Shedding Light on London

Tackling Modern Slavery: Local Authority Practice and Emerging Threats

Prepared by Antony Botting, Consultant - Modern Slavery Specialist
September 2025

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1. Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of a qualitative study exploring how local authorities in London are responding to modern slavery. The research aimed to better understand how victims are identified and supported, the challenges faced by practitioners and opportunities to strengthen local and national responses.

Interviews were conducted with modern slavery leads or safeguarding and support teams from a range of boroughs, covering both adult and children's services. Conversations were guided by a standard set of questions and analysed thematically. To protect confidentiality, no authorities or individuals are identified and comments are presented in aggregated form.

1.1 Key Findings

- Identification and Engagement Barriers: Practitioners rely heavily on referrals - often from police or partner agencies - rather than proactive identification. Victims frequently disengage after initial contact or following the National Referral Mechanism's (NRM) 45-day reflection period, particularly where housing or immigration issues remain unresolved.
- Inconsistent Multi-Agency Coordination: While safeguarding boards and some high-risk panels support collaboration, practice varies widely. Confusion persists over which teams or practitioners should complete NRM referrals and police engagement can be inconsistent.
- Training and Awareness Gaps: Structured training exists in some areas, including e-learning, practice guides and awareness campaigns. However, knowledge among general practitioners, housing officers and job centre staff is patchy, limiting opportunities for early identification.
- Local Vulnerabilities: Authorities face specific pressures, including transient populations, rough sleeping, unregulated labour sectors and significant numbers of asylum seekers or people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). Uncertainty over long-term responsibilities for these groups remains a shared challenge.
- Prevention and Outreach Needs: Proactive outreach to high-risk groups is limited, with most interventions occurring only after exploitation is suspected. Authorities recognise the importance of stronger community engagement to encourage earlier referrals.
- Long-Term Support Gaps: Sustained housing, employment and mental health support for survivors is inconsistent. There is also a notable disparity between boroughs, where some report having sufficient temporary housing stock to accommodate victims while they await National Referral Mechanism (NRM) support to be arranged through the Salvation Army, whereas others face

significant shortages. Many victims risk re-exploitation due to inadequate reintegration pathways and limited voluntary sector capacity.

- Policy Misalignment: Local authorities feel that current national approaches do not fully reflect local realities. Greater funding, clearer statutory responsibilities, especially around NRPF cases and stronger police accountability were repeatedly identified as priorities.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, wider economic pressures, including cost-of-living challenges, potential economic slowdown and AI-driven labour market changes, may increase vulnerability to exploitation, while internal trafficking and under-identified sectors such as care work remain concerns.

Overall Picture

Despite committed practitioners and examples of good practice, such as comprehensive awareness campaigns, person-centred approaches and multi-agency high-risk panels, the response to modern slavery across London remains uneven. Strengthening training, improving coordination and investing in long-term survivor support are essential to creating a more consistent and effective system.

Funding Note

While these findings highlight achievable improvements, their successful implementation will depend on adequate and sustained funding, particularly for housing, long-term survivor support and the coordination roles within local authorities.

1.2 Priority Recommendations

1. Enhance Training and Awareness: Expand and standardise modern slavery training across all frontline professionals, including non-specialist roles.
2. Strengthen Multi-Agency Coordination: Clarify responsibilities for NRM referrals, improve police engagement and formalise data sharing protocols.
3. Invest in Long Term Survivor Support: Increase funding for housing, employment and mental health services to reduce re-exploitation risks.
4. Improve Prevention and Outreach: Develop proactive engagement strategies for high-risk groups and invest in community education to encourage reporting.
5. Align National Policy with Local Needs: Provide clearer statutory guidance on No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) and asylum cases and ensure funding reflects the real costs of support at the local level.

6. Appoint Dedicated Modern Slavery Leads in Local Authorities**:** Ensure every local authority designates a specific lead officer for modern slavery to coordinate referrals, partnerships and training, improving consistency and accountability across services.

2. Introduction

2.1 Purpose and Scope of the Research

The purpose of this research is to develop a clearer understanding of how local authorities across London are responding to modern slavery. The study explores how victims are identified and supported, the operational challenges faced by practitioners and opportunities to enhance prevention, partnership working and long-term support. While the findings are rooted in the experiences of safeguarding and service teams, the goal is not to evaluate individual authorities but to identify common strengths, gaps and emerging needs to inform practice and policy.

2.2 Context: Modern Slavery in Local Authority Settings

Modern slavery remains a complex and evolving issue within London and the UK.[1] Local authorities play a critical role in identifying victims, coordinating referrals to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and ensuring access to safeguarding, housing and long-term reintegration support. Exploitation may involve labour trafficking, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, or criminal exploitation, including child criminal and sexual exploitation and county lines activity.[2]

Despite national frameworks and statutory duties, local responses vary, influenced by differences in demographics, resources and partnership structures. The findings of this report highlight how operational realities on the ground shape the implementation of modern slavery strategies and the provision of victim care.

2.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

To protect participants and encourage open discussion, strict confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. Local authority names are not disclosed and no specific comments or data are attributed to any individual or organisation. All insights are presented in aggregated or anonymised form, ensuring that no single authority can be identified. This approach supports candid reflection while providing a reliable thematic overview of current practice.

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[1] CARE: "Record 20,000 Modern Slavery Victims Referred in UK" - recent report of increasing referrals. CARE

[2] *House of Commons Library: "The tenth anniversary of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 - UK NRM statistics 2024"* - reports 19,125 potential victims in 2024, 31% children, 23% UK nationality. House of Commons

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Approach

A qualitative, thematic approach was used to explore how local authorities in London are identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery. The study aimed to capture practical insights, highlight strengths and gaps, and inform recommendations for improving local responses.

3.2 Participant Engagement

Local authorities were approached to provide a broad mix of contexts and service structures. Representatives responsible for adult and children's safeguarding and support services, or the modern slavery lead (where one existed) were interviewed to provide a range of perspectives.

3.3 Data Collection

Informal, semi-structured conversations guided by a shared question set were used to gather information about victim identification, referral pathways, partnership working, and key challenges. Notes from these discussions were compiled for thematic review.

3.4 Data Analysis

Feedback was grouped into broad themes to identify common patterns and distinctive insights across local practice. Themes were refined to capture significant issues without attributing specific comments to any individual authority.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Participants were assured that all contributions would remain confidential and that no authority or individual would be identifiable.

4. Thematic Findings

4.1 Effectiveness and Practical Challenges

Practitioners across authorities reported that identifying victims of modern slavery remains complex and often reactive rather than proactive. Reliance on external referrals, particularly from police or third sector partners, was a common feature. Several authorities noted that victims frequently disengage soon after first contact or following the National Referral Mechanism's (NRM) 45-day reflection period, especially where housing, immigration, or financial instability are an issue and persist.
Limited frontline resources and the difficulty of supporting victims who are fearful or unwilling to engage were highlighted as significant barriers.

4.2 Coordination and Partnership Working

Multi-agency safeguarding boards, community safety partnerships and in some cases high-risk panel meetings provide valuable coordination forums. However, the level of collaboration varies across authorities.

There was uncertainty in some areas about which practitioners are responsible for completing NRM referrals, with suggestions that empowering hostel staff or housing officers could reduce delays. While some areas demonstrate strong links with NGOs and faith-based groups, others reported inconsistency in police engagement and limited data sharing protocols.

Practices regarding referrals between local authorities and police varied markedly. In some areas, the police pass all suspected cases directly to the local authority for assessment, whereas in others, the authority passes all suspected cases to the police. This lack of consistency may create confusion over responsibilities and potential delays in victim support. Best practice generally encourages the organisation first coming into contact with a suspected victim to initiate safeguarding and the NRM process, but this should occur within a clearly defined, multi-agency framework to ensure responsibilities are shared and coordinated.

4.3 Training and Awareness

Training provision is uneven. In some authorities, structured approaches, including e-learning modules, in-person sessions, weekly practice guides and Modern Slavery Awareness Weeks, are well established.
Elsewhere, training remains ad hoc or limited to safeguarding specialists. Gaps in awareness among general practitioners, housing officers and job centre staff were frequently cited, with concerns that these gaps reduce opportunities for early identification of victims.[3]

4.4 Local Authority-Specific Challenges

Authorities reported that local vulnerabilities are shaped by demographic and economic contexts. Areas with transient populations, such as those surrounding major transport hubs, face heightened risks due to the movement of people who may be disconnected from support networks. High levels of rough sleeping and significant numbers of asylum seekers or individuals with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) were also cited as factors that increase vulnerability.

The care sector has emerged as a significant but often under-identified area of labour exploitation. Rising demand for social care, chronic staff shortages and reliance on migrant labour and agency staff have created conditions in which unscrupulous employers and recruitment agencies can exploit vulnerable workers. A recent report [4]

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[3] Sky News: "Modern Slavery Helpline receives record number of calls in 2023" - general awareness and reporting trends. Sky News
[4] *GLAA: "Exploitation is on the rise in the care sector" (2024)* - 31% of reports to GLAA in Q1 were care sector with poor work conditions and debt. gla.gov.uk

from the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) highlights a steep increase in potential modern slavery cases linked to residential and domiciliary care, including excessive recruitment fees, debt bondage, withholding of wages and coercive working conditions. Local authorities noted that oversight mechanisms for care providers especially when services are commissioned through third-party agencies are not always robust enough to detect or prevent exploitation, making proactive monitoring and stronger procurement standards essential.[5]

A recurring concern was the presence of unregulated labour sectors. These include informal or cash-in-hand work in industries such as car washes, nail bars, construction and parts of the hospitality sector. Because these workplaces often fall outside formal regulatory oversight, exploitation can remain hidden, with victims reluctant to come forward for fear of losing income, immigration repercussions, or retaliation from exploiters. Local authorities noted that economic pressures, particularly during periods of instability, can push vulnerable individuals into these sectors, where traffickers or exploitative employers operate with relative impunity.

Another disparity highlighted was the availability of temporary housing to accommodate victims while they await National Referral Mechanism (NRM) support through the Salvation Army. Some authorities described having sufficient stock to meet immediate needs, while others reported acute shortages, leaving victims at risk of re-exploitation.

Ambiguity over responsibilities for supporting individuals with insecure immigration status continues to complicate local safeguarding responses. Participants described uncertainty over which agencies should provide assistance to victims who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF) or whose immigration cases are unresolved.

This lack of clarity leads to inconsistent practices with some authorities providing temporary accommodation or financial assistance on a discretionary basis, while others refer victims to overstretched voluntary organisations or national schemes.

Practitioners highlighted that without clear statutory guidance or dedicated funding, decisions are often made on a case-by-case basis, creating delays and potential safeguarding gaps. In some cases, victims with insecure status disengage entirely out of fear of immigration enforcement or concern that seeking help could jeopardise their future claims. This hesitancy can leave individuals vulnerable to further exploitation, underscoring the need for clearer national policy and resources tailored to this group.

4.5 Prevention and Early Intervention

Proactive prevention measures are limited. While some authorities collaborate with voluntary organisations or homelessness networks to identify potential victims earlier, most interventions occur only after exploitation has been suspected or reported. Participants emphasised the need for stronger community engagement strategies to

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[5] *The Guardian: "Care sector: migrant workers charged up to £20,000 in illegal fees"* (2025) - migrant workers in health & care visas paying large sums, then facing poor conditions. The Guardian

encourage earlier referrals and for improved systems to flag early warning signs, particularly among high-risk groups such as rough sleepers or unregulated labourers.

4.6 Long-Term Support and Survivor Outcomes

Long-term support was described as inconsistent and under-resourced. Survivors often struggle to access sustainable housing, employment opportunities and mental health services, increasing the risk of re-exploitation. Some authorities rely heavily on voluntary organisations for ongoing support, but these groups also face funding and capacity constraints. Reintegration pathways were widely described as fragmented, with few coordinated programmes to support independence and recovery once NRM support ends.

4.7 Policy and Strategic Priorities

Participants repeatedly called for clearer statutory guidance and increased funding to match the real costs of victim care. Several, where no modern slavery lead was present, stressed the importance of designating a dedicated modern slavery lead within each authority to improve accountability and coordination.

Concerns were raised that current national approaches do not always reflect local realities, particularly regarding support for NRPF cases and the long-term needs of survivors. Examples of good practice, such as robust awareness campaigns, person-centred approaches, enhanced procurement processes and high-risk multi-agency panels, were highlighted as potential models to replicate.

5. Cross-Authority Comparative Insights

Across the authorities consulted, several consistent patterns emerged, alongside notable differences that reveal both strengths and areas for improvement:

Consistent Patterns Across Authorities

- All participants recognised modern slavery as a significant safeguarding concern and emphasised the importance of the NRM as a critical mechanism for victim support.
- Every authority highlighted challenges in victim engagement, particularly after the NRM reflection period, and noted difficulties in long-term survivor support.
- Reliance on referrals, especially from police or NGOs, was common, with limited proactive identification.

Variations in Capacity and Resources

- Housing provision showed marked disparity, with some authorities considering their temporary housing stock sufficient to accommodate

victims awaiting NRM support via the Salvation Army, while others reported severe shortages.
- The level of multi-agency coordination varied widely. Some areas described well established safeguarding boards and high-risk panels, while others reported inconsistent police engagement and unclear referral responsibilities.
- Training provision ranged from comprehensive programmes (including e-learning and awareness campaigns) to ad hoc or minimal sessions.

Differences in Local Context

- Authorities serving transient populations around transport hubs reported unique challenges in tracking and supporting victims.
- Exploitation in unregulated labour sectors, such as car washes, construction and hospitality, was raised universally but appeared more acute in areas with larger informal economies.
- Only a minority had begun to examine emerging risks such as exploitation in the care sector or the potential labour market impacts of AI and automation.

Examples of Strong Practice

- Some authorities had embedded modern slavery checks into procurement processes and appointed dedicated safeguarding leads for modern slavery. These measures were viewed as improving accountability and prevention.
- Joint awareness campaigns with neighbouring councils or NGOs were cited as effective for staff engagement and public education.

6. Discussion

6.1 Overarching Trends and Themes

The research highlights a broadly shared commitment among local authorities to tackling modern slavery, yet also reveals structural and operational barriers that undermine consistent responses.

Reliance on external referrals, particularly from police and third-sector partners, remains the primary route for victim identification, suggesting limited proactive detection mechanisms. Victims' disengagement after the NRM's 45-day reflection period was a recurrent theme, linked to ongoing instability around housing, employment and immigration status.
The importance of effective multi-agency working emerged strongly, with safeguarding boards and voluntary-sector organisations providing essential expertise and resources.

However, awareness and training remain uneven. Frontline staff in non-specialist roles, such as general practitioners, housing officers and job centre staff, are not consistently

equipped to identify modern slavery indicators. Authorities also flagged emerging and under-recognised risks, including exploitation in unregulated labour markets, internal trafficking and the care sector.

6.2 Variations in Local Practice

While some authorities have embedded modern slavery awareness into procurement, training and dedicated safeguarding roles, others operate with less formalised structures or fewer resources. Housing provision showed significant disparity with some areas having temporary accommodation readily available for victims awaiting NRM support through the Salvation Army, whereas others struggle with acute shortages.

Similarly, levels of police engagement and clarity around NRM responsibilities varied, affecting referral timeliness and victim protection.
Outreach and prevention activity also differed. A small number of authorities reported active collaboration with NGOs and neighbouring councils on awareness campaigns or community engagement, while others relied almost exclusively on post-referral interventions.

These variations suggest that while pockets of good practice exist, the overall response across London is uneven and heavily influenced by local capacity, leadership and partnership networks.

Referral routes also differed significantly. One area reported that the police pass all suspected modern slavery cases directly to them, while another described the opposite approach, where the authority passes all suspected cases to the police. Such differences reflect a lack of standardised protocols and may affect the speed and clarity of safeguarding responses.

6.3 Alignment with National Policy and Guidance

The findings indicate a perceived gap between national policy frameworks and local realities. While the NRM provides an essential mechanism for identifying and supporting victims, its time-limited reflection period does not adequately address long-term survivor needs.[6]

Authorities expressed uncertainty over their responsibilities for individuals with insecure immigration status or no recourse to public funds, highlighting the absence of clear statutory guidance and funding.

National strategies on modern slavery often emphasise enforcement and victim identification but less frequently address reintegration, housing stability and employment support. Emerging risks, such as the labour market impacts of AI-driven unemployment, underreported internal trafficking and exploitation in the care sector, are not yet fully reflected in national guidance. Local authorities stressed the need for

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[6] Home Office: Modern Slavery - NRM & Duty to Notify statistics UK, End of Year Summary 2024 - includes total UK referrals in 2024, breakdowns by sex, age, nationality, positive decisions. GOV.UK

policy adjustments and sustainable funding that better align with on-the-ground challenges.

7. Future Considerations

As economic conditions evolve, new risks are likely to influence patterns of modern slavery and exploitation. Alongside advances in artificial intelligence and automation, wider economic pressures in the UK, including cost-of-living increases, inflation, rising interest rates and potential economic slowdown, may result in higher unemployment or underemployment, particularly in low-wage sectors. Reductions in public spending or local authority budgets could further limit the safety nets available to vulnerable individuals. Together, these factors may push more people into informal or unregulated labour markets, where traffickers and exploitative employers can operate with fewer checks.

A growing concern is the underreporting of internal trafficking within the UK. Domestic exploitation, including child criminal and sexual exploitation, county lines activity and trafficking of UK nationals, may remain hidden due to stigma, fear, or lack of recognition of trafficking indicators. Authorities will need to expand awareness campaigns and strengthen systems to ensure these cases are identified and addressed effectively.[7]

Additionally, exploitation within the nursing care sector, including in residential and domiciliary care, is an area that may be under-identified at present. Low pay, staff shortages and reliance on agency or migrant labour can create opportunities for exploitative recruitment and working conditions. Addressing this risk will require closer scrutiny of workforce practices, procurement processes and whistleblowing protections.

Displaced workers and financially stressed households may become more susceptible to coercive recruitment or exploitative working conditions. Exploitation within under-regulated sectors, such as hospitality, construction and increasingly the care sector could intensify as employers seek to cut costs. Local authorities will need to anticipate these shifts and adapt their prevention strategies to a changing labour market and economic environment.

Together, these factors underline the importance of building flexibility and resilience into local responses. This is to include robust data collection, proactive prevention measures and strategies capable of adapting to new forms of exploitation as they emerge.

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[7] *Modern Slavery: NRM & Duty to Notify statistics, 2024 summary* - includes data on referrals flagged as county lines, as well as gendered patterns of labour vs sexual exploitation. GOV.UK

8. Recommendations

8.1 For Local Authorities and Partners

- **Appoint Dedicated Modern Slavery Leads:** Designate a lead officer within each local authority to coordinate modern slavery referrals, partnerships and training, ensuring accountability and consistency.
- **Clarify Referral Protocols:** Establish clear, multi-agency agreements ensuring that the first responder organisation encountering a suspected case makes the initial NRM referral and safeguarding arrangements. Follow-up responsibilities, such as investigation, housing and long-term support, should then be coordinated through established multi-agency safeguarding structures to avoid delays, duplication, or gaps in care.
- **Strengthen Multi-Agency Collaboration:** Formalise the role of safeguarding boards, high-risk panels and data-sharing agreements to improve communication and case tracking across services.
- **Expand Training Across Frontline Services:** Provide comprehensive and regular training for non-specialist staff (e.g. GPs, housing officers, job centre staff, hostel workers) on recognising and responding to modern slavery indicators.
- **Enhance Prevention and Outreach:** Develop proactive engagement strategies targeting high-risk groups, such as rough sleepers, migrants and workers in unregulated labour sectors, through partnerships with NGOs, faith groups and community networks.
- **Address Temporary Housing Disparities:** Review local housing capacity to ensure sufficient temporary accommodation for victims awaiting NRM support through the Salvation Army, reducing the risk of re-exploitation.
- **Improve Support for Those with Insecure Immigration Status:** Create clear internal guidance and referral pathways for victims with NRPF or unresolved immigration cases, ensuring decisions are consistent and safeguarding is prioritised.

8.2 For Central Government and Policymakers

- **Align Policy with Local Realities:** Review the NRM's time-limited reflection period and funding mechanisms to ensure survivors receive adequate long-term support for reintegration.
- **Clarify Statutory Responsibilities for NRPF Victims:** Provide explicit national guidance and dedicated funding to support victims with insecure immigration status, reducing ambiguity for local authorities.
- **Increase Sustainable Funding:** Allocate resources not only for immediate crisis support but also for housing, employment pathways and mental health services that prevent re-exploitation.
- **Modern Slavery Leads:** Central government should provide dedicated funding streams to allow local authorities to appoint modern slavery leads, expand training and ensure adequate temporary housing provision.

- **Address Emerging Risks:** Integrate future-focused risks, such as AI-driven labour market disruption, underreported internal trafficking and exploitation in the care sector, into national strategies and guidance.
- **Improve Police Engagement:** Establish national expectations for police participation in modern slavery referrals and multi-agency panels to reduce variability across localities.

8.3 For Voluntary and Community Sector Stakeholders

- **Expand Community Awareness Campaigns:** Work with local authorities to increase public understanding of modern slavery, including internal trafficking and lesser-recognised sectors such as care work.
- **Support Proactive Identification:** Partner with frontline workers and outreach teams to engage vulnerable groups early, reducing reliance on reactive referrals.
- **Strengthen Survivor Support Networks:** Build capacity to provide long-term assistance, such as mentoring, skills training and mental health services, to complement statutory provision.
- **Collaborate on Data and Learning:** Share anonymised insights with local authorities and each other to improve understanding of trends and emerging forms of exploitation.
- **Advocate for Policy Change:** Use collective evidence to lobby for clearer national guidance, improved funding and stronger safeguards for vulnerable populations.

9. Conclusion

This study set out to understand how local authorities across London are responding to modern slavery and to identify opportunities for improvement. The findings reveal committed practitioners and examples of good practice, but also systemic gaps that leave some victims without consistent protection or long-term support.

Authorities demonstrated that meaningful progress is possible even under pressure. Embedding modern slavery checks into procurement processes, appointing specialist leads and running joint awareness campaigns with neighbouring councils and NGOs were cited as steps that strengthened local responses. High-risk multi-agency panels, where they exist, provided effective forums for coordinated decision-making and victim safeguarding. These examples point to practical actions that can be replicated more widely.

Yet, persistent challenges remain. Housing provision for victims awaiting NRM support through the Salvation Army varies dramatically, with some areas able to accommodate victims immediately and others facing acute shortages. Referral practices between police and local authorities are inconsistent with some areas relying on police to pass all cases, while others expect local authorities to do so, highlighting the need for standardised protocols. Survivors frequently disengage after the NRM reflection period because employment, mental health support, or immigration stability are not in place, leaving them vulnerable to re-exploitation.

Emerging risks add further urgency. Unregulated labour sectors such as nail bars, construction and hospitality remain a common source of exploitation. The care sector, often overlooked, presents opportunities for exploitation due to staff shortages and agency work. Underreported internal trafficking, particularly child criminal and sexual exploitation, risks remaining hidden.[8] And economic pressures, including inflation, cost-of-living increases and AI driven labour market disruption, may increase unemployment and push more people toward informal or exploitative work.

Addressing these challenges will require shared solutions. Authorities can strengthen training for frontline workers beyond safeguarding specialists, replicate successful outreach and partnership models and invest in sustainable housing capacity. Central government can provide clearer statutory guidance on NRPF cases, extend funding for long-term survivor support and ensure police engagement is consistent. Voluntary and community organisations can expand outreach and survivor mentoring programmes, working alongside statutory services to close gaps.

It is recognised that local authorities are operating under significant financial constraints and many of the measures outlined will require sustained investment.

By acting on these insights, London's response can shift from a primarily reactive system to one that is strategic, preventative and survivor-focused, ensuring that victims are not only identified and safeguarded but also supported to rebuild their lives with stability and dignity.

10. About the Author

Antony Botting is a consultant specialising in modern slavery and the founder of Botting Anti-Slavery, a consultancy advising public authorities and private sector organisations on improving responses to exploitation. He previously led modern slavery strategy for a London borough and has worked closely with statutory agencies and the voluntary sector to strengthen victim identification, referral processes and long-term survivor support. His consultancy work focuses on building effective, coordinated and survivor-centred approaches to tackling modern slavery.

11. Appendices

A. Research Questions (Crib Sheet)

The following crib sheet was used to guide all semi-structured discussions with local authority representatives. The questions were designed to prompt open, reflective responses while ensuring consistency across interviews:

1. How does your team/organisation identify potential victims of modern slavery?
2. What referral processes or pathways are in place once a victim is identified?

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[8] NSPCC: "Almost 87,000 sexual offences against children were recorded by police in the past year" - large data point for child sexual exploitation. NSPCC

3. What challenges do you face in supporting victims, both immediately and long-term?
4. How do you work with partner agencies (e.g., police, voluntary sector, other borough services)?
5. What training or awareness-raising activities exist for frontline staff?
6. Are there specific vulnerabilities to modern slavery that are unique to your borough?
7. What would additional support - locally or nationally - look like to improve your response?
8. Is there anything else you feel is important to highlight regarding modern slavery in your locality?

B. Comparative Thematic Matrix

(See below for an anonymised summary of key insights across participating authorities. Borough names and numbers have been removed to preserve confidentiality.)

Theme	Authority Insights (Aggregated)
Effectiveness & Practical Challenges	Reliance on referrals rather than proactive detection; disengagement after NRM reflection period; resource pressures in social care.
Coordination & Partnership Working	Safeguarding boards and high risk panels are valuable but inconsistently used; differences in referral responsibility between police and local authorities.
Training & Awareness	Structured training in some areas; ad hoc or limited training elsewhere; knowledge gaps among GPs, housing officers and job centres.
Local Authority-Specific Challenges	Disparity in temporary housing availability for victims awaiting NRM support; unregulated labour sectors; transient populations; NRPF cases.
Prevention & Early Intervention	Limited proactive outreach; need for stronger community engagement.
Long-Term Support & Survivor Outcomes	Gaps in housing, employment and mental health services; risk of re-exploitation; reliance on voluntary sector capacity.
Policy & Strategic Priorities	Need for clearer statutory guidance, sustainable funding and dedicated modern slavery leads.

C. Illustrative Quotes

(All quotes are anonymised and paraphrased where necessary to prevent identification of individuals or local authorities.)

- *"We often find out about potential victims only because a partner agency flags them. Proactive identification isn't happening as much as it should."*
- *"Housing is a huge barrier. We simply don't have the stock to keep victims safe while NRM support is arranged."*

- *"Our safeguarding board works well when cases are complex, but the police engagement isn't consistent."*
- *"Training exists, but GPs and housing officers rarely recognise the signs. They're often the first point of contact."*
- *"The care sector worries me. It's under the radar. Recruitment fees and debt bondage are real issues, but we're not set up to catch it."*
- *"Without clearer guidance for NRPF cases, decisions become case-by-case, which delays safeguarding and leaves victims at risk."*
- *"Some localities pass everything to the police; here, it's the opposite. The police pass all suspected cases to us. It's confusing without a standard approach."*
- *"The voluntary sector is plugging gaps, but they're stretched thin. Without sustainable funding, survivors will keep slipping through."*
- *"NRM referrals can feel like a black hole - we send them off but rarely get feedback, which makes it hard to plan long-term support."*
- *"Outreach into unregulated sectors like car washes or small construction sites is minimal. We simply don't have the resources or legal backing."*
- *"The Salvation Army support is excellent, but the gap before it starts can leave victims exposed to re-exploitation."*
- *"Awareness campaigns are useful, but without housing or mental health support to back them up, we risk identifying victims we can't adequately help."*