

Thurrock Partnerships

Modern Day Slavery Strategy

2022-2025

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Partnerships:

- Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Thurrock Community Safety Partnership
- Thurrock Safeguarding Adults Board

**THURROCK LOCAL
SAFEGUARDING
CHILDREN
PARTNERSHIP**


THURROCK
Community Safety Partnership
Making Thurrock Safer


THURROCK
SAFEGUARDING ADULTS

Vision and priorities

We believe everyone, everywhere has the right to a life free from slavery. But right now, millions of children and adults are trapped in slavery in every single country in the world. Including ours.

Thurrock will strive to ensure its neighbourhoods are free from exploitation. We will do this by:

1. empowering communities to participate and engage in tackling modern slavery and trafficking
2. increasing training, awareness and understanding of modern slavery, human trafficking and exploitation
3. strengthening partnerships and outreach to Thurrock businesses to ensure ethical trading practices
4. increasing support and protection for people who are being exploited, and those at risk of exploitation
5. greater success in detection, disruption and prosecution

Introduction

This refreshed Modern Day Slavery (MDS) strategy sets out Thurrock's approach to:

- tackling modern slavery
- its duties under the Modern Slavery Act 2015

The Modern Slavery Act puts an obligation on local authorities to notify the Secretary of State if they have reasonable grounds to believe a person may be a victim of human trafficking or slavery.

Thurrock's MDS strategy and action plan has, until recently, been a part of its Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. In January 2022 it was decided to refresh the strategy and maintain it separately within Thurrock Community Safety Partnership (CSP).

The updated strategy will give a new focus for MDS in Thurrock, ensuring our workforce and citizens can recognise and respond to signs of modern slavery.

Thurrock Council has signed-up to the Charter Against Modern Slavery, which aims to establish ethical labour sourcing practices in our supply chain and establish robust recruitment practices. Our annual modern slavery and human trafficking statement is published online at www.thurrock.gov.uk/modern-slavery

Building on that, this strategy sets out Thurrock's approach to effectively tackle the problem of modern slavery and human trafficking. It reinforces our commitment to prevent and reduce modern slavery cases and protect and support victim's reintegration into the society.

This strategy adopts the 4 Ps:

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

This strategy is related to the following strategic documents and should be read alongside them:

- 'SET Modern Day Slavery Guidance' and the 'SET One Minute Guide – Modern Slavery', which are available under 'Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) Safeguarding Policies' at www.thurrocksab.org.uk/information-and-resources/policies-procedures
- priority 7, 'Human Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime', of the Community Safety Partnership annual delivery plan 2022/23, which is available at www.thurrock.gov.uk/tcsp

Context

Modern slavery is about being exploited and completely controlled by someone else, without being able to leave. It includes:

- human trafficking
- slavery
- servitude
- forced or compulsory labour

Modern Slavery is an international crime, affecting an estimated 29.8million people around the world. It is a global problem that transcends age, gender and ethnicities.

Types of modern slavery

Human trafficking is the act of moving people to other locations for the purpose of exploitation. Children, young people and adults can be trafficked from abroad, within the UK, between cities or from one street to another. Unaccompanied children and young people from outside the UK can be some of the most vulnerable children in the country.

Forced labour is about people being forced to work under the threat of violence and for no pay. They are treated as property and exploited to create a product for commercial sale.

Domestic servitude refers to employees working in private homes who are forced or coerced into serving, and/or fraudulently convinced that they have no option to leave.

Sexual exploitation involves women, men or children that are forced into the commercial sex industry and held against their will by force, fraud or coercion.

Forced marriage is when women and children are forced into marriage for a range of reasons, including exploiting the rights conferred on them by citizenship or for domestic servitude.

County lines or movement of drugs is defined as how gangs and criminal networks from towns use children, young people and vulnerable adults to deliver class A drugs to customers in county and rural areas. This often involves vulnerable people being subject to deception, intimidation, violence and grooming.

Organ harvesting is a lucrative global illicit trade. Organ trafficking holds a critical place with transnational organised crime groups due to high demand. It leaves vulnerable populations also known as 'donors', and first world beneficiaries also known as 'recipients', open to severe exploitation and a lifetime of health consequences.

Street crime is when people are exploited to beg or steal for the financial benefit of others.

National picture

The Office for National Statistics report 2020 states that because of its hidden nature, producing an accurate measure of prevalence is difficult. Currently, there is no definitive source of data or suitable method available to accurately quantify the number of victims of modern slavery in the UK. Instead, they have produced a range of data to help better understand the extent and nature of these crimes.

Increases in awareness and reporting, and improvements in police recording, are likely to have contributed to the increases in potential victim numbers since the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act across the UK in 2015. For example:

- the Modern Slavery Helpline received a 68% increase in calls and submissions in the year ending December 2018, compared with the previous year
- there were 5,144 modern slavery offences recorded by the police in England and Wales in the year ending March 2019, an increase of 51% from the previous year
- the number of potential victims referred through the UK National Referral Mechanism (NRM) increased by 36% to 6,985 in the year ending December 2018

Collecting legal evidence for modern slavery offences can be difficult, and the cases are among the most challenging and complex to prosecute. For example:

- there were 205 suspects of modern slavery flagged cases referred from the police to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for a charging decision in England and Wales in the year ending March 2019
- over two-thirds (68%) of modern slavery related CPS prosecutions in England and Wales resulted in a conviction in the year ending March 2019

Modern slavery can affect anyone in society, with victims being exploited in a number of ways. For example:

- almost a quarter (23%) of the 6,985 potential victims referred through the NRM in the year ending December 2018 were UK nationals.
- of the 2,251 potential victims supported by The Salvation Army in England and Wales in the year ending June 2019, 48% had experienced labour exploitation and 39% had experienced sexual exploitation.

Thurrock picture

Whilst Thurrock has relatively low numbers of referrals into the NRM, we believe this is only part of the picture. It is highly likely MDS is going undetected and unreported. Emerging threats include:

- the impact of COVID-19 across many industries may lead to an increase in opportunities for modern slavery and human trafficking offenders to exploit others, especially with the shortages of workers in some sectors
- the potential for an increase in labour exploitation as the HGV driver shortage crisis remains unresolved and inexperienced/newly qualified drivers are brought in to fill the gaps

- exploitation within the low-cost clothing manufacturing industry, as reported by the media last year – this is not a large industry in Essex compared to some other counties but any intelligence received will be acted upon appropriately
- the political conflict and subsequent relocation of Afghan and Ukrainian nationals to the UK may leave them vulnerable to exploitation incidents where they seek work and stability
- the prevailing climate – adaptations had to be made for those involved in labour exploitation because of the lockdowns and closures of some sectors.

Our priorities

1. Empowered communities to participate and engage in tackling modern slavery and trafficking

Combating MDS is everyone's business. We will start conversations with our citizens.

From this we can develop community champions. We will develop community champions through our engagement with organisations.

2. Increased training awareness and understanding of modern slavery, human trafficking and exploitation

We will support and promote campaigns to raise awareness of modern slavery and trafficking across the borough.

We will work with our partnerships to deliver effective and responsive training and support in this area.

We will develop specific training for relevant professionals in how to support the systemic gathering of intelligence and evidence required to identify, challenge and ensure successful prosecution of criminality.

3. Strengthened partnerships and outreach to Thurrock businesses to ensure ethical trading practices

We will use our influence and contracting to ensure businesses in Thurrock are trading ethically and mirror the current duties in the Modern Slavery Act.

4. Increased support and protection for people who are being exploited, and those at risk of exploitation

Justice and care have teams in police forces across the UK, acting as a bridge between victims, support and police investigations. They provide independent advocacy to help victims navigate the NRM and services. The teams are committed to identifying victims of trafficking and working alongside police to ensure that victims have end to end support.

5. Greater success in detection, disruption and prosecution

We will train recruiters and procurement officers to recognise, prevent and report forced labour, labour trafficking and other hidden third party labour exploitation.

Action plan

The 2022 plan will see the start of the refreshed Modern Slavery Strategy. This will be a 3-year strategy, and it is our opportunity to better understand the prevalence in Thurrock, the nature of exploitation and work closely alongside our communities to prevent and report MDS. We need to ensure that what residents of Thurrock feel are the important are addressed

Year 1:

- offer training to partners on MDS
- develop a Thurrock MDS pathway
- complete an awareness raising toolkit for MDS
- develop communications and a consistent message across all sectors and for the public
- update information on modern slavery on the partners' websites
- ensure strategic oversight and joint leadership through the Community Safety Partnership, Thurrock Safeguarding Adults Board and Thurrock Safeguarding Children Partnership
- encourage partners to adopt a MDS statement
- undertake and promote appropriate, targeted MDS campaigns, making reporting channels easy to use and well-known by promoting local and national helplines and services

Year 2:

- continue to offer training on MDS
- host Thurrock MDS week – training and awareness for businesses
- collect data from all Thurrock systems and police systems, including qualitative data
- promote national MDS initiatives for businesses, such as Car Wash Scheme
- provide posters and awareness to businesses, and offer to attend training
- develop and implement innovative and shared disruption approaches
- use intelligence to ensure multi-agency operations are effectively targeted

Year 3:

- continue to offer training on MDS
- celebrate those businesses that have signed up to the charter
- promote awareness of MDS
- review the MDS pathway to ensure its embedded in practice