

Annex to Modern Slavery PEC Briefing: Priorities for IASC's Strategic Plan (15 March 2024)

To ensure that there is meaningful engagement of lived experience expertise (LEE), the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC) has identified the following 12 core principles to support healthy engagement of those who hold lived experience of modern slavery. These have been generated by the PEC's Lived Experience Engagement team, drawing on experience of working directly with people with lived experience of modern slavery, including the Centre's Lived Experience Advisory Panel. This document was first published in March 2024 to support the PEC's briefing on the IASC's Strategic Plan, however we view this as a living document that we will continue to discuss with the LEAP and other survivor-led activities, and to update in line with our learnings

- **Power dynamics**

Power dynamics refer to the degree of influence or control one person or group can exercise over another person or group and within the modern slavery sector, and it is particularly important to consider power dynamics when engaging and working alongside people who hold lived experience of modern slavery or human trafficking. If power dynamics are not addressed, it can define the level of productivity and activeness of the lived experience expert when feeding their expertise into initiatives designed to support them. Often inequality in power is rooted in people's different life experiences, especially when considering the wider social and economic differences. With this in mind, professionals engaging and working with lived experience need to continually address inequality in their professional relationships.

- **What do we mean by 'lived experience expertise'?**

It's important to acknowledge that people who hold lived experience are more than just their experiences, and therefore want to be treated equally. Many lived experienced experts have gained a wealth of skills and insight into complex systemic and systematic socio-political systems and structures which simply cannot be gained from literature alone.

- **Tokenism**

Tokenism is an artificial form of diversity that creates a superficial appearance of equality without truly achieving it. For people who hold lived experience of modern slavery and human trafficking, tokenism reduces a lived experience expert's agency. Professionals working alongside lived experience experts (LEEs) should be mindful of intersectionality.

Intersectionality is the extent to which multiple forms of discrimination combine or overlap in the experiences that some groups in society may face. For example, you may have two LEE with similar experiences however their gender, immigration status and/ or sexual orientation, may alter their experience in comparison to their peers. The direct needs of LEEs need to be considered, as opposed to putting of putting all LEE's together and assuming they all have the same experiences and needs, and ensure that tasks undertaken by LEEs are inclusive,

accessible, productive and meaningful. To cultivate trust and preserve safe spaces for meaningful engagement, open channels of communication and transparency of information should be adopted practices to ensure healthy engagement. To help avoid tokenistic behaviour, organisations and/or professionals should be specific about any structures and results they want to create and be mindful that one person who holds lived experience does not represent expertise of human trafficking and/or modern slavery at large. It is important to reach beyond usual contacts and make space for new faces. Those working with LEEs need to ensure accountability and transparency about how a lived experience expert's contributions and ideas are being considered and implemented, otherwise LEE can be left feeling that they are being used to justify existing plans.

- **Trauma-informed practice**

Trauma-informed practice is rooted in the understanding that exposure to trauma for an individual can impact areas of development within their life. Adopting a trauma-informed approach is not something you switch on and off and should be a consistent practice embedded into everyday engagements. Adopting trauma-informed practice creates safe spaces for individuals to be seen and heard for their expertise and skill as opposed to solely basing their contributions on their experience, which can have lasting effects on mental health, self-esteem and self-worth. Effective implementation of trauma-informed practice avoids re-traumatisation of individuals.

Patronisation is also a response where fellow colleagues that feel uncomfortable in their engagement style try to mask their discomfort by being overly nice and or act in a 'sycophant' manner. Fear is another response where a colleague will simply avoid engagement with lived experience experts and will avoid one-to-one situations. It's therefore important for all people within an organisation that works with lived experience experts to be encouraged and equipped to work in trauma-informed ways, such as provision of trauma-informed training for all staff.

- **Gatekeeping**

Gatekeeping is the practice of professionals deciding for the people they support whether and how they may access a space, a form of support or a service, which poses a barrier to the liberation and empowerment of LEE in practice. Lived experience experts encourage professionals working with them to avoid well-meaning attempts to protect a LEE by keeping them away from projects which concern the kinds of experiences they have had. A lived experience expert should, as long as they are well informed and the work is undertaken with an understanding of trauma-informed practice, be able to decide for themselves which projects are or are not suitable for them based on their mental health needs.

- **Early and sustained co-production with lived experience experts**

The earlier the inclusion of a lived experience expert in work directly concerning them, the better. Ideally, this should occur at the beginning of budgeting for a project and the initial design stages. Co-production is about the sharing of power. It incorporates thinking about inclusive ways of working that embeds the experience, knowledge and skills of those with lived

experience from conception, through the design, production and delivery stages. Establishing healthy collaboration styles and ways of working are key to ensuring that LEE can meaningfully inject their expertise into initiatives that concern them.

- **Inclusivity**

The inclusion of a diverse group of LEE, in any stage of development, is crucial to the underpinning of meaningful engagement. It is important to ensure that a broad range of experiences are included and heard. This will require adapting both existing and future work to the gender, age, sexuality race, culture, nationality, religion and class of LEE's, to provide equal opportunities for access and development. Being able to have diverse panels of people with lived experience across different regions creates a larger scope for inclusive participation.

- **Safeguarding procedures**

Safeguarding measures must be implemented to ensure that there is no risk of harm to anyone involved. These measures should consider both physical as well as psychological harm. Survivors of modern slavery may have an anonymity order in place to protect their identity and therefore extra consideration and thought needs to be given to any identifying information which may include images, locations, names, and immigration matters. None of these information types should be published without written informed consent. Any personal identifying information should be kept safe, in line with data protection requirements and deleted or redacted upon request. Financial safeguarding also should be included as many survivors of modern slavery are left in a state of poverty or destitution and have restrictions in place which limit their access to employment and/or education. Financial harm can surface long after their engagement due to the nature of some financial and legal systems. Further guidance on good practice can be found in the forthcoming Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre LEAP '*A toolkit for payment guidance for anti-slavery professionals and lived experience experts*'.

- **Fair remuneration**

Ensuring that lived experience experts are remunerated appropriately can often bring challenges due to the personal circumstances of the survivor themselves. These challenges are further fuelled by a lack of published resources and accessible guidance from relevant Government Departments such as the Home Office and Department for Work and Pensions. Where lived experience experts are included in work concerning them, fair remuneration is important to factor into a project's budget at the offset. The amount of remuneration should be reflective of any additional emotional labour endured to fulfil the role, meaning that the pay is higher than for other professionals for instance and cover any extra expenses that result from having lived experience. Remuneration should be paid on time, any expenses should be covered in advance, and support provided to lived experience experts to navigate self-assessment tax returns. Remuneration in the form of BACS should factor in any potential impact on receivership of benefits, legal aid and/or criminal proceedings etc. Further guidance can be found in the forthcoming Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre LEAP '*A toolkit for payment guidance for anti-slavery professionals and lived experience experts*'.

- **Transparency and informed consent**

Informed consent, to any participation that may be undertaken by those with lived experience of modern slavery, is vitally important to ensure that they have full agency and autonomy over any decision that they make. The only way of ensuring this is to provide full transparency and ensure that all processes, policies, and communications are fully accessible, and any questions are quickly addressed. Communication and accountability must be clear, with decision-making processes being honest and open to feedback. The key feature of modern slavery is being completely under the control of another which involves a removal of self-identity and the ability to make any decision for oneself. Not being fully informed or being expected to participate without choice can be reminiscent of their experience and subsequently may affect their mental health. To address any doubt as to whether fully informed consent has been given, the lived experienced expert should have the ability to withdraw and retract any information should they wish. Survivors of modern slavery are often vulnerable to being further or re-exploited and may remain at risk of both present and future potential harm. This means that they often have to apply extra considerations when making decisions regarding any information that they may share.

- **Empowerment**

Empowerment equips and provides LEEs with the opportunity to exercise their own agency and independence, and should be positive and liberating for those with lived experience of modern slavery. It should enable them to look forward with hope for the future and should focus on strengths by celebrating all achievements. The ability to influence and access resources should be made available. Empowering lived experience experts prevents re-traumatisation and acts as a foundation to the social, economic and educational growth and development of the LEE, whilst exposing them to future opportunities. Empowerment comes from a place of supporting one another.

- **Equity**

Unequal power dynamics cannot be prevented without ensuring that equity and equality are fully addressed. Equitable engagement requires an assurance that those with lived experience have equal accessibility, training and skills as those that do not hold lived experience. Due to multiple disadvantages that lived experienced experts have endured along with displacement and socio-economic factors, access to education and resources may be limited. It is important that lived experienced experts are included on all 'in-house' training programmes and given any necessary extra training and upskilled prior to their engagement role. This may require an overhaul of traditional organisational policies as well as organisational restructuring. It should never be assumed that a lack of recognised professional qualifications is an indicator of intelligence or performance levels. Along with training, equitable provisions should include accessibility, such as, but not confined to, translators, technology and appropriate software and provisions for any extra needs identified on an individual level.