

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

Date: 25 June 2026

Author: Chief Executive

Wards Affected

Borough-wide.

Purpose

To seek Cabinet approval of the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2025/26, including the associated commitments to practical action.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision.

Recommendation

THAT CABINET:

Approves the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2025/26.

1 Background

1.1 Modern Slavery is an umbrella term encompassing slavery, servitude, forced work and human trafficking. They are defined as:

Slavery – people are forced to work through mental or physical threat; owned or controlled by an ‘employer’, usually through mental or physical abuse or the threat of abuse; dehumanised, treated as a commodity or bought and sold as ‘property’; physically constrained or have restrictions placed on their freedom.

Servitude – similar to slavery in that a person is under an obligation to provide a service which is imposed on them, but there is no element of ownership.

Forced Work – defined as ‘work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the person has not offered him/herself voluntary’.

Human Trafficking – when men, women and children are moved and forced into exploitation. A person is a victim of human trafficking even if they haven't yet been exploited but have been moved for the purposes of exploitation.

1.2 There are a number of different types of exploitation that victims of Modern Slavery may be subjected to, and victims may experience more than one type of exploitation at the same time. The most common forms of exploitation are:

- **Sexual exploitation** – forced into prostitution, pornography or lap dancing for little or no pay. They may be deprived of their freedom of movement and subjected to threats and violence.
- **Labour exploitation** – a victim is made to work for little or no pay, and may face violence or threats. If they are foreign nationals, their passports may be confiscated by their exploiters and they may be made to live in terrible conditions and under constant threat.
- **Forced criminality** – victims can be forced to participate in a range of illegal activities including pick pocketing, shop-lifting, cannabis cultivation, county lines exploitation (drugs) and other activities. Note – the Modern Slavery Act 2015 provides a defence for victims who have been forced into criminality.
- **Organ harvesting** – victims are trafficked in order for their internal organs (typically kidneys or liver) to be harvested for transplant.
- **Domestic servitude** – victims work in a household where they may be ill-treated, humiliated, subjected to exhausting hours, forced to work and live under unbearable conditions or forced to work for little or no pay.

1.3 During 2025 (January – December) in the UK, 23,411 potential victims of Modern Slavery were referred to the Home Office* via the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), which is used to identify and support victims of Modern Slavery. This represented a 22% increase on 2024 figures (19,117) and is the highest recorded since NRM records began. Overall, potential victims were most commonly referred for labour exploitation, which accounted for 36% of all referrals. This is more likely to be found in industries where there is high demand and low paid work. As an example, and not an exhaustive list, Modern Slavery has been found in the following industries: farming (fruit, vegetable and flower picking), HGV driving, care homes, hotels, nail bars, car washes, charity bag collection, domestic servants, fishing, tarmacking and paving, restaurants and takeaways). Of all referrals in 2025, 70% were adults at age of referral and 30% were children, and 74% were male and 26% were female. Exploitation types typically have gendered patterns, for example in 2025, males most often reported labour and criminal exploitation, whereas females most often reported sexual exploitation.

1.4 Whilst it is possible for anyone to become a victim of Modern Slavery, the following groups are more at risk: young people, women and girls, homeless people, people who can speak little or no English, asylum seekers and refugees, people with learning difficulties, people with mental health problems. However, the records do

show that trends change over time, as in 2025 the most common nationalities referred were UK (22%), Eritrean (13%) and Vietnamese (9%).

1.5 Modern Slavery Act 2015

In March 2015, the Government enacted the Modern Slavery Act 2015 which:

- consolidated and clarified existing Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking offences and increased the maximum sentences for committing these offences;
- introduced slavery and trafficking Prevention Orders and slavery and trafficking Risk Orders, which can be used to disrupt activities by Modern Slavery perpetrators;
- created the role of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner;
- introduced support and protection for victims;
- introduced a requirement for certain businesses to produce and publish a Modern Slavery Statement on what they are doing to tackle Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking in their supply chains.

1.6 The Act includes a number of provisions for local authorities. Firstly, a duty to identify and refer Modern Slavery child victims and consenting adults through the NRM. Secondly, a duty to notify the Home Secretary of adults who do not consent to enter the NRM. Thirdly, a duty to cooperate with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

1.7 All commercial organisations turning over in excess of £36 million annually, are also required to report their efforts to identify, prevent and mitigate the risk of Modern Slavery in their commercial operations by publishing an annual Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement.

1.8 Local Authorities

While the public sector was largely overlooked in the 2015 Act, in April 2017 the Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights recommended that *"If the Government expects business to take human rights issues in their supply chains seriously, it must demonstrate at least the same level of commitment in its own procurement supply chains"*. The same can be said of local authorities i.e. that they have a responsibility to ensure that the risks of Modern Slavery within their supply chains are understood and that they are demonstrating community leadership in promoting a human rights approach towards procurement.

1.9 Putting this into context, local authorities have four distinct roles to play:

- Identification and referral of victims;

- Supporting victims, for example, through safeguarding children and adults with care and support needs and through housing/homelessness services;
- Community safety services and disruption activities;
- Ensuring that supply chains that local authorities procure from are free from Modern Slavery.

1.10 Gedling is already actively involved in tackling Modern Slavery in a number of ways. The Chief Executive chairs the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Modern Slavery Partnership, and key members of staff have been trained by the external organisation 'Hope for Justice'. Modern Slavery has also periodically featured in Staff Briefings, which raises staff awareness of the signs to look out for, which in turn may assist in identifying an individual under threat and informs staff how to report any concerns. The Council also regularly reviews safeguarding activity (including modern slavery) through reporting to the joint Budget, Performance and Risk Board. The Council's contracts and procurement documents also contain clauses in respect of compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

1.11 A new Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Policy 2024-2027 was approved by Cabinet on 31 January 2024.

1.12 Nationally

There are a number of important recent developments which the Council will be noting and taking any necessary actions:

- The launch in April 2026 of the *"First Responder Toolkit for England and Wales: Referring Victims of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking to the National Referral Mechanism"*.
- The Passing of the *Crime and Policing Act 2026* and ongoing work of the Home Office to produce statutory and non-statutory guidance on child criminal exploitation and cuckooing.
- A new report dated April 2026 by a consortium of influential antislavery organisations entitled *"Decade of Dignity: A Strategic Vision for Eradicating Modern Slavery in the UK"*, which seeks to give a 'strategic roadmap' for antislavery action.

2 Proposal

2.1 In line with the Act and the recommendation from the Joint Committee on Human Rights, Cabinet is asked to approve the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement for 2025/26.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 Members could choose not to approve the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2025/26 or approve different versions. However, the document has been prepared in order to set out the current and ongoing action the Council intends to take to demonstrate its commitment to tackling this issue in a clear and concise way.
- 3.2 Whilst the Council could take a less proactive approach than set out in the document, this would not demonstrate the Council's ambition and commitment to tackle and prevent Modern Slavery issues in the Borough, the County and in its own supply chains.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report, however the Council made a contribution of £17,763 in 2025/26 to Nottingham City Council towards the costs of the Slavery Exploitation Team.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 Whilst local authorities are not required as a commercial organisation to publish a Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement unless their turnover exceeds the annual threshold, it is considered best practice.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 The equalities implications are set out within this report.

7 Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 There are no carbon reduction/sustainability implications arising out of this report.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1: Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2025/26.

9 Background Papers

- 9.1 LGA publication 2017: Tackling Modern Slavery – A Council Guide.
- 9.2 GBC Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Policy 2024-2027.
- 9.3 *Home Office: Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify statistics UK, end of year summary 2025

10 Reasons for Recommendations

- 10.1 To lead by example and to take a proactive role in ensuring that there is no slavery or human trafficking in our own business and our supply chains.