log or referral relating to potential modern slavery.

Age and gender information for alleged victims where this was recorded is summarised below.

- 19 (67.9%) were males (10 adult; 9 under 18).
- 9 (32.1%) were female (8 adult; 1 under 18).

The available nationality information showed that:

- 17 (60.7%) were British (including all 10 of the alleged victims aged under 18).
- 3 (10.7%) were Pakistani.
- 8 (28.6%) were other nationalities.

The local pattern broadly reflects the national picture in one important respect: British alleged victims were more likely to be children, while all alleged non-British victims recorded in the Stockport enquiries were adults.

The predominant local theme was involvement in drug dealing, drug delivery or county lines-related exploitation. Other forms of criminal exploitation featured less frequently.

No currently known instances have been identified of modern slavery activity being linked to apparently legitimate businesses, including businesses connected to the council's supply chains. However, intelligence gaps remain in relation to forced labour across Greater Manchester. This means the absence of identified cases should not be interpreted as an absence of risk. The council and STAR Procurement should therefore continue to use proportionate due diligence, contract management and supplier engagement to identify and respond to potential concerns.

Stockport Council's Modern Slavery Statement 2026/27

Purpose of the statement

Stockport Council is committed to preventing modern slavery and human trafficking in its corporate activities and to ensuring that its supply chains are free from modern slavery and human trafficking. In September 2018, the council publicly signalled this commitment through a council motion, carried with cross-party support, that condemned the practice of modern slavery. The motion also committed to signing up to a Modern Slavery Charter, to ensure that the council has robust procedures in place to guard against supporting modern slavery. One of the commitments set out in the charter was to produce a Stockport Council Modern Slavery Statement and to review it annually to ensure it remains current. The council's first modern slavery statement was published in April 2019 and it has been reviewed and updated approximately annually since then.

This is the seventh iteration of the council's modern slavery statement. It will run from October 2026 to September 2027. It summarises activity undertaken since 1st October 2025 aimed at ensuring council services, businesses and supply chains do not have links to modern slavery. It also proposes activity for implementation up to 30th September 2027 to mitigate the risk of such links.

Stockport Council's responsibilities and related actions

This statement covers the activities of Stockport Council, which is a unitary authority providing all local government services within the borough of Stockport. The council manages a wide range of services, delivered both directly by the council and through external contractors. It has a large and diverse supply chain. A key partner in this work is STAR Procurement, the shared procurement service for Stockport, Knowsley, Rochdale, St Helens, Tameside and Trafford Councils. The council's main services are listed in Appendix 3.

Responsibility

The council (working with STAR Procurement), has responsibilities relating to modern slavery that fall within the following broad areas of activity:

- **Defining and outlining** risks in the supply chain and in the council's wider role as a coordinator of public services and partner in safeguarding the community.
- **Prevention:** training commissioners, contract managers, staff and other public services/ community groups, issuing communications, ensuring senior management and member buy-in, issuing statements and encouraging suppliers to adopt anti-slavery statements.
- **Detection:** of non-compliance through due diligence, audit and monitoring.
- **Response:** investigating allegations and following the reporting pathway.
- **Evaluation:** through learning from investigations and the annually-updated statement.

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Review of activity set out in Stockport Council Modern Slavery Statement 2025/26
During 2025/26, Stockport Council and STAR Procurement made good progress in embedding modern slavery awareness and assurance across the organisation. Key achievements included implementation of the updated multi-agency Modern Slavery Strategy, delivery of elected member training, continued completion of CIPS ethical procurement training by STAR staff, development of a Modern Slavery Toolkit for suppliers and staff, refreshed contract management training incorporating ethical procurement principles and completion of follow-up work arising from the Internal Audit review.

The following tables summarise progress by each area of activity. Where an action has become embedded into routine practice, this is noted and the action will generally not be carried forward into future annual action plans unless further development is required.

Responsibility: Defining and outlining risks relating to modern slavery	
Actions in 2025/26 statement	**Activity undertaken since September 2025**
The 2025/26 iteration of Stockport Council's Modern Slavery Statement - Preventing, Protecting and Detecting through Procurement will be published on the council's website and promoted on the intranet when Cabinet (scheduled for 4 November 2025) has approved it.	The statement was added to the council's website on 5th November 2025.
The review of the 2024/25 iteration of the statement and the draft 2025/26 statement will be discussed at the Strategic Commissioning Group meeting on 27 October 2025. The group will maintain oversight of the delivery of the refreshed statement's action plan, including a mid-year progress report in spring 2026.	The draft statement was discussed at Strategic Commissioning Group on 27 October 2025. The group was discontinued in 2026 and has been replaced by monthly meetings between the council and STAR through the Value for Money Group. This revised governance route will provide the forum for reviewing future statements and monitoring progress.

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Responsibility: Prevention	
Actions in 2025/26 statement	**Activity undertaken since September 2025**
Continued co-delivery (with GMP) of the 'Understanding Exploitation' course during 2025/26. This covers a range of topics, including modern slavery and human trafficking. Content of the training course is updated ahead of each session to ensure the training is relevant and appropriate for staff, referencing recent local learning, case studies and changes to legislation.	These sessions cover a range of topics, including modern slavery and human trafficking. Content is normally updated prior to each session to ensure it remains current (e.g. to include recent local learning, case studies and legislative changes). The training programme was not delivered during 2026, but the content remains highly relevant to council staff, particularly in supporting awareness of emerging risks, local learning, case studies and legislative developments. More work is needed to determine how future sessions will be planned, coordinated and delivered across the council and its partners. This will involve identifying key stakeholders, agreeing responsibilities for delivery and establishing a sustainable approach to ensure the training can be delivered consistently.
Content relating to human trafficking and modern slavery will continue to be a key part of the council's complex safeguarding training offer during 2025/26. Course material continues to develop based on learning from previous sessions. Training will be co-delivered by the Adult Safeguarding Training Manager and the Adult Safeguarding Partnership Business Manager and is targeted at multi-agency practitioners and professionals across the borough.	Delivery of this course is being revised, and the content is being updated. The new presentation will be recorded and provided to all staff via Learning Pool (Stockport Council's internal online training portal).
Monitoring delivery of the multi-agency Stockport Safeguarding Partnerships Modern Slavery Strategy through quarterly meetings of the Complex Safeguarding Sub-Group. Escalation and assurance reporting to the One Stockport Safety Partnership and Safeguarding Children and Adults Partnership Executive Boards will take place as and when necessary.	The Safeguarding Children and Adult Partnerships approved an updated Modern Slavery Strategy in 2025, which has four areas of development: Prevention and awareness; Identification, referral and support for victims; Partnership and collaboration; Monitoring and evaluation. Delivery in 2025/26 included: • Awareness raising campaigns and delivering training (including through the updated presentation added to Learning Pool mentioned in relation to the action above). • Ensuring that identification, referral and support for victims is a key element of training packages and promoting referral pathways within safeguarding threshold practice guidance. • Through the Safeguarding Partnership, providing supporting intelligence of specific risk areas e.g. cuckooing.

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Responsibility: Prevention	
Actions in 2025/26 statement	**Activity undertaken since September 2025**
The first training sessions for elected members relating to modern slavery will be delivered online on 10th December 2025. An e-learning option is also being developed for those who are unable to attend the scheduled session.	The training session which took place online on 10 December 2025 was attended by 12 councillors. The e-learning option has not yet been developed.
STAR's new starters, including temporary staff, will undertake the CIPS online course on Ethical Procurement and Supply as part of their induction. All STAR staff involved in sourcing activities will complete the course annually.	Obtaining the CIPS Ethics Kitemark is completed annually, this includes all STAR staff who are involved in sourcing activities completing the CIPS online course.
STAR will refresh its in-house Modern Slavery training for all staff in 2025/26 – existing staff members as well as new recruits. Following implementation of the Procurement Act, course content is being prepared and the training is planned to roll out in late 2025/early 2026.	STAR is still exploring options for refreshing its in-house modern slavery training, this has included third party providers. A costed proposal will be submitted to STAR's Wider Leadership Team in late 2026, with this likely to be rolled out during 2027 as part of STAR's new training programme.
STAR will undertake stakeholder mapping across the council, on an ongoing basis, to identify the need for 'Back to Basics' training (which covers modern slavery issues and awareness). STAR will also provide such training as and when necessary. Course content is being prepared and the training is planned to roll out in late 2025/early 2026.	Stakeholder mapping has been updated, and is constantly being refreshed. Back to Basics training is currently under review as part of the new training programme for roll out during 2027.

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Responsibility: Prevention	
Actions in 2025/26 statement	**Activity undertaken since September 2025**
Relevant modern slavery aspects will be incorporated into STAR's 'Meet the Buyer' events. One such session has already been scheduled for January 2026 and material on modern slavery will be included within a presentation aimed at a mixed audience.	STAR's modern slavery commitment statement was presented at the Meet the Buyer event in January 2026. The presentation outlined the risks of modern slavery in supply chains and STAR's commitment to ensuring that those risks are identified, managed and appropriately addressed. The session was well received and led to contact with an individual with lived experience of modern slavery whose experiences and input may be used to strengthen future training and awareness sessions.

Responsibility: Detection	
Actions in 2025/26 statement	**Activity undertaken since September 2025**
The council's Strategic Commissioning and Contract Performance Manager and its Strategic Commissioning Group will develop and deliver Contract Management training, including an element on ethical procurement (which covers modern slavery). The focus for 2025/26 will be to make the contract management training mandatory for all commissioning and contract manager staff across the council.	Contract management training has been developed and refreshed across the organisation. The original ambition was to make the training mandatory for all commissioning and contract management staff during 2025/26. This was not achieved within the planned timeframe because of organisational process and system considerations. However, the training has been actively promoted across all STAR authorities, supporting strong engagement and accessibility for relevant staff. The training incorporates ethical procurement principles and references modern slavery considerations within the context of the Procurement Act and associated regulatory requirements. This helps ensure that commissioning and contract management staff are aware of their responsibilities in identifying and addressing ethical procurement risks. To date, 62 attendees have completed the course. Delivery was temporarily paused at the beginning of 2026 to support the successful rollout of Atamis, the new Integrated Procurement System, and to allow the training materials to be refreshed. The updated course now forms part of wider work to strengthen contract management capability across the council.

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Responsibility: Response	
Actions in 2025/26 statement	**Activity undertaken since September 2025**
STAR will refer any of its contractors identified as a cause for concern regarding modern slavery for investigation via the National Referral Mechanism. This process will be enhanced via additional staff training and through the Champion Against Modern Slavery function.	No referrals have been necessary in the reporting timeframe. Training will be part of the above actions.
STAR will develop a Modern Slavery Toolkit to better support services if modern slavery is identified within their supply chain.	The Modern Slavery Toolkit has been developed and is available online to suppliers and staff through the STAR website. Periodic checks are undertaken to ensure that the information remains current and compliant.

Responsibility: Evaluation	
Actions in 2025/26 statement	**Activity undertaken since September 2025**
As per standard Internal Audit procedure, a member of the Internal Audit team will follow up on the 2024 Modern Slavery Audit in 2025. This is to ensure that the actions, agreed by management, are in progress.	The Internal Audit team completed its follow-up review and issued the final follow-up report in November 2025. As there are no further actions to complete, this action is not proposed for inclusion in the 2026/27 action plan. The timing of any future audit will be determined through the annual review and risk assessment of the Audit Plan. If modern slavery is assessed as a significant risk, a further audit will be considered.

Activity for 2026/27

In 2026/27, rather than establishing frameworks and resources, there will be more of an emphasis on embedding them more consistently across the organisation, strengthening training and awareness activity, monitoring compliance and supplier engagement, enhancing governance arrangements and preparing for potential new statutory requirements arising from the Immigration and Asylum Bill 2026.

The table below sets out specific activity that Stockport Council and STAR Procurement will undertake up to the end of September 2027. Actions that have become embedded as normal practice are not generally repeated in the annual action plan unless further development is needed.

Area of activity	Actions proposed for October 2026 to September 2027
Defining and outlining risks relating to modern slavery	• The 2026/27 iteration of Stockport Council's Modern Slavery Statement - Preventing, protecting and detecting through service delivery, procurement and contract management, will be published on the council's website and promoted on the intranet when Cabinet (scheduled for 3 November 2026) has approved it. • Monitor the progress of the Immigration and Asylum Bill 2026 and its requirements closely, so that future versions of its modern slavery statement are compliant with any new legislation.
Prevention	• Work will be undertaken to determine how 'Understanding Exploitation' sessions will be planned, coordinated and delivered across the whole organisation, including partner agencies. This will involve identifying relevant stakeholders, agreeing responsibilities for delivery, and establishing a sustainable approach to ensure the training can be delivered consistently in the future. • Content relating to human trafficking and modern slavery will continue to be a key part of the council's complex safeguarding training offer during 2026/27. A recorded training session will be made available on Learning Pool which can be accessed by all staff, and partners via the Safeguarding Partnership website. • Monitoring delivery of the multi-agency Stockport Safeguarding Partnerships Modern Slavery Strategy through quarterly meetings of the Complex Safeguarding Sub-Group. Escalation and assurance reporting to the One Stockport Safety Partnership and Safeguarding Children and Adults Partnership Executive Boards will take place as and when necessary. • An annual training session will be provided to elected members on modern slavery (2026/27 date to be arranged). The session will be recorded and added to the elected member area of Stockport Council's internal online Learning Pool. • An e-learning session for elected members will be developed during 2026/27 and this will also be added to Learning Pool's elected member area.

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Area of activity	Actions proposed for October 2026 to September 2027
Prevention (continued)	• STAR's new starters, including temporary staff, will undertake the CIPS online course on Ethical Procurement and Supply as part of their induction. All STAR staff involved in sourcing activities will complete the course annually. The latest version of the online course, which was launched in September 2026, is compliant with the Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply's (CIPS) Corporate Ethics Kitemark. This is an internationally recognised certification awarded by CIPS to organisations that demonstrate strong ethical procurement practices, complete annual ethics training and embed CIPS' Code of Ethics into their policies and procedures. • STAR will refresh and deliver in-house modern slavery training for existing staff and new starters, with delivery during 2027. • STAR is updating its website and procurement handbook, including associated guidance and templates. The new website will be a central hub for advice, resources and training. • Modern slavery awareness will continue to form an integral part of STAR's 'Meet the Buyer' events.
Detection	• The council will continue to make contract management training available to commissioning and contract management staff. The training will include ethical procurement content, including awareness of modern slavery risks, and will be promoted to relevant staff across the council as part of wider work to strengthen contract management practice.
Response	• STAR will support the council in referring any of the council's contractors identified as a cause for concern regarding modern slavery for investigation via the National Referral Mechanism. • STAR will log instances where suppliers have policy/practice that prevents them from signing up to STAR's Modern Slavery and Responsible Procurement Statement.
Evaluation	• This seventh iteration of Stockport Council's Modern Slavery Statement will be reviewed in summer/autumn 2027 and annually thereafter. The review will consider progress against the 2026/27 action plan, changes in national and local modern slavery trends, relevant learning from safeguarding or procurement activity, and any further actions required. • Progress with delivering actions set out in the statement will be monitored through quarterly updates to the Stockport Council/STAR monthly meetings.



Cllr Mark Roberts
Leader of Stockport Council



Michael Cullen
Chief Executive, Stockport Council

Appendix 1: Potential indicators of modern slavery

Practical Guidance
In the course of employment with the council, staff may come across situations and people that cause concern. This section gives practical guidance to assist with deciding if someone may have been trafficked or is the victim of modern slavery.

Victims are trafficked worldwide, including to and within the UK. They can be forced to work in the sex trade, domestic service, forced labour, criminal activity or be exploited through the forced removal or trafficking of human organs.

There is no typical victim - sometimes victims do not understand they are being exploited and they are entitled to help. Victims are often trafficked to a country where they cannot speak the language, have travel and identity documents removed and are told that if they try to attempt an escape they or their families will be harmed. Key indicators of modern slavery or trafficking include:

- Is the person in possession of his or her own passport, identification or travel documents or are these documents in possession of someone else?
- Does the person act as if they were instructed or coached by someone else?
- Do they allow others to speak for them when spoken to directly?
- Was the person recruited for one purpose and forced to engage in some other job?
- Have transport costs been paid for by facilitators, who they must pay back through working or providing services?
- Do they receive little or no payment for their work? Is someone else in control of their wages?
- Does the victim have freedom of movement? Are they dropped off and collected from work?
- Is the person withdrawn or do they appear frightened?
- Has the person or their family been threatened with harm if they attempt to escape?
- Is the person under the impression they are bonded by debt, or in a situation of dependence?
- Has the person been physically or emotionally harmed or deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care or other life necessities?
- Can the person freely contact friends or family? Do they have limited social interaction or contact with people outside their immediate environment?

This list is not exhaustive. Remember, even if a person displays one or more of the indicators of trafficking set out above, they may not necessarily be a victim of trafficking. Often however, you may build up a picture of the person's circumstances that suggest something is not quite right – so if you have suspicions, report them.

Appendix 2: Reporting processes

This appendix sets out how professionals (including council officers) and members of the public can report suspicions regarding modern slavery or trafficking. Note that as well as the local referral processes set out below, a range of professionals (including council officers) should also make a referral into the Home Office National Referral Mechanism (described later in this appendix).

Where modern slavery or trafficking is suspected, staff should take a trauma-informed and safeguarding-led approach. They should not confront suspected perpetrators or put themselves, the potential victim or others at further risk. Immediate safety should be prioritised, concerns should be recorded clearly and the established safeguarding and reporting routes below should be followed.

Child safeguarding

If concerns involve children or young people (aged 18 or under) in any way, please report these concerns to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding and Support Hub (MASSH) using the online reporting processes available on the 'Contacting the MASSH' page on the council's website, accessible via the link below. This includes separate processes for members of the public and professionals to follow.

https://www.stockport.gov.uk/contacting-the-massh

Adult safeguarding

If no children or young people are involved and concerns relate to the exploitation of adults, you should alert the Adult Social Care Team via one of the numbers on the link below on the council's website. This also includes separate processes for members of the public and professionals.

https://www.stockport.gov.uk/report-suspected-abuse-or-neglect

Stockport Council Confidential Reporting ('Whistleblowing') Policy

Council staff may use the council's Confidential Reporting Policy (also known as the 'Whistleblowing' Policy) to report their concerns. Council staff can access the policy and reporting form through the link below on the council intranet:

https://stockportcouncil.sharepoint.com/kb/Pages/DGW-Introduction.aspx

Contracts and supply chains

If you are managing a contract on behalf of the council and you have any suspicions regarding modern slavery that relate to any organisation providing goods or services to the council (or further along the supply chain), you should review the STAR Modern Slavery Toolkit for advice and contact details on what to do next.

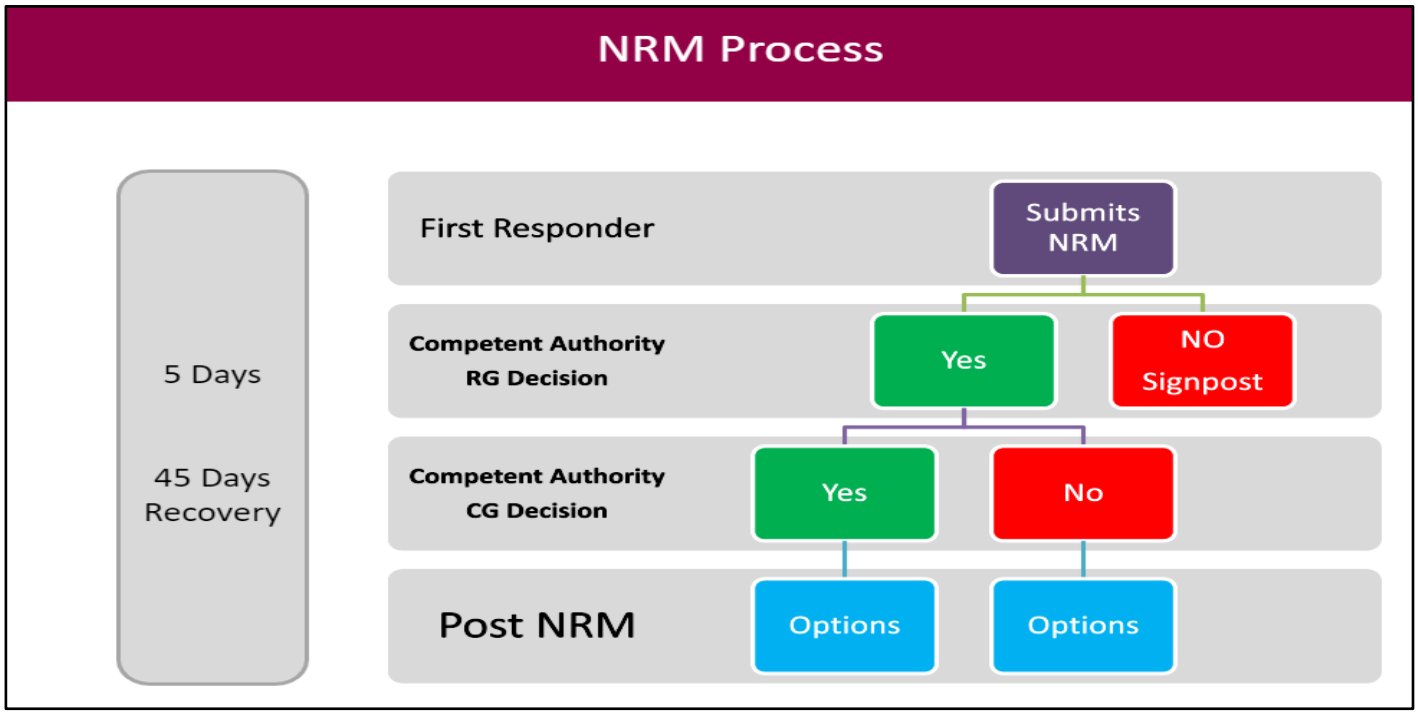
https://www.star-procurement.gov.uk/buyers/STAR-Modern-Slavery-Toolkit.aspx

National Referral Mechanism

Several organisations, known as 'First Responders', including councils, have a duty to notify the Home Office of any people they have reasonable grounds to believe may be victims of slavery or human trafficking via a referral process known as the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Council officers should therefore make a referral into the NRM where there are reasonable grounds to believe someone may be a victim of modern slavery. For adults, consent is needed for a full NRM referral; where consent is not given, a Duty to Notify report may still be required. For children, consent is not required.

Making such a referral should not replace emergency or safeguarding action. Existing safeguarding processes, however, should still be followed alongside NRM referrals, as a 'duty to notify' referral should not be relied upon to safeguard victims.

The diagram below summarises the process, journey and timescales regarding referrals to the National Referral Mechanism. This is taken from a training presentation used in 'learning circles' organised by Stockport's Safeguarding Adults Partnership. A Reasonable Grounds decision (RG) is made by the Home Office based on the initial information provided, which can lead to immediate help and support. This then moves to a more detailed investigation which leads to a Conclusive Grounds (CG) decision which would enable further support.



Note that only organisations designated as 'First Responders' are eligible to make NRM referrals. These are set out below.

- Local authorities.
- Police forces.
- Parts of the Home Office (UK Visas & Immigration; Border Force; Immigration Enforcement).
- National Crime Agency.
- Fair Work Agency (this replaced the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority in April 2026).

- Salvation Army.
- Migrant Help.
- Medaille Trust.
- Kalayaan.
- Barnardo's.
- Unseen.
- Bawso.
- New Pathways.
- Refugee Council.

The referral form can be accessed **here**.
Further guidance on the NRM process can be found **here**.

Though members of the public and organisations which are not designated 'First Responders' cannot make NRM referrals, they can report concerns to the Home Office via the Modern Slavery helpline (0800 0121 700) and should also follow the local processes set out above to alert the relevant safeguarding team.

Appendix 3: Stockport Council services

The services that Stockport Council provides are summarised below, by directorate.

Place
- Culture and Leisure.
- Development and Regeneration.
- Economy, Work and Skills.
- Estates and Asset Management.
- Highways and Transport.
- Neighbourhoods and Public Protection.
- Strategic Housing.

Children's Services
- Adoption.
- Family Help and Integration.
- Children's Social Care.
- Early Years and Neighbourhoods.
- Safeguarding and Learning.
- School Effectiveness.
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Inclusion.
- Virtual School for Children in Care.

Adult Social Services
- Adult Social Care Commissioning.
- Enablement and Recovery.
- Practice Quality and Workforce Strategy.
- Prevention and Customer Engagement.
- Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism.
- Active Recovery Communities & Home (ARCH).

Public Health
- Health Protection.
- Behaviour Change Commissioning.
- Healthy Communities.
- Physical Activity.
- Public Health Intelligence and Early Intervention/Prevention.
- Infection Control.
- Fair and Inclusive Stockport.

Corporate Support Services

- Business Intelligence.
- Business Support (Operational).
- Citizens Services.
- Strategic Commissioning and Contracts.
- Communications.
- Electoral Services.
- Financial and Management Accountancy.
- Human Resources and Occupational Development.
- Internal Audit, Risk and Insurance.
- IT.
- Legal Services.
- Revenues and Benefits.
- Strategy and Transformation.