

# Redefining Freedom

Striving for a World Without Slavery

**Sandwell Anti-Slavery Partnership Annual Report  
2022 - 2023**





# Forward

**Wendy Sims**

Chair of the Sandwell  
Anti-Slavery Partnership

The fight against modern slavery remains an ongoing challenge, as highlighted by the 175 incidents reported to the Sandwell Slavery and Human Trafficking Operational Partnership (SHOP) this year. This pervasive crime restricts their freedom and deprives them of their basic human rights, trapping them in a cycle of exploitation and abuse. As we strive towards a world without slavery, it is critical that we address these challenges and work towards new solutions.

This year, we are proud to report on our continued efforts to redefine freedom and combat modern slavery. We have made significant progress in raising awareness of modern slavery and its impact, including recent partnership spotlight on cuckooing to raise awareness and agree referral pathways.

Moreover, we have recognised a gap in support for victims of modern slavery who are coming out of the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC) and when they were resettling, there were no joined-up approaches. To address this gap, we have collaborated with Black Country Women's Aid (BCWA), the Salvation Army, and local authorities to embed referral pathways to support a holistic approach to housing for survivors of modern slavery.

Through our ongoing work, we are empowering survivors, building partnerships, and striving to make a real difference in the fight against modern slavery. In this report, we will highlight our achievements and outline our goals for the future as we continue to redefine freedom and work towards a world without slavery.

The purpose of this annual report is to provide an overview of the work of the Anti-Slavery Partnership in Sandwell and the Slavery and Human Trafficking Operational Partnership (SHOP) over the past year. It aims to showcase the progress made towards redefining freedom and striving for a world without slavery, while also highlighting the ongoing challenges and areas for improvement. The report covers a broad range of activities, including prevention, protection, and prosecution efforts, as well as partnerships and collaborations with other agencies and stakeholders. Its scope encompasses the entire Sandwell area and beyond, reflecting the complex and evolving nature of modern slavery and human trafficking.

# 2022 – 2023 Highlights

- 175 incidents of modern slavery were reported to the SHOP this year, underscoring the ongoing need to redefine freedom and combat this pervasive crime
- To address these challenges, we undertook 175 multi-agency visits and made 145 safeguarding visits, striving to empower survivors and protect vulnerable individuals from exploitation
- Our efforts to disrupt locations where modern slavery was reported led to successful interventions at 129 sites
- We completed 434 individual agency interventions this year to protect victims, pursue offenders, and disrupt locations
- Through our ongoing efforts to screen potential victims of modern slavery
- We were able to safeguard and support 203 individuals, empowering them to seek help and access the resources they need to rebuild their lives
- Among these potential victims, we identified 114 men and 89 women who were at risk of sexual exploitation, highlighting the diverse ways in which modern slavery violates freedom and deprives individuals of their basic human rights
- Our proactive work with the homelessness community led to the identification of 14 victims of modern slavery, who were provided with wrap-around support and referrals into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and the Salvation Army for additional assistance
- In total, we supported 56 victims of modern slavery through referrals to the National Referral Mechanism and the Salvation Army, underscoring our commitment to empowering survivors and ensuring that they have access to the resources they need to rebuild their lives
- We trained 464 professionals on modern slavery this year, underscoring our ongoing commitment to building partnerships and empowering individuals and communities to take a stand against this pervasive crime.



## Sexual exploitation

This year, 90 individuals were safeguarded and provided with ongoing support after being identified as potential victims of sexual exploitation. By redefining freedom and working to protect vulnerable individuals, we strive to build a world where no one is forced to endure such exploitation.



## Labour exploitation

Our efforts to address labour exploitation led to the safeguarding and education of 34 individuals on their workers' rights, the national minimum wage, and modern slavery. By empowering individuals to assert their rights and building a culture of accountability, we aim to redefine freedom and promote justice for all.



## Criminal exploitation

In line with our commitment to redefining freedom and protecting the most vulnerable members of our society, we screened 32 individuals for potential criminal exploitation and safeguarded them from harm. By working collaboratively with partners across sectors, we aim to build a world without slavery, where everyone is free to live their lives without fear of exploitation or abuse.

# 01

# Partnership overview



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# Our Partnership

The Sandwell Strategic Anti-Slavery Partnership provides a strategic overview of all work around modern slavery.

The Slavery and Human Trafficking Operational Partnership (SHOP) is a multi-agency partnership committed to ensuring that Sandwell's operational responses to Modern Slavery are robust and informed.

# Our Approach

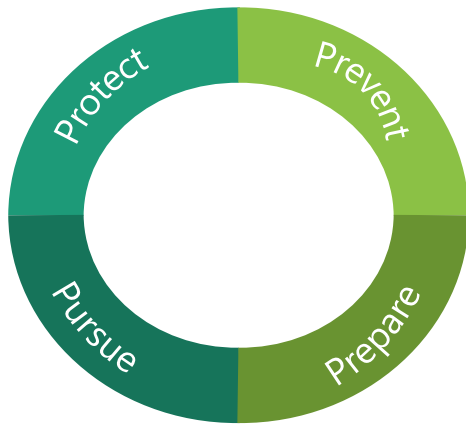
SHOP have adopted their recommendation around the '4 x P' model:

## Objective 1: Protect

Increasing protection against serious and organised crime.

## Objective 3: Pursue

Prosecuting and disrupting serious and organised crime



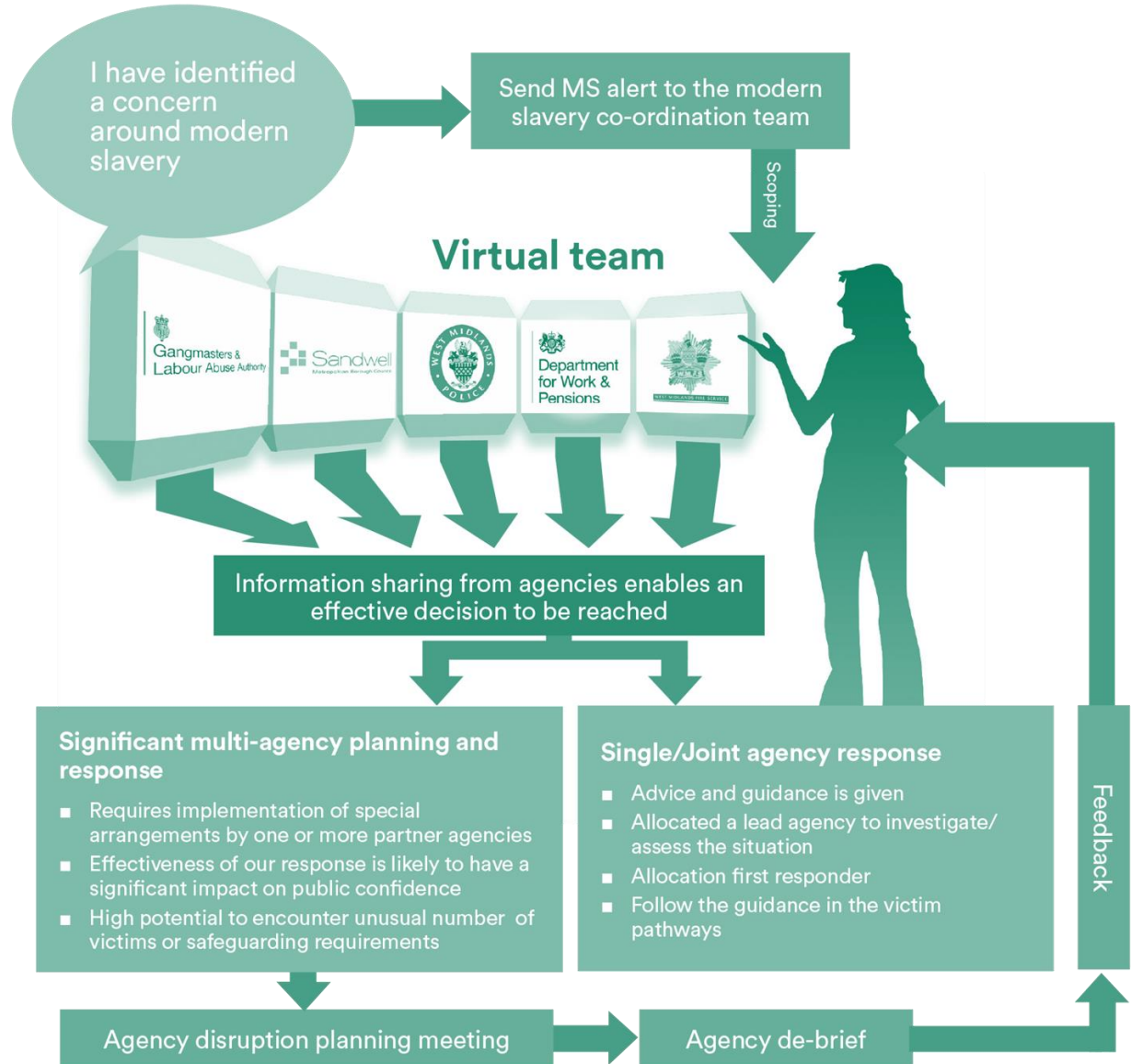
## Objective 2: Prevent

Preventing people from engaging in serious and organised crime.

## Objective 4: Prepare

Reducing the impact of serious and organised crime

# Our Model



# Anti-Slavery Partnership

Key highlights from the Sandwell Strategic Anti-Slavery Partnership for this year include:

- **Development of a Local Government Association (LGA) modern slavery maturity matrix:** The Partnership has been leading the development of this matrix based on Sandwell and presenting on best practices in modern slavery at the LGA annual conference
- **Public health approach:** The Partnership has been working to actualise a public health approach to modern slavery and completed the LA Modern Slavery Transparency Statement
- **Training sessions:** The Partnership worked with the VRP to promote 55 training sessions with 1350 attendees through Operation Aidant-CLIW and developed a regional training framework in collaboration with the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and updated Sandwell Training offer
- **Spotlight on sexual exploitation:** The Partnership has focused on identifying and reporting sexual exploitation, as well as child sexual exploitation lessons in practice
- **Monitoring organised immigration crime:** The Partnership has been monitoring the increase in organised immigration crime in close collaboration with immigration enforcement
- **Modern slavery delivery plan:** The Partnership has developed a modern slavery delivery plan and provided updates on work strands through SHOP/anti-slavery partnership updates
- **Statistical reports:** The Partnership has shared statistical reports including NRM data, SHOP data, and training data

Overall, the Sandwell Strategic Anti-Slavery Partnership has been working hard to combat modern slavery through various strategic efforts, collaboration with partners, and ongoing training and awareness raising.

Dear colleagues,

As Chair of the Sandwell Strategic Anti-Slavery Partnership, I am proud to report on our continued efforts to combat modern slavery and redefine freedom. This year, we have made significant strides in raising awareness, promoting best practices, and providing training to our partners and stakeholders.

Our work towards actualising a public health approach to modern slavery and completing the LA Modern Slavery Transparency Statement are important steps in redefining freedom for victims of modern slavery. By focusing on identifying and reporting sexual exploitation, as well as monitoring the increase in organised immigration crime, we are working towards a world where everyone is free to live their lives without fear of exploitation or abuse.

Moreover, our collaboration with the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and development of a modern slavery delivery plan reflect our commitment to empowering individuals and communities to combat modern slavery. We have also shared statistical reports and encouraged businesses, organisations, and individuals to take the Slavery Free Pledge, which is a critical step towards eradicating modern slavery from our society.

Despite these efforts, the fight against modern slavery remains an ongoing challenge. Through continued partnerships and a commitment to empowering individuals and communities, we aim to build a world without slavery, where everyone is free to live their lives without fear of exploitation or abuse.

Thank you for your ongoing support in this critical fight.

Wendy Sims, Chair of the Sandwell Anti-slavery Partnership

# Slavery and Human trafficking Operational Partnership (SHOP)

The Sandwell Slavery and Human Trafficking Operational Partnership (SHOP) has made significant progress in combatting modern slavery in the region by focusing on several key areas:

- **Collaboration with the National Crime Agency:** SHOP has worked closely with the NCA on Operation Aidant to tackle modern slavery in Vietnamese nail bars
- **Scrutiny panel reviews:** The partnership has conducted scrutiny panel reviews of modern slavery cases across the region to identify gaps and improve the response
- **Resettlement pathways:** SHOP has designed resettlement pathways with Black Country Women's Aid (BCWA) to support and safeguard victims of modern slavery leaving refuge and asylum accommodation
- **Upstream work:** The team is notifying landlords of modern slavery in their properties and holding them accountable, resulting in 122 private dwellings being reported in the last 12 months
- **Addressing financial abuse and potential cuckooing:** SHOP is working with adult social care to address financial abuse and potential cuckooing
- **Modern slavery dashboard:** The partnership has developed a modern slavery dashboard on Power BI to enhance monitoring and reporting.

Through these efforts, SHOP has strengthened the partnership approach to modern slavery and built back multi-agency visits and interventions post-COVID. The team has also focused on strengthening information sharing and intelligence gathering and analysis to improve the overall response to modern slavery in Sandwell.

Dear colleagues,

I am excited to share with you the progress that our Sandwell Slavery and Human Trafficking Operational Partnership (SHOP) has made in combatting modern slavery in our region. As we continue our efforts, we must also consider the meaning of freedom and how it has been redefined for those who have been victims of modern slavery.

Our partnership has been actively collaborating with various agencies and organisations to implement strategic measures to address modern slavery. We have been working closely with the National Crime Agency on Operation Aidant to tackle modern slavery in Vietnamese nail bars. Through these efforts, we are not only fighting against modern slavery, but we are also redefining freedom for those who have been trapped in these exploitative situations.

In addition, our partnership has designed resettlement pathways with Black Country Women's Aid (BCWA) to support and safeguard victims of modern slavery leaving refuge and asylum accommodation. Through this initiative, we are providing these individuals with the resources and support needed to reclaim their freedom and start a new life.

Our team is notifying landlords of modern slavery in their properties and holding them accountable. We are also addressing financial abuse and potential cuckooing by working with adult social care. By identifying and addressing these issues, we are breaking down barriers to freedom and ensuring that victims of modern slavery are not trapped in these situations any longer.

Through these efforts, SHOP has strengthened the partnership approach to modern slavery and built back multi-agency visits and interventions post-COVID. We are proud to continue our work in redefining freedom for those who have been affected by modern slavery.

Thank you for your dedication and hard work towards this important cause.

Best regards,

Debbie Huxton, Chair of the Slavery and Human trafficking Operational Partnership (SHOP)

# 02 2022-23 Progress Updates



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# “ Slavery free ”

## The Sandwell Slavery free pledge

- Demonstrate strong local leadership for anti-slavery initiatives;
- Raise awareness amongst our staff, associates and the people we serve on a daily basis;
- Train our staff to recognise and respond appropriately to potential signs of slavery;
- Share intelligence and information to help detect slavery and ensure it cannot take root;
- Support victims and survivors in our communities;
- Remove slave-based labour from our supply chains;
- Contribute to building a prosperous and slavery-free local economy

Sandwell



We are pleased to report that Sandwell Council has made significant progress towards our goal of becoming a slavery-free borough. Over the past year, we have continued to focus on the key areas of our pledge, and have achieved the following milestones since the pledge was signed in 2019:

- **Demonstrating strong local leadership:** Sandwell council has established an Anti-Slavery Partnership to coordinate efforts to tackle modern slavery across the local area. This partnership includes representatives from local businesses, charities, and community groups, as well as council staff
- **Raising awareness:** The council has launched a public awareness campaign to educate residents and businesses about the signs of modern slavery and how to report it. This has included posters and leaflets in public places, as well as social media messaging and targeted outreach to vulnerable groups
- **Training staff:** All council staff have received training on modern slavery awareness, including how to spot the signs of exploitation and what to do if they suspect someone is being exploited. This training is also being offered to local businesses and community groups
- **Sharing intelligence:** The Anti-Slavery Partnership has established a central reporting mechanism for anyone who suspects modern slavery in Sandwell. This allows intelligence to be gathered and shared between partners, including the police and other law enforcement agencies
- **Supporting victims:** The council has commissioned a specialist support service for victims of modern slavery, which offers a range of practical and emotional support to help them recover from their experiences. This service is available to anyone who has been exploited, regardless of their immigration status
- **Removing slave-based labour:** The council has introduced new procurement policies that require all suppliers to demonstrate that they are not using slave-based labour in their supply chains. This includes regular audits and checks to ensure compliance
- **Contributing to a slavery-free local economy:** The council is working with local businesses to promote ethical and sustainable practices, including fair employment practices and responsible sourcing. This includes a focus on supporting local businesses that are committed to tackling modern slavery in their operations

Overall, we are proud of the progress we have made towards becoming a slavery-free borough. We remain committed to our pledge and will continue to work towards eradicating modern slavery in Sandwell.

# Objective 1: Protect - Recognise the need to strengthen our approach to supporting victims of modern slavery

## 2022-23 Progress

In line with our commitment to supporting victims of modern slavery, we have made significant progress in strengthening our approach and ensuring our victim pathways are robust, effective, and aligned with best practice. We have achieved the following milestones:

- **Review and Refresh Victim Pathways:** We reviewed and refreshed our victim pathway and safeguarding responses for victims of modern slavery, incorporating the pledge to train our staff to recognise and respond appropriately to potential signs of slavery. As a result, we have improved our ability to respond to incidents of modern slavery in Sandwell
- **Resettlement Pathways:** We developed resettlement pathways for survivors of modern slavery who are resettling in Sandwell. This involved working towards trusted assessor status with the Salvation Army to ensure that we can provide the necessary support to survivors. These efforts are aligned with the pledge to support victims and survivors in our communities
- **Improved Referrals:** We have improved our referrals to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and increased the number of Duty to Notify referrals we make. This is a critical aspect of our pledge to share intelligence and information to help detect slavery and ensure it cannot take root
- **Public Health Approach:** We have worked with the modern slavery and human trafficking regional board to adopt a public health approach to modern slavery. This approach recognises that modern slavery is a public health issue and requires a coordinated response from all relevant agencies. This has allowed us to respond more effectively to the issue

# Objective 2: Prevent - Developing an understanding of the threat, risk and harm modern slavery and human trafficking poses

## 2022-23 Progress

In order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the threats, risks, and harms posed by modern slavery and human trafficking, we have taken the following targeted actions:

- **Sandwell Modern Slavery Dashboard:** We have developed a dashboard to track incidents of modern slavery in Sandwell. This dashboard has been instrumental in helping us respond more effectively to the issue. By tracking incidents and trends over time, we have been able to develop a better understanding of the scale and nature of modern slavery in Sandwell
- **Data and Intelligence-Driven Response:** We have used data and intelligence to respond to modern slavery incidents and understand the picture of risk and threat of modern slavery in Sandwell. This has allowed us to target our resources effectively and respond to incidents of modern slavery in a timely and effective manner
- **Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA):** We conducted a strategic needs assessment for modern slavery and integrated it into the Serious Violence Duty Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA). By doing so, we were able to better understand the risks and threats posed by modern slavery in Sandwell. This has helped us target our resources more effectively and develop more robust strategies for addressing the issue
- **Annual Modern Slavery Profile:** We produce an annual modern slavery profile for each of the Sandwell Towns. This provides a comprehensive picture of the issue in our area and has helped us identify areas of concern and potential hotspots. By doing so, we are able to target our resources more effectively and ensure that we are addressing the issue in the areas where it is most prevalent

# Objective 3: Pursue - In order to disrupt incidents modern slavery in Sandwell, we work collaboratively to target perps and victims

## 2022-23 Progress

We are committed to disrupting incidents of modern slavery in Sandwell through collaborative efforts that target perpetrators and support victims. Here are some of the actions we have taken:

- **Deep Dive Training:** We have continued to deliver deep dive training on modern slavery to ensure that our partners are up to date with our work in Sandwell. This has helped to ensure that all partners are aware of the risks and threats of modern slavery in our community
- **Rebuilding Partnerships:** We have worked to build back partnerships that were impacted by the pandemic, Partners carried out 175 multi-agency visits and made 145 safeguarding visits, striving to empower survivors and protect vulnerable individuals from exploitation. This has allowed us to work collaboratively with our partners to disrupt incidents of modern slavery in Sandwell
- **Leading the Response:** We continue to lead the modern slavery response through the Strategic Anti-Slavery Partnership, which allows us to maintain a coordinated and effective response to modern slavery in Sandwell
- **Disrupting Perpetrators:** We have disrupted perpetrators and brought them to justice using all available tools, powers, and legislation. This has helped to ensure that perpetrators are held accountable for their actions and deterred from committing further offences
- **Multi-Agency Interventions:** Over the past year, we have disrupted modern slavery in X locations through multi-agency interventions and completed X individual agency interventions to protect victims, pursue offenders, or disrupt locations. We have also made X arrests as part of our operational activity

**Objective 4: Prepare** - It is recognised that there is a need to raise awareness across partner agencies, businesses and communities, to address modern slavery.

## 2022-23 Progress

We are committed to raising awareness of modern slavery across our partner agencies, businesses, and communities. Here are the milestones we have achieved so far:

- **Regional Approach:** We worked closely with the VRP and other partners to take a regional approach to Operation Aidant activity. This has allowed us to engage with a wide range of partners and raise awareness of modern slavery across the region. Through this, we have been able to share intelligence and information, identify victims, and disrupt criminal activity
- **Responding to Modern Slavery Training:** We launched a new training program called Responding to Modern Slavery and have rolled this out to professionals working in Sandwell. This training equips them with the necessary knowledge and skills to identify and respond effectively to incidents of modern slavery. Through this, we are building a network of trained professionals who can act as first responders in the fight against modern slavery
- **Effective Communications Channels:** We continued to use effective communications channels to raise awareness. These include social media, posters, leaflets, and newsletters, among others. We also work closely with local media to ensure that incidents of modern slavery are reported accurately and sensitively

# 03

# Modern Slavery Data



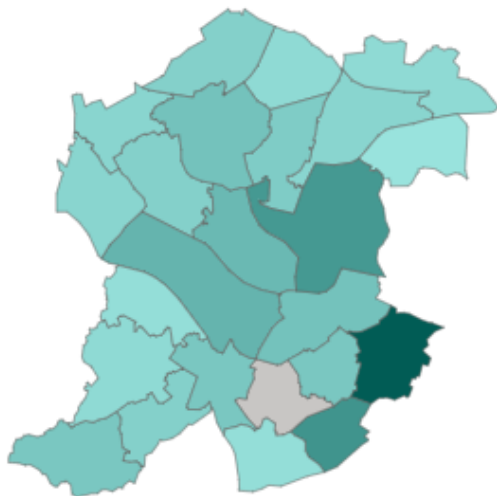
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# 2022 data

## Modern Slavery Locations



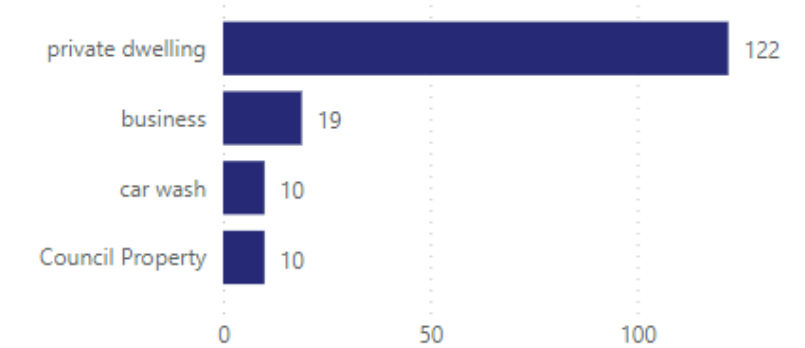
## Modern slavery concerns by ward



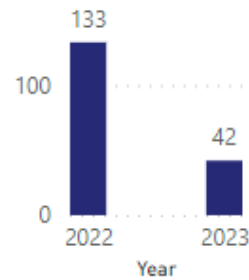
## Referral by modern slavery type



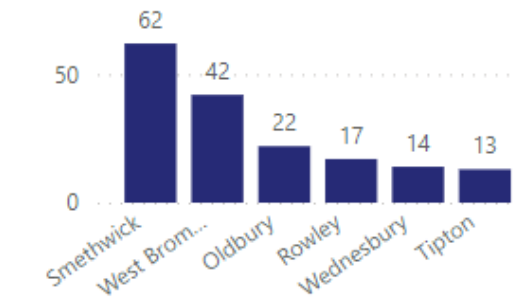
## Type of location



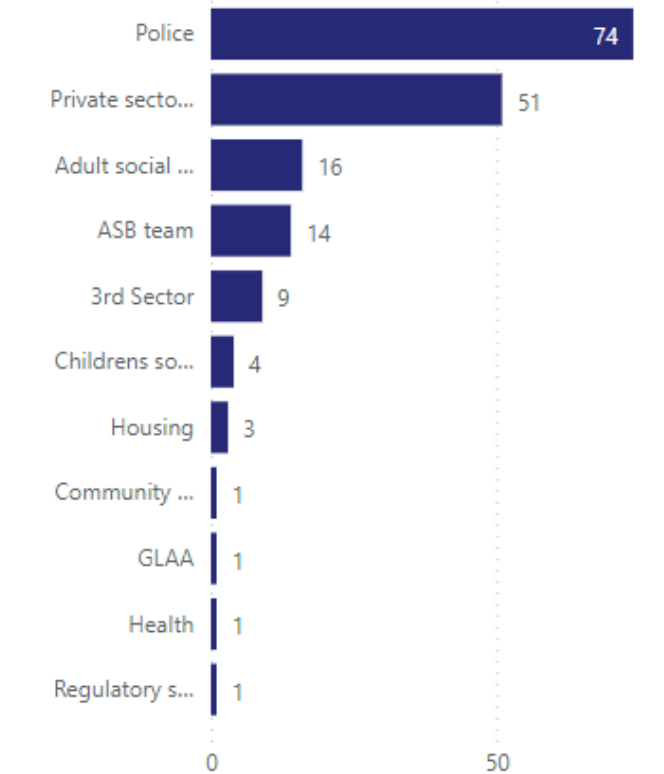
## Referrals by year



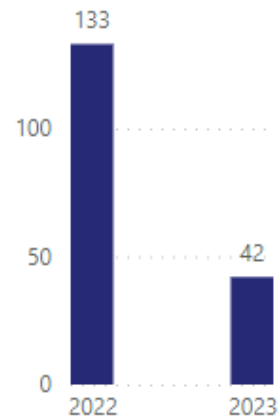
## Referral by town



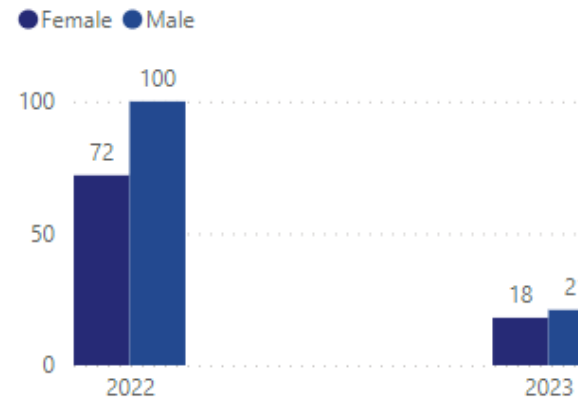
## Referral from



## Multi agency visits

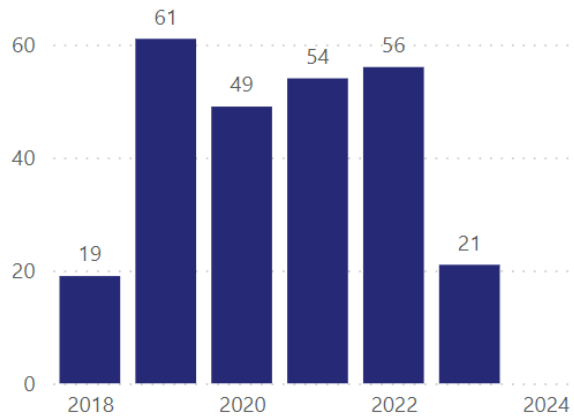


## Victims screened

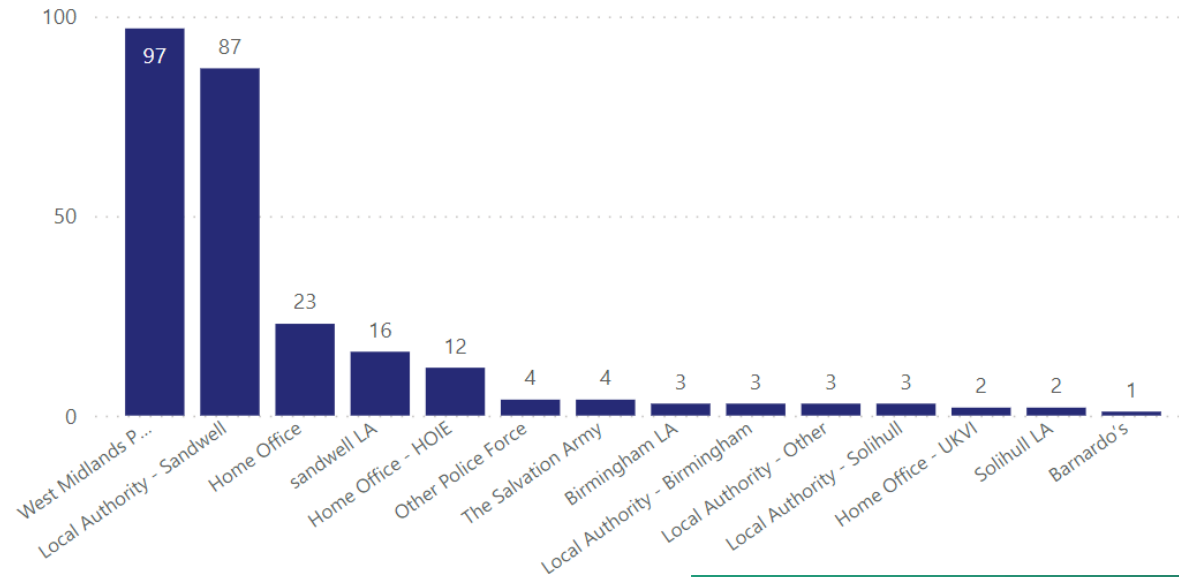


# NRM dashboard

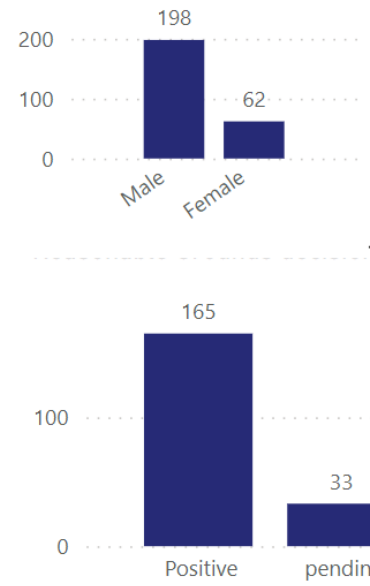
## Referrals to the NRM



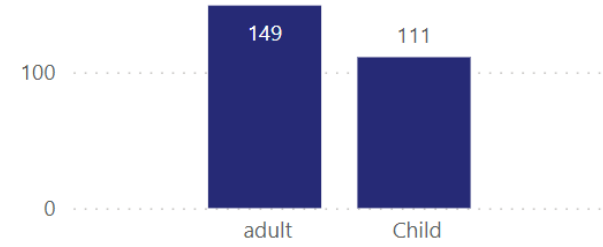
## First Responder



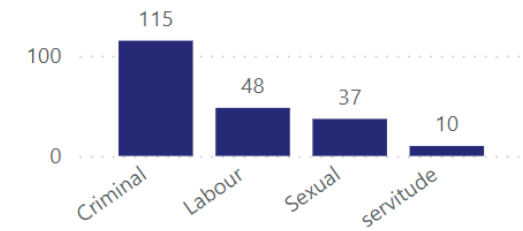
## Gender



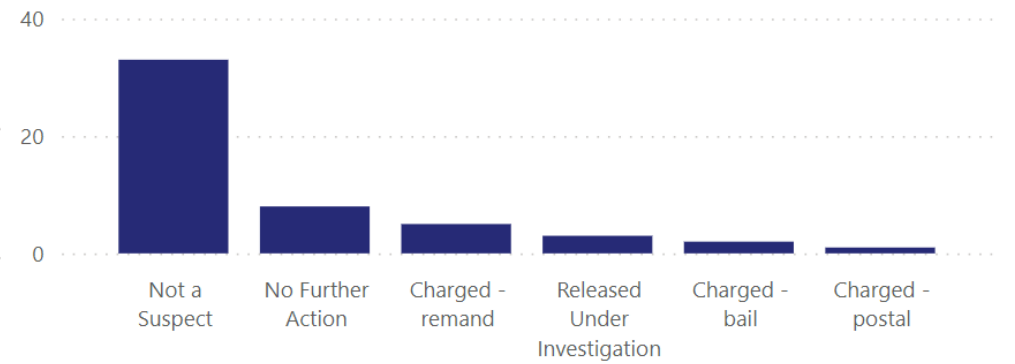
## Adult or child



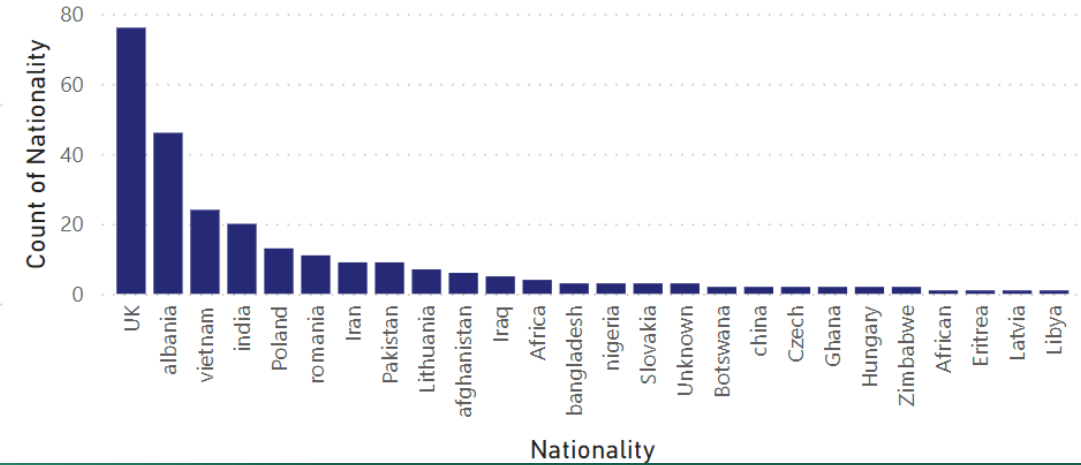
## Exploitation Type



## modern slavery suspect status



## Count of Nationality by Nationality





## Tipton

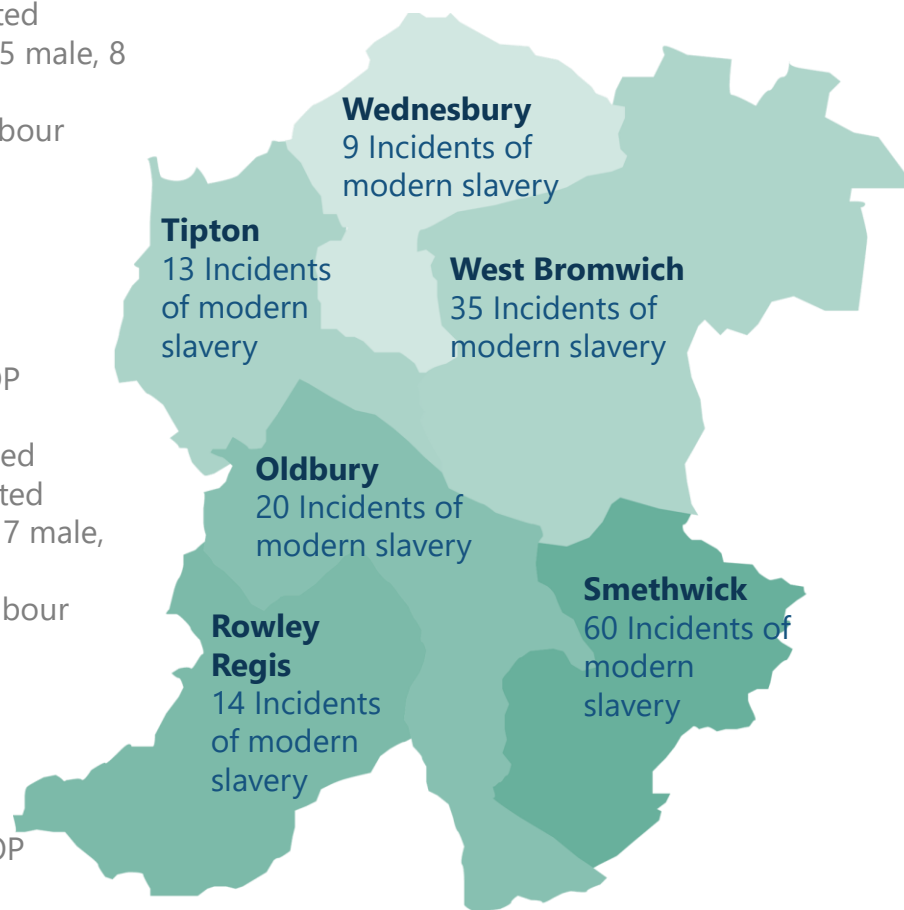
- 13 incidents of modern slavery reported to SHOP
- 13 multi-agency visits were completed
- 8 locations where modern slavery were disrupted
- 30 individual agency interventions were completed
- 23 potential victims were screened for slavery (15 male, 8 female)
- Victim profile includes 2 sexual exploitation, 7 labour exploitation, 4 criminal exploitation

## Oldbury

- 20 incidents of modern slavery reported to SHOP
- 22 multi-agency visits were completed
- 19 locations where modern slavery were disrupted
- 59 individual agency interventions were completed
- 26 potential victims were screened for slavery (17 male, 8 female)
- Victim profile includes 9 sexual exploitation, 9 labour exploitation, 2 criminal exploitation

## Rowley Regis

- 14 incidents of modern slavery reported to SHOP
- 17 multi-agency visits were completed
- 13 locations where modern slavery were disrupted
- 38 individual agency interventions were completed
- 21 potential victims were screened for slavery (15 male, 6 female)
- Victim profile includes 2 sexual exploitation, 10 labour exploitation, 2 criminal exploitation



## Wednesbury

- 9 incidents of modern slavery reported to SHOP
- 15 multi-agency visits were completed
- 9 locations where modern slavery were disrupted
- 28 individual agency interventions were completed
- 7 potential victims were screened for slavery (2 male, 5 female)
- Victim profile includes 2 sexual exploitation, 6 labour exploitation, 4 criminal exploitation

## West Bromwich

- 35 incidents of modern slavery reported to SHOP
- 42 multi-agency visits were completed
- 31 locations where modern slavery were disrupted
- 97 individual agency interventions were completed
- 40 potential victims were screened for slavery (20 male, 20 female)
- Victim profile includes 6 sexual exploitation, 16 labour exploitation, 13 criminal exploitation

## Smethwick

- 60 incidents of modern slavery reported to SHOP
- 62 multi-agency visits were completed
- 45 locations where modern slavery were disrupted
- 159 individual agency interventions were completed
- 84 potential victims were screened for slavery (45 male, 39 female)
- Victim profile includes 13 sexual exploitation, 41 labour exploitation, 4 criminal exploitation

# Place Based Responses to Modern Slavery (1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023)

# 04

## Stories of Survivors



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# Cuckooing

The Anti-Slavery Partnership and SHOP have been working collaboratively to address the issue of cuckooing, a practice where drug dealers take over the homes of vulnerable people for drug dealing purposes, which is often linked to modern slavery. To combat this issue, the partnership has implemented a multifaceted approach, including raising awareness, supporting victims, and disrupting perpetrators.

The partnership's efforts to raise awareness have included launching a spotlight on cuckooing and developing a case study to illustrate the reality of the issue. Additionally, the partnership has worked with adult social care to develop pathways for victims of cuckooing, ensuring that they receive the support they need.

To prevent cuckooing, the partnership has developed a one council approach, highlighting the importance of all departments working together as one team. Furthermore, the partnership has used data and intelligence to respond to modern slavery, understanding the picture of risk and threat.

In terms of disrupting perpetrators, the partnership has successfully disrupted 10 incidents of cuckooing spread across West Bromwich, Smethwick, Oldbury, Wednesbury, and Rowley. These cases involved one female and nine males, with 12 multi-agency visits, 10 multi-agency interventions, and 1 arrest.

Overall, the partnership's work in addressing cuckooing and modern slavery has aimed to improve the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable individuals and communities affected by this issue.

## Case study

John (not his real name) was a 72-year-old British man living alone on the fourth floor of a high-rise block of flats in Oldbury. He had a life-limiting health condition that made it difficult for him to leave his home, carry out his daily activities of living, and cook for himself. He was lonely, estranged from his son, and in need of help.

One day, a young woman named Sarah, (not her real name) who was the daughter of John's friend and neighbour, befriended him and offered to help with shopping, cleaning, and cooking. She also introduced him to her boyfriend, who claimed to be a drug dealer. John was grateful for their help, but soon they started taking advantage of him.

Without John's permission, Sarah and her boyfriend took money from his bank account to buy drugs. They brought drugs into his home and allowed others to use his property for drug dealing. They slept in his only bedroom, while John was forced to sleep on a chair. They also neglected John's needs, leaving him hungry and emaciated. His flat was in a terrible condition, with putrefied contents in the fridge, an unsanitary kitchen and bathroom, and a neglected pet cat.

Fortunately, John's situation was noticed by local authorities and he was rescued from the abuse. An injunction was issued against Sarah and her boyfriend, and John received the support and care he needed to recover. This case illustrates the dangers of cuckooing, where drug dealers take advantage of vulnerable people and use their homes for illegal activities. It also highlights the importance of community vigilance and action to protect vulnerable individuals from abuse and exploitation.

# Sexual Exploitation

The Anti-Slavery Partnership and SHOP have been actively working to address the issue of sexual exploitation, which is a form of modern slavery that can have long-lasting effects on victims. A focus group on sexual exploitation was held at the Anti-Slavery Partnership meeting to discuss ways to tackle this issue. However, there has been a concerning decrease in referrals for sexual exploitation, which may indicate that victims are not coming forward or are not being identified.

To highlight the realities of sexual exploitation and modern slavery, the partnership developed a case study of a victim. The partnership has also been working closely with local law enforcement to disrupt sexual exploitation, resulting in the identification and shutdown of several locations.

In terms of the data, there has been a 15% decrease in reported incidents of sexual exploitation, with the majority of incidents occurring in West Bromwich and Smethwick. The top nationalities of victims have shifted, with Romanian remaining the top nationality but British and Chinese nationals now appearing in the top three. Additionally, six HMOs were identified as potential locations for sexual exploitation.

Despite the decrease in reported incidents, the partnership has conducted a higher number of agency interventions and screened more potential victims, with a higher number of males being identified as potential victims in 2022. It's important to continue addressing the issue of sexual exploitation and modern slavery and to ensure that victims are identified and supported.

## Case Study

Ana, (not her real name) had come to the UK from Romania to live with her mother and work in a factory. However, she quickly found that the conditions were unbearable, and she ran away. Ana soon became involved in sex work, where she met another woman who offered her a job with good pay, accommodation, and security. However, the job turned out to be at a brothel where Ana was unable to leave due to the security measures in place.

Ana was taken to different locations across Sandwell to meet with clients, and she witnessed other young girls being supplied with drugs to help them get through the day. The flat above the pub where Ana was found by the ambulance crew was sparsely furnished with no food in the kitchen. Upon further investigation, Ana disclosed names and places outside of Sandwell that were linked to a large human trafficking ring, which is under investigation by Coventry police. A cease and desist order was issued to the landlord of the flat, the landlord of the pub, and the brewery.

Ana's experience highlights the insidious nature of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Vulnerable individuals are often lured into these situations with promises of a better life, only to find themselves trapped in dangerous and exploitative situations. The work of organisations like the Anti-Slavery Partnership and SHOP is crucial in identifying and disrupting these operations and providing support to the victims.

# Labour Exploitation

The partnership has been actively working to combat labour exploitation, which can take various forms such as forced labour, bonded labour, and other forms of exploitation in the workplace. To address this issue, the partnership has integrated new modern slavery in practice models to further develop the skills of those working in the modern slavery sector.

One notable achievement is the successful preventative work in tackling modern slavery in Vietnamese nail bars through Operation Aidant activities, which was carried out in partnership with the National Crime Agency (NCA). The partnership has also been keeping track of various KPIs to monitor their progress in this area.

According to the data, the overall number of labour exploitation cases has increased by 8.4% from 83 in 2021 to 90 in 2022. However, the numbers vary significantly among different locations. For instance, in West Bromwich, the number of cases has decreased by 36%, while in Smethwick, there has been a 64% increase in cases.

The top three nationalities of victims of labour exploitation have changed from Indian, Polish, and Romanian in 2021 to Romanian, Pakistani, and Albanian in 2022. Moreover, the number of locations disrupted has significantly increased from 20 to 67, which indicates the partnership's successful efforts to tackle this issue. However, the number of arrests has decreased by 81.8% from 11 in 2021 to 2 in 2022.

Lastly, the number of victims screened has decreased by 34.3% from 210 in 2021 to 138 in 2022, with a significant decrease in the number of male victims (49.4%). However, there has been a 38.9% increase in the number of female victims identified in 2022.

## Case study

Mr. K, a 68-year-old Polish man, had been living and working in the UK for 8 years when he suffered a stroke and was discharged from the hospital. He was found homeless in West Bromwich bus station, unable to work due to his health condition. He was also informed that he could no longer live in the accommodation that came with his job since he was not earning any money and had no access to public funds as he did not have a British visa. Mr. K and his wife had been unemployed in Poland and had become dependent on alcohol. They were approached by a gypsy king in their local pub who offered them a job and accommodation in Sandwell, UK. Believing that their lives were turning around for the better, they left their son and family behind and came to the UK.

However, upon arriving in Sandwell, they quickly realised that the job and accommodation were a nightmare. Mr. K and his colleagues were made to work long hours in a local factory for little pay, incorrect payslips, no sick pay, and no annual leave entitlement. The owners of the business subjected them to daily ridicule, bullying, and humiliation, and sometimes even physical abuse. Mr. K suffered psychological and emotional abuse as a result of this mistreatment, trapped in a cycle of exploitation and abuse with no way out.

The situation came to the attention of the authorities, and an ongoing police operation was launched to investigate the matter. Mr. K was referred to the NRM and accommodated with the Salvation Army safe house. The hope is that this operation will lead to justice for Mr. K and his colleagues and put an end to the exploitation and abuse they have suffered.

# Criminal Exploitation

The partnership has been actively working to combat criminal exploitation, which is the exploitation of individuals for criminal purposes, such as human trafficking and county lines drug trafficking. One of the key highlights of their work in this area is an increase in monitoring of organised immigration crime, with close collaboration with immigration enforcement.

The partnership's upstream work has focused on landlords, with efforts made to work with landlord forums and notify them of any instances of modern slavery in their properties, holding them accountable for any exploitation that may be taking place. In the last 12 months, 106 private dwellings were reported.

While there has been an 18% decrease in instances of criminal exploitation, there are still areas that require attention, such as a 44% increase in West Bromwich and a 100% increase in Tipton. The top nationalities involved in criminal exploitation have shifted from Albanian and Romanian to British and Indian, and there has been a 200% increase in HMOs involved in exploitation.

Despite the decrease in instances of criminal exploitation, the partnership has remained vigilant and conducted 32 multi-agency visits, with 64 interventions made, and 17 locations disrupted. However, the number of arrests has decreased by 89%, with only one arrest made in 2022. The number of victims screened has also decreased by 44%, with a decrease of 43% in the number of males and a decrease of 50% in the number of females.

## Case study

Male aged 37, Pakistani, single, non-English speaking, unemployed, and living in a council property in a densely populated area of Birmingham. Neighbours had reported complaints about noise, the smell of drugs, and syringes on the floor outside the property. A large number of men were seen coming and going from the first-floor flat of a three-story building.

Upon investigation, it was discovered that the male had been befriended by a known drug dealer, who had initially supplied him with drugs for recreational use. However, this relationship had quickly turned into a form of criminal exploitation, with the male's flat being used as a base for drug dealing and consumption.

The flat was unkempt and had no furniture; the male slept on the floor. He had lost his job on a building site, where he had not been paid correctly and had no payslips. He had sporadically worked odd jobs. The other men using the flat were homeless and also addicted to drugs. They would stay at the flat overnight and be instructed where to go during the day to beg and commit petty crimes such as stealing and pickpocketing.

The dealer would collect the stolen items and the money earned from begging and reward the men with drugs at night. The male was intimidated and forced to allow the dealer and his associates to use his flat for their criminal activities, leaving him with nowhere else to turn.

This case was referred to the police and the local council, who worked together to provide support to the male and the other vulnerable individuals involved.

# 05

## Next Steps: Building a World Without Slavery



Redefining Freedom:  
Striving for a World  
Without Slavery

# Next Steps

As part of the Sandwell commitment to combatting modern slavery in the region, the partnership has identified several key next steps for 2023-24.

These next steps are aimed at strengthening the approach to supporting victims of modern slavery, and ensuring that the partnership's efforts remain aligned with best practice.

Some of the next steps highlighted in the report include conducting a review of the effectiveness of victim pathways and resettlement pathways, strengthening partnerships with organisations and agencies involved in providing support services to victims, developing a comprehensive training program for staff, volunteers and partner agencies, increasing efforts to engage with and support communities in Sandwell, and continuing to work closely with the modern slavery and human trafficking regional board to ensure a coordinated response.

By taking these next steps, the partnership is working towards its goal of eradicating modern slavery in the region and ensuring that victims are identified and provided with the necessary support as early as possible.

## **Objective 1: Protect - strengthening safeguards against modern slavery by protecting vulnerable people from exploitation**

1. Strengthen our approach to supporting victims of modern slavery
2. Review and refresh victim pathway and safeguarding responses for victims of modern slavery
3. Work with the modern slavery and human trafficking regional board to adopt a public health approach to modern slavery

## **Objective 2: Prevent - preventing people from engaging in modern slavery**

1. Continue to deliver a range of modern slavery training
2. Working collaboratively across different parts of the council involved in commissioning, procurement and contract management to ensure a consistent approach and understanding across the life-cycle of the contract
3. Continue to use effective communications channels to raise awareness of modern slavery

## **Objective 3: Prepare - reducing the harm caused by modern slavery through improved victim identification and enhanced support**

1. Develop resettlement pathways for survivors of modern slavery resettling in Sandwell working towards trusted assessor status with the Salvation Army
2. Join up council-wide activity and supporting mechanisms through a joint action plan and strategy
3. Further develop the Slavery-Free Ambassador Programme

## **Objective 4: Prepare - prosecuting and disrupting individuals and groups responsible for modern slavery**

1. Continue to use data and intelligence to respond to modern slavery, understanding the picture or risk, threat of modern slavery
2. Continue to build on operational disruption activity and partnership working
3. Continue to lead on the modern slavery response through the strategic Anti-Slavery Partnership



## GET IN TOUCH



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