



<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Councillor Heather Acton, Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration
<b>Date:</b>	18 June 2021
<b>Classification:</b>	General Release
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Modern Slavery and Exploitation Strategy 2021</b>
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key Decision:</b>	An entry was included in the Forward Plan of Key Decisions enabling a decision to be made on or after 5 <sup>th</sup> May
<b>Financial Summary:</b>	This report outlines the strategy to be implemented jointly by Westminster and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. There are no financial implications at this stage.
<b>Report of:</b>	Wayne Chance-McKay, Head of City Operations

## 1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council is committed to tackling modern slavery and exploitation and have experience delivering effective responses and innovation in this area gained via leading the European Commission (EC) funded European Communities Against Trafficking Project 2013-2015. Since then the Council and its partners have continued to grow in this area; strengthening the multi-agency partnership; delivering a training programme; building referral pathways and developing online campaigns to reach at-risk communities. The proposal contained in this report is to publish a modern slavery strategy which sets out our shared goals and objectives for the next five years.
- 1.2 The inaugural modern slavery strategy will outline the Coordinated Community Response (CCR) to modern slavery. The CCR recognises that it is everyone's responsibility to tackle modern slavery; encouraging all agencies to work together to provide the best support for survivors.
- 1.3 To ensure we are embedding the CCR, the modern slavery strategy is a co-produced partnership document. Survivors, community voluntary and faith groups, professionals from specialist agencies, residents and businesses have all contributed to the development of the strategy.

- 1.4 The strategy provides an overview and the context of modern slavery, including data to inform the local picture. It considers each of the four objectives which form the theory of change and which contribute to the vision of ending modern slavery in the boroughs. Each of the four objectives ('Victims Identified', 'Victims Supported', 'Exploitation Prevented', and 'Exploiters Brought to Justice') are discussed in turn and detailing how they contribute to the vision. The strategy also includes suggestions from partners on how individual, community, professional and society can contribute towards each objective; along with quotes and case studies highlighting best practice in the CCR.
- 1.5 The strategy covers a five-year period and is a bi-borough strategy with the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC), outlining the shared approach, whilst acknowledging the varying profile of modern slavery issues across the two boroughs.

## **2.0 Recommendations**

- (i) That the Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration agrees to approve the bi-borough Modern Slavery and Exploitation Strategy (Appendix A).
- (ii) That the Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration delegate authority to the Director of Public Protection and Licensing to approve minor modifications and updates to the Strategy.
- (iii) That the Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration agrees for the strategy to be implemented from 21 June 2021.

## **3.0 Reason for Decision**

- 3.1 Modern slavery is happening in our borough and it is vital that everyone knows the signs and how to respond. This strategy sets out our commitment to involving as many agencies and individuals as possible in our coordinated community response to ending modern slavery. Whilst it provides a strategic overview, it also includes practical guidance for individuals, communities, professionals and wider society on how they can contribute to reaching each of our shared objectives on an operational level. By engaging a wider audience in this conversation, we can move towards achieving our vision of ending modern slavery.
- 3.2 The Council is considered one of the leading London boroughs in responding to modern slavery. The theory of change on which this strategy is built was developed by our strong multi-agency partnership. There are many projects focused on improving our response to modern slavery in the borough, from procurement practices to welfare visits, and the strategy is required to coalesce the work being undertaken in this area into one strategic document that sets out our shared position and is accessible to all.

## **4.0 Background**

- 4.1 Modern slavery is a violation of human rights and is outlined in the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The Act categorises offences of Slavery, Servitude and Forced or Compulsory Labour and Human Trafficking and includes:

- **Forced labour:** Coerced, deceived or forced into working for little or no pay
- **Sexual exploitation:** Coerced, deceived or forced into providing sexual services
- **Domestic servitude:** Coerced, deceived or forced into working within a home environment for little or no pay
- **Criminal exploitation:** Coerced, deceived or forced into criminal activities (including begging, stealing and growing or selling drugs)
- **Forced or sham marriage:** Coerced, deceived or forced into marriage
- **Organ harvesting:** Coerced, deceived or forced into removing internal organs for another person's gain

4.2 Estimations of the scale of modern slavery suggest there are 100,000 victims in the UK. Data from our local multi-agency partnership reveals over 500 incidents of modern slavery in Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster between April 2019 – November 2020. Due to modern slavery being a 'hidden' crime, along with the barriers for survivors coming forward and the systems used to record cases at a local and national level, it is difficult to provide exact data and the number of cases is expected to be higher.

4.5 Modern slavery can affect anybody of any age, gender or ethnicity. Modern slavery is caused by someone taking control of another person. Poverty, rough sleeping, abuse and conflict can make people more vulnerable to being controlled. Exploiters take advantage of these vulnerabilities, often offering victims a way out of their situation that's too hard to refuse. People are often unable to escape because of fear for their own lives or for the lives of their family, or because they don't know who to turn to or who to trust.

4.6 Within Westminster, we come across multiple forms of modern slavery. Many local cases involving young people occur through criminal exploitation and 'county lines', where local children are made to travel to other boroughs and counties to sell drugs. In the borough we see cases of sexual exploitation where, mostly women from overseas, are exploited for sexual services, either within residential properties, massage parlours or on our streets in tents. We also see numbers of domestic servitude in where, in most cases, women work excessive hours for no or little pay, cooking and cleaning within their employer's family home. There are also cases of forced labour within the borough, where individuals are made to work for little or no pay in various industries, including construction sites and hospitality.

4.7 The modern slavery strategy sets out our coordinated community response to tackling modern slavery. It outlines our four objectives, as developed with partners, which are 'Victims Identified', 'Victims Supported', 'Exploitation Prevented', and 'Exploiters Brought to Justice'.

## 5.0 A Partnership Strategy

5.1 Partner engagement was held between September – November 2020 with the following:

- 18 survivors attended focus groups and 1-1 interviews;

- 52 representatives from community/voluntary/faith groups participated in a training workshop and their views were obtained as part of this process. 14 representatives also took part in a focus group;
- 30 multi-agency professionals participated in focus groups;
- 4 businesses responded to an online survey; and
- the council received over 100 responses to an online quiz aimed at residents.

A draft of the strategy was shared with the focus group participants in January 2021 to collate their feedback and ensure it reflects the views shared in consultation.

- 5.2 In the initial consultation, respondents shared their thoughts on the four objectives: ‘*Victims Identified*’, ‘*Victims Supported*’, ‘*Exploitation Prevented*’, and ‘*Exploiters Brought to Justice*’, which were also originally developed by our multi-agency partnership group. Discussions ranged from the need to challenge the media’s representation of modern slavery to campaigning to make it socially unacceptable to buy goods that are not free from exploitation.
- 5.3 Reoccurring themes raised in the consultations were about the vulnerability of asylum seekers and people with no recourse to public funds. Survivors told us that not having the legal right to work in the UK whilst waiting for decisions on their asylum and/or trafficking case can cause further exploitation as survivors feel forced to work illegally to have enough money to live. Exploiters take advantage of this by not paying the minimum wage and threatening to tell the immigration authorities if workers complain.
- 5.4 The consultation with multi-agency professionals highlighted the importance of timely professional immigration advice, and the community consultation included support for equal rights, regardless of immigration status. There was also an overwhelming demand for longer-term stable support for survivors and more access to mental health services.
- 5.5 The consultations highlighted the need for the strategy to advocate for equality and equal rights for survivors irrespective of their protected characteristics. The strategy requests trauma-informed long-term support in addition to an appropriate immediate response. The consultations also highlighted the need for the strategy to be accessible to everyone. As such, there is a guide at the start and guidance throughout highlighting how individuals, community groups, multi-agency professionals and wider society can play their part in ending modern slavery. The strategy will also be available in multiple languages on request. Quotes from a range of partners and case studies demonstrating the CCR in practice are included throughout.

## **6.0 Financial Implications**

- 6.1 There are no Financial Implications

## **7.0 Legal Implications**

- 7.1 Section 52 of The Modern Slavery Act 2015 (“the Act”) states that it is a statutory requirement for the Council to notify the Secretary of State or another public authority (if

required by legislation) if we have reasonable grounds to believe that a person may be a victim of slavery or human trafficking.

- 7.2 This duty is discharged by either referring a potential victim into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) where they are a child or consenting adult, or by notifying the Home Office where an adult does not consent to enter the NRM. Both a referral and a notification can be made through the Modern Slavery Portal.
- 7.3 The Council is considered to be a 'first responder organisation' which means we are authorised to refer a potential victim of modern slavery into the National Referral Mechanism.
- 7.4 The Council already has a statutory duty to safeguard child victims under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, and Adults at Risk under section 42 of the Care Act 2015. The Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government has also published guidance on providing homelessness services to victims of modern slavery.
- 7.5 On 4 January 2021, pursuant to s49 of the Act, a new government Statutory Guidance entitled "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" was published replacing previous government guidance. The Council, as a public authority, is required to have regard to the guidance with a view to developing a more consistent response to modern slavery victims to ensure they are identified and receive the available and appropriate support.
- 7.6 The Office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner was established pursuant to the Act and in its most recent annual report it has encouraged local authorities to have clearly defined responsibilities and processes in place to respond to modern slavery such as is set out in this Strategy.
- 7.7 Section 54 of the Act requires "commercial organisations" to prepare a Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement for each financial year if it supplies goods or services and has a certain total turnover. The Statement should confirm the steps the organisation has taken to ensure slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in any of its supply chains and in any part of its own business, outline its policies and confirm the training available to staff in relation to slavery and human trafficking.
- 7.8 It is not, as yet, a statutory requirement for the Council to provide this Statement because it is a public and not a commercial organisation. Where Councils have provided a Statement it has been regarded as industry good practice.

7.9 It is also not a statutory requirement for the Council to provide a Modern Slavery Strategy but the Council has decided to publish one in line with good practice and to ensure further clarity on the offer and role of the Council.

## **8.0 Equalities Implications**

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Appendix B

## **APPENDICES**

- Appendix A Modern Slavery and Exploitation Strategy
- Appendix B Equality and Impact Assessment

**BACKGROUND PAPERS** - none

**If you have any queries about this report, please contact Wayne Chance-McKay**

For completion by the **Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration**

**Declaration of Interest**

I have <no interest to declare / to declare an interest> in respect of this report

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

State nature of interest if any .....

.....  
*(N.B: If you have an interest you should seek advice as to whether it is appropriate to make a decision in relation to this matter)*

For the reasons set out above, I agree the recommendation(s) in the report entitled  
.....and reject any alternative options  
which are referred to but not recommended.

Signed .....

Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration

Date .....

If you have any additional comment which you would want actioned in connection with your decision you should discuss this with the report author and then set out your comment below before the report and this pro-forma is returned to the Secretariat for processing.

Additional comment: .....  
.....  
.....

If you do not wish to approve the recommendations, or wish to make an alternative decision, it is important that you consult the report author, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, Strategic Director Finance and Performance and, if there are resources implications, the Strategic Director of Resources (or their representatives) so that (1) you can be made aware of any further relevant considerations that you should take into account before making the decision and (2) your reasons for the decision can be properly identified and recorded, as required by law.

Note to Cabinet Member: Your decision will now be published and copied to the Members of the relevant Policy & Scrutiny Committee. If the decision falls within the criteria for call-in, it will not be implemented until five working days have elapsed from publication to allow the Policy and Scrutiny Committee to decide whether it wishes to call the matter in.