

Stockport Safeguarding Partnerships Modern Slavery Strategy



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What do we mean by “modern slavery”?

Modern Slavery is the exploitation of individuals by other people for personal or commercial gain. The UK Modern Slavery Act (2015) encompasses slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking. It involves the use of force, deception or coercion to exploit a person to obtain some type of labour, crime or sex act.

There are several broad categories of exploitation which are encompassed within Modern Slavery:

- ▶ Labour exploitation
- ▶ Sexual exploitation; including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- ▶ Domestic servitude
- ▶ Criminal exploitation – forced begging, illegal drug cultivation, organised theft, related benefit frauds etc.
- ▶ Organ harvesting
- ▶ Forced, sham or predatory marriage
- ▶ Cuckooing

Modern Slavery can affect anyone and includes both adult and child victims. Traffickers look out for potential victims who are susceptible for a range of reasons including psychological or emotional vulnerability or economic hardship. Victims rarely come forward to

seek help because of threats, fear, language barriers, fear of criminalisation and many other reasons. The trauma caused by the perpetrators to victims means that many victims will not identify themselves as such, or ask for help and support, even in the most public of settings. This means modern slavery remains a hidden crime which often takes place in plain sight.

The internationally recognised definition for human trafficking is referred to as the “Palermo Protocol”¹. It means *the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power, or a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.*

Traditionally, we think of human trafficking as crossing international borders, however it can take place within a country, town, or a building, and does not require the victim to be moved across borders, just simply moved for the purpose of exploitation.

1. [The Protocol for human trafficking](#)

Guiding principles and the national context

Our understanding of Modern Slavery can be summarised as follows.

- ▶ Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour.
- ▶ Human trafficking consists of three basic components: action, means and purpose of exploitation. All three components must be present in an adult trafficking case; for child trafficking the 'means' component is not required.
- ▶ In human trafficking cases, exploitation can take many forms, including sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude, forced criminality and removal of organs.
- ▶ Some people may not be victims of human trafficking but still victims of modern slavery if they have been subject to slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour.
- ▶ Human trafficking is not the same as human smuggling. There are common myths about modern slavery, such as misconceptions that UK nationals cannot be victims and that a person cannot be a victim if they reject offers of help.

Modern Slavery is an ever-evolving, complex issue, that requires a multi-agency response. The latest national data on modern slavery tells us that:

- 19,125 potential victims of modern slavery were referred to the Home Office in 2024, representing a 13% increase compared to the preceding year (16,990). Of these referrals, 5,999 were for children and 13,100 were for adults¹.
- The most common exploitation category was criminal exploitation (49.9%) for all individuals².

In response to emerging risks regarding international recruitment, the Home Office implemented requirements and restrictions in April 2025, and the White Paper published in May 2025 addressed visa restrictions and an intention to close the social care visa route to overseas recruitment.

Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) is an arms-length public body sponsored by the home office that is responsible for gathering intelligence about Modern Slavery and leading investigations into crime, as well as providing specialist victim support. The Office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, created as part of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, encourages good practice in dealing with modern slavery.

Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) has been set at £6.25 million for 2024 – 2025 compared with last year's budget of £7.7 million, which is a 20% reduction. Modern Slavery helplines recorded a surge in calls and the GLAA itself saw a 400% rise in allegations since it launched the post-Brexit scheme to recruit care workers from abroad.

This strategy has been written with input from the Stockport Complex Safeguarding Sub-Group, which is part of the Safeguarding Children's Partnership and Safeguarding Adults Partnership governance. A detailed action plan will be developed to sit under this Strategy which will be monitored and delivered by the local multi-agency Complex Safeguarding Sub-Group.

1. Gov.uk official statistics: Modern slavery NRM and DtN statistics end of year summary 2024 [Modern slavery: NRM and DtN statistics, end of year summary 2024 - GOV.UK](#)
2. Gov.uk official statistics: Modern slavery NRM and DtN statistics end of year summary 2024 [Modern slavery: NRM and DtN statistics, end of year summary 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

The Stockport Context

This Strategy sets out our local understanding of how modern slavery, trafficking and exploitation affects children, young people and adults, and how our Partnerships will work together to improve the lives and experiences of those at risk.

The Safeguarding Partnership's Business Plan 2023-2026 identified strategic priorities around:

- Effective transitions from childhood to adulthood
- Understanding complex trauma and assessing risk
- Working with adults to manage risk effectively and make safeguarding personal

These safeguarding priorities underpin our commitment to safeguard children, young people and adults of Stockport. This includes victims, and potential victims of modern slavery.

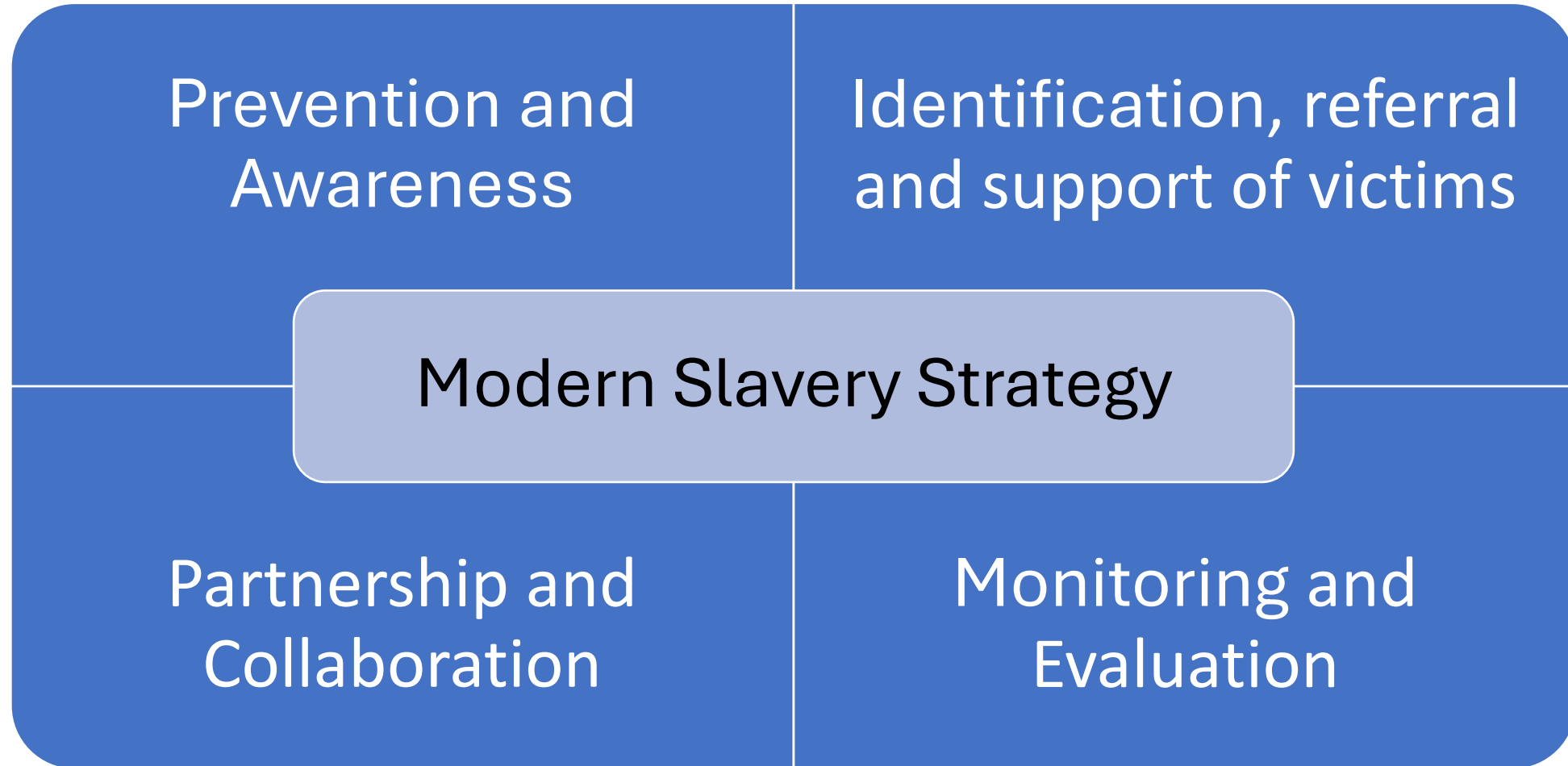
Our previous strategy (2021-2023) saw the development and delivery of multi-agency training.



Our local data tells us:

- 47% of all children and young people open to the Complex Safeguarding Team in 2023/24 were for criminal exploitation.
- Rate of 1.0 per 100,000 of Section 42 enquiries for Modern Slavery across the Northwest at December 2024 compared to 0.8 for Stockport.
- 9 contacts to the Children's Services front door in 2024/25 for Modern Slavery/Trafficking, compared to 4 in the previous year.
- 10 crimes recorded for Modern Slavery in the first 6 months of 2024.
- Over 228 cuckooing victims identified and supported between 2022 and 2024.

Our Strategy



Prevention and Awareness

Our strategy is to prevent the exploitation and modern slavery of children, young people and adults in Stockport. We are committed to proactive measures that reduce risks and raise awareness across our communities. When concerns do arise, we act swiftly and appropriately to safeguard those affected.

Why?	How?	So What?
Modern slavery has far-reaching impacts on community safety and well-being. Addressing it comprehensively helps create a safer, more cohesive community where everyone can thrive. Reporting to the SSAP Executive Board in June 2024 showed that concerns for modern slavery were not being addressed as safeguarding concerns so our data does not reflect our activity.	Launch public awareness campaigns to educate the community about modern slavery. (e.g. Anti-Slavery Day; Modern Slavery Champions)	Public awareness campaigns will educate the community about modern slavery, leading to increased vigilance and reporting.
	Deliver multi-agency training and awareness raising sessions across the safeguarding Partnership.	Practitioners will have access to high quality training and information to support front-line practice. Regular training will ensure that staff are well-equipped to handle modern slavery cases.
	Co-delivery of multi-agency learning circles between GMP and the Safeguarding Partnership.	Specialised training for key personnel will improve the quality of support and intervention.
	Work with our Provider networks to identify risks associated with overseas recruitment into the Care Sector. (GM engagement with commissioning colleagues) See Appendix A: Displaced Care Worker support pathway (June 2025)	Increased awareness of emerging risks and plans to respond where appropriate. Preventative measures will reduce the incidence of exploitation in high-risk areas and industries.

Identification, referral and support of victims

When modern slavery is identified, as a Partnership we will ensure that victims receive compassionate, timely, and tailored support. We are committed to working together to help individuals recover, rebuild their lives, and stay safe from further harm.

Why?	How?	So what?
Modern slavery often targets the most vulnerable members of society. By prioritising identification, support, and prevention, these individuals can be protected from exploitation and abuse. In 2024, the NRM reported the following referral figures: • 13,100 adult referrals, (68% compared to 65% in 2023) • 5,999 children referrals, (31% compared to 35% in 2023) Of the 20,090 reasonable grounds decisions issued in 2024, the proportion of positive reasonable grounds decisions was 40% for adults (at age of referral) and 79% for children.	Establish clear protocols for identifying potential victims of modern slavery. Train frontline staff to recognise signs of exploitation and understand referral pathways.	More victims are identified and referred to appropriate services leading to timely and effective support. This can help break the cycle of exploitation and provide victims with a pathway to recovery.
	Promote and utilise existing victim support pathways across Stockport and GM. Awareness raising and sharing information on how to access services.	Victims and potential victims are supported following any experiences of modern slavery.
	Provide immediate and long-term support for victims, including safe housing, healthcare, and legal assistance. Collaborate across local and GM organisations to offer comprehensive care and support services.	Victims receive comprehensive care, including safe housing, healthcare, and legal assistance. This holistic support helps them rebuild their lives and reduces the risk of re-victimisation.
	Implementation of GMP cuckooing protocol in frontline practice across Stockport.	Victims, and potential victims, can be moved to a place of safety with coordinated multi-agency support.

Partnership and Collaboration

We will strengthen our Partnership by fostering open communication, active engagement, and effective collaboration. Through strategic and operational information sharing, we aim to build a shared understanding that supports coordinated action and collective responsibility across all partners.

Why?	How?	So what?
Modern slavery is often linked to organised crime. Effective disruption and enforcement strategies weaken these networks, reducing their ability to operate and exploit individuals. We need to develop and support a system-wide response to the challenges posed by modern slavery.	Foster strong partnerships with local, GM, Northwest, and national agencies. Improve information sharing through Partnership governance. Improve availability of resources on the SSAP and SSCP websites.	Multi-agency collaboration will enhance the sharing of best practices and resources. A coordinated approach will ensure a more comprehensive and effective response to modern slavery.
	The Complex Safeguarding Sub-Group to develop an intelligence picture of need and activity.	Using intelligence and knowledge to support victims and to act on those perpetrating modern slavery to protect potential victims.
	Strengthen partnerships with GMP with effective information sharing and collaboration to disrupt and prosecute perpetrators.	Strengthening GMP partnerships will lead to more successful prosecutions of perpetrators. This will disrupt criminal networks and act as a deterrent to others involved in modern slavery.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Why?	How?	So what?
Monitoring and evaluation will ensure that the strategy remains effective and responsive to new challenges. A continuous improvement process will help maintain high standards of safeguarding.	Establish mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of the strategy, to include feedback on multi-agency training.	Continuous monitoring and evaluation will help to refine and improve this strategy over time. This will ensure that our approach remains effective and responsive to emerging trends.
	Regularly review and update the strategy based on feedback and emerging trends.	
	Develop shared intelligence on modern slavery in Stockport to better understand the experiences of our children, young people and adults.	The Partnerships will have a stronger insight into local, regional and national activity and trends, meaning services can be developed in response to emerging trends.
	Participate in audit and scrutiny events including: • GMCA children's complex safeguarding peer review • Multi-agency audit activity	The Partnerships will receive assurance on operational delivery across the borough. Any practice developments will be evidence-based meaning children and adult experienced improved services based on what we know we need to deliver better.

Governance and Accountability

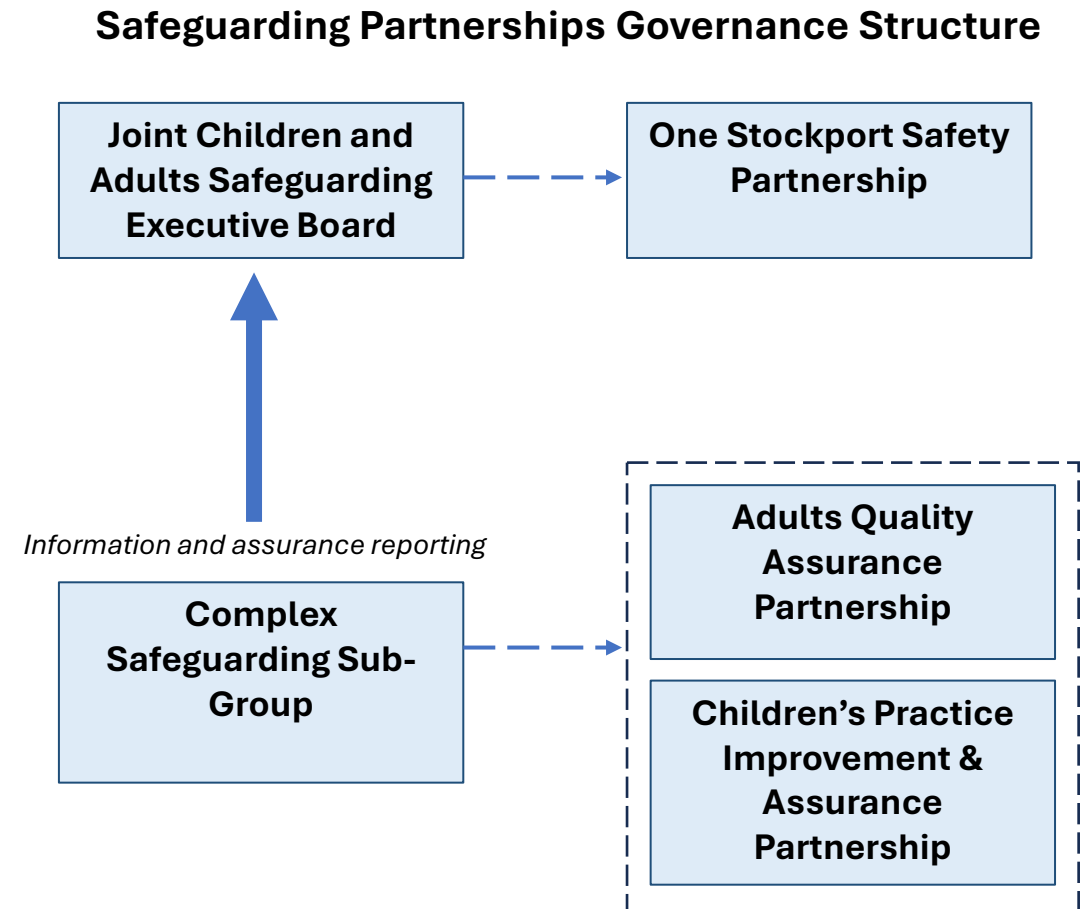
The governance of this Strategy will sit with the Stockport Joint Children and Adults Safeguarding Executive Board.

This strategy will be delivered by partners of the Stockport Safeguarding Children's Partnership and Stockport Safeguarding Adults Partnership and reported through the Complex Safeguarding Sub-Group with escalation and assurance reporting up to the Joint Safeguarding Executive Board as required. Information on how this strategy is being delivered will also be shared with the One Stockport Safety Partnership. This strategy will be reviewed and updated accordingly to include any actions or priorities that emerge through our work.

The Complex Safeguarding sub-group will share information for assurance to the Children's and Adults Quality Assurance forums as required. Any updates provided will be reflected in our multi-agency training offer.

To deliver on this strategy, the Complex Safeguarding sub-group will have a three-year operational action plan to measure progress against the priorities of prevention and awareness; identification, referral and support of victims; partnership and collaboration; and monitoring and evaluation. All partners will be responsible for implementation and delivery of the plan and providing updates and evidence of impact for their delivery.

This strategy should be read alongside the Stockport Child Exploitation Strategy 2025-2027 which sets out the work taking place to address the exploitation of children and young people, which includes Modern Slavery.



Support for those in need

If you have suspicions regarding modern slavery or trafficking you should report them.

For **concerns involving children or young people (aged 18 or under)** in any way, contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding and Support Hub (MASSH) using the online reporting form:

<https://www.stockport.gov.uk/contacting-the-massh> or by phoning **0161 217 6028**.

You must also make a referral to Barnardo's Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship Service by phoning **0800 043 4303**.

If your **concerns relate to the exploitation of adults**, you should contact the Adult Social Care Team by phoning **0161 217 6029**.

Should someone be in immediate danger always alert the police by phoning 999.

Support is available and there are leaflets in multiple languages available on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-victims-of-human-trafficking#history>

Free confidential support and advice for all victims is available from Greater Manchester Victims Services by calling **0161 200 1950** or visiting www.gmvictims.org.uk (specifically for Modern Slavery support visit [ModernSlaverySupport](#))

For those in immediate danger where police are alerted – GMP will follow their procedures and act to protect any victim of modern slavery.

Responding as a system

Where concerns are identified for potential victims, it is important that the right system partners are involved and included at the right time.

Children and Adult Social Care will receive safeguarding referrals for potential victims where there are safeguarding concerns for the individuals. Appropriate and proportionate safeguarding pathways should then be followed, ensuring the right partners are included.

To support our partners in identifying concerns and providing the appropriate response, the Joint Safeguarding Partnerships offer quarterly multi-agency training on modern slavery.

Greater Manchester colleagues have developed an offer to address and support issues of international recruitment and launched a displaced care worker pathway in 2024. This includes:

- Access to dedicated Citizen's Advice Bureau Support
- Access to specialist advice from GM Immigration Aid Unit
- Access to Work & Skills support
- Individual LA offers to support finding alternative sponsorship

The local authority has strengthened this locally and our Stockport Offer includes:

- Dedicated Stockport sponsorship support mailbox
- Health and Social Care Employers actively recruiting list.
- Access to Work & Skills initiatives and pastoral support
- Dedicated drop in sessions
- Sponsorship Support Group for Workers & 'Welcome to Stockport' induction package (to be developed)

All relevant partners are represented at the Stockport Complex Safeguarding Sub-Group which will ensure that we can follow the nationally recognised approach of:

- **Pursue** *prosecuting and disrupting individuals and groups responsible for modern slavery*
- **Prevent** *preventing people from engaging in modern slavery*
- **Protect** *strengthening safeguards against modern slavery by protecting vulnerable people from exploitation and increasing awareness of and resilience against this crime*
- **Prepare** *reducing the harm caused by modern slavery through improved victim identification and enhanced support*

Appendix A: Displaced Care Worker support pathway (June 2025)

The 10 local authorities across Greater Manchester have introduced a consistent pathway for displaced care worker support.

This includes the introduction of two additional services to support both providers and displaced care workers.

- NHS Professionals (offering provider support)
- Support to Succeed (work/skills & employability support for workers)

Specialist advice support is provided through:

- Access to dedicated Citizen's Advice Bureau Support
- Access to specialist advice from Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit

New Pathway:

Home Office contacts Displaced Worker



Displaced worker contacts GM Regional Hub



Referral made to Support to Succeed (STS)



NHS Professionals (NHSP) liaise with ASC Providers to provide IR advice/support & confirm vacancies available



NHS P link in with STS re vacancies/employers



STS signposts displaced care worker to roles

Appendix B: Useful resources

- Safeguarding children multi-agency guidance for modern slavery, trafficking and exploitation [Children who are Victims of Modern Slavery, Trafficking](#)
- Safeguarding adults multi-agency guidance for [Modern Slavery](#)
- Statutory Guidance on modern slavery [Modern Slavery: statutory guidance for England and Wales \(under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015\) and non-statutory guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK](#)
- National Referral Mechanism guidance [National referral mechanism guidance: adult \(England and Wales\) - GOV.UK](#)
- The University of Leeds has published cuckooing resources for practitioners [Toolkit launched to help spot vulnerable people at risk of 'cuckooing' | University of Leeds](#)
- Home Office guidance on accessing support for potential victims of modern slavery [National referral mechanism guidance: adult \(England and Wales\) - GOV.UK](#)
- The Modern Slavery Helpline provides information and advice about modern slavery, a 24-hour reporting line, online reporting through the website, and can provide training to public sector organisations. They can be contacted on 0800 121 700 or online at: www.modernslaveryhelpline.org
- Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority [GLAA](#)