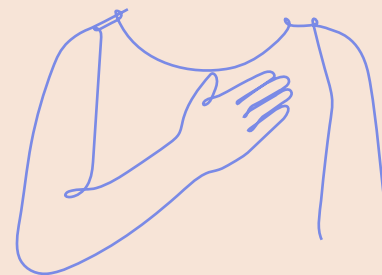


Policy brief:

# Survivor support

Based on the Modern Slavery PEC  
funded research portfolio



Modern Slavery PEC Policy Brief 2023

This Policy Brief by the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC) synthesises findings and identifies promising practices and key evidenced-based recommendations emerging from seven research projects funded by the Centre on the theme of survivor support. The Brief also identifies ongoing evidence gaps and reflections on where next for research on survivor support.

Understanding the effectiveness of support in meeting recovery needs and longer-term outcomes for survivors as well as how to improve access to justice for vulnerable groups is one of the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre's (Modern Slavery PEC) five priority research areas.<sup>1</sup> The Centre has made a significant investment in this research area, funding a portfolio of five 12-month projects through an open call for research<sup>2</sup> to explore how the UK's support system could be improved to ensure better outcomes for adult and child survivors of modern slavery. In addition, the PEC has funded three targeted research projects on various themes linked to adult survivor support designed to respond to particular evidence gaps, as identified by the Centre and through consultation with research users, two of which have been published.

This represented one of the deepest, wide-ranging, systematic and survivor-informed group of research projects ever commissioned on survivor support in the UK. The unique PEC model of funding meant that it included a large number of partners across various institutions and was especially innovative in different ways to be more inclusive in the conduct of research.

## 12-month projects exploring how to improve survivor support

- Murphy, C., Heys, A., Barlow, C., Gleich, L., and Wilkinson, S., (2022) [‘Identifying Pathways to Support British Victims of Modern Slavery towards Safety and Recovery: A Scoping Study’](#)
- Hynes, P., Connolly, H., Durán, L., with Durr, P., Matar, E., and Haydon, P., (2022) [‘Creating stable futures: human trafficking, participation and outcomes for children’](#)
- Paphitis, S., Jannesari, S., Witkin, R., Damara, B., Joseph, J., Triantafillou, O., Dang, M., Howarth, E., Katona, C., Wright, N., Sit, Q., and Oram, S. (2023) [‘The Modern Slavery Core Outcome Set’](#)

- Grant, M., Fotopoulou, M., Hunter, S., Malloch, M., Rigby, P., and Taylor, K. (2023), '[Survivor-informed support for trafficked children in Scotland](#)' [Scotland: survivor-informed support for trafficked children](#)
- Dang, M., Bradbury-Jones, C., Thomas, S., Rinaldi-Semione, J., Wright, N., Brotherton, V., Esiovwa, N., Barrow, J., Johannes, K. (2023), '[Placing survivor wellbeing on the policy and evidence map](#)'

### Targeted research on survivor support

- Gauci, J.-P., Magugliani, N., Trajer, J., (2023) '[Impacts of a lack of legal advice on adults with lived experience of modern slavery](#)'
- Polizzi, G., D'Arcy, J., Harris, R., Yates, S., Cullen, C., Andrew, B., Barrera, P. (2023) '[Evaluating the provision of distributed technology to adults with lived experience of modern slavery](#)'

A synopsis of each project and a list of all reports' recommendations can be found in the standalone [Appendix](#).

## Methodology

This policy brief was produced by the Modern Slavery PEC's policy impact team, with input from the research and lived experience engagement team. The fieldwork of the PEC-funded projects covered in this brief primarily took place in 2021 and 2022, and thus reflects the legislative, policy and practice context in place at that time. Key themes, promising practices and recommendations are tailored for UK-based policymakers as well as practitioners. This brief draws upon and is informed by evidence-based recommendations generated in the respective research projects. The brief recognises the dynamic nature of the policy area of survivor support, and recent developments which post-date the projects, including implementation of modern slavery measures in the Nationality and Borders Act and the enactment of the Illegal Migration Bill.<sup>3</sup>

Learnings and reflections on how the projects engaged people with lived experience in their research are out of scope of this brief.

The [Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre](#) (Modern Slavery PEC) was created by the investment of public funding to enhance understanding of modern slavery and transform the effectiveness of law and policies designed to address it.<sup>4</sup>

The Modern Slavery PEC funds research to provide independent, innovative and authoritative insight and analysis on modern slavery. The Modern Slavery PEC is an impartial organisation and our focus is on ensuring the best available evidence and analysis is available for policymakers and law-makers.

We are led by evidence and our belief that policies are more effective when they are firmly underpinned by evidence grounded in robust research and data. Our approach is rooted in human rights.

## Headlines

The innovative approach of these projects, in particular being informed by survivors and conducted by research teams with a wide range of expertise, led to new insights and new evidence. The evidence generated by the projects challenges the way we understand established concepts and terminology, and highlights the key factors and barriers to what can be considered success in providing support to people with lived experience of modern slavery.

### **1. A survivor-informed focus on outcomes can influence agendas for policies, research and interventions. Evidence shows a need for policies, research and interventions to adopt survivor-informed outcomes for 'recovery' that recognise the challenges and limitations of the term as well as its iterative, cyclical, non-linear, non-timebound nature and its connection to the wider context of people's lives**

- 'Recovery' is a contested term, which can have the effect of defining survivors by their experience of trauma or dismissing personal experiences.
- Across the research projects, there was diversity in how survivors described 'recovery'.
- 'Recovery' was seen by some survivors as an end goal, by others as a life-long process, or being able to make choices, plan for the future, the regaining of ordinary life and to not be defined by an experience of trafficking. Outcomes for recovery were described by some as key life aspirations
- There is an interconnection between wellbeing and recovery with some survivors describing wellbeing as the ability to function and manage the impact of trauma on a day-to-day basis
- Outcomes of 'recovery' were described as holistic, cyclical, non-linear, non-timebound and connected with the wider context of people's lives
- Consensus-driven participatory research with adult survivors of modern slavery identified a non-exhaustive, minimum core set of seven outcomes to be used holistically and promote inter-agency collaboration and integration to deliver interventions for adult survivor recovery and reintegration. The seven outcomes also provide a framework for policy and service design and evaluation.
- Participatory research with young people who had experienced trafficking and had migrated to the UK identified 25 outcomes as important and meaningful to them plus 86 specific Indicators based around the four General Principles of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These were based on what young people identified they would need to see positive changes to happen in their lives and the lives of others, now and in the future.

- Across several projects, both adults and young people with lived experience of modern slavery described the need for physical and psychological safety as a key outcome for recovery and wellbeing needs, particularly highlighting appropriate accommodation. Young people described safety as interlinked with identity, community and autonomy and foundational to realising other recovery outcomes.

## **2. Evidence from these projects highlighted ways to improve the delivery of support services, including by providing holistic, long-term, trauma-informed and culturally competent interventions and developing trusted relationships between practitioners and survivors**

- Several projects highlighted that long-term support is key for 'recovery'
- Digital access enabling the use of services aimed to support adults' recovery is particularly important for survivor wellbeing.
- Projects consistently highlighted the importance of trauma-informed and culturally competent interventions and trusted relationships between practitioners and people with lived experience of modern slavery, to promote agency, safety and to reduce the potential risks of further exploitation.

## **3. Evidence from these projects demonstrates practical and structural barriers to more effective support for survivors of modern slavery**

- Uncertainty around survivors' entitlements impacts on access to support, including legal aid, psychological assistance, as well as the interrelationship between specialised National Referral Mechanism (NRM) support and other statutory entitlements for British nationals, with some adult survivors entering the NRM without awareness of doing so or without providing consent.
- Most projects identified several practical barriers to accessing entitlements such as language, geography, lack of funding, lack of resources and capacity, long waiting lists, restrictive eligibility criteria, inconsistent provision, lack of childcare and lack of travel costs
- The research projects focusing on children discussed structural, systemic and discriminatory barriers, particularly in the immigration, asylum, criminal justice system and support in care.

#### 4. Evidence from these projects shows that wider systems such as immigration and housing often have a negative impact on support and wellbeing for survivors

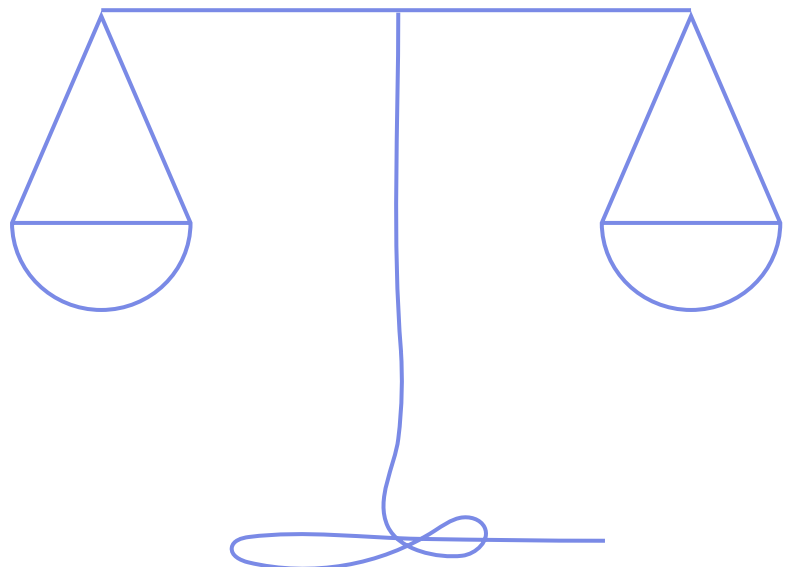
- Procedural delays in criminal prosecutions, as well as NRM and asylum decisions negatively impact on survivors' wellbeing and contribute to the anguish and harm of limbo.
- Multi agency coordination and consistency of services between specialised modern slavery services and wider systems affecting survivors' lives such as housing, mental health services, the immigration and asylum system is key to supporting identification and recovery.
- Requirements to retell traumatic experiences of exploitation and not being believed can create additional harm, negatively impact on wellbeing.

## Priority Recommendations

- The UK Government, devolved administrations and service providers should develop mechanisms for the meaningful participation of adults and children with lived experience of modern slavery in the design, development and evaluation of policies and interventions that affect them, which are trauma-informed, prevent harm, are appropriately remunerated and non-tokenistic. In particular, this should be considered in the design of future adult survivor support models including the re-tendering of the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract for England and Wales.
- The Home Office, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and local authorities must provide access to secure and appropriate safe accommodation for adults and children with lived experience of modern slavery in line with Slavery and Trafficking Care Standards, which as a minimum standard promotes respect, is gender-sensitive, allows for the proper investigation of complaints and has cooking and cleaning facilities. Given the issues identified with appropriate accommodation and risks of homelessness ([see p. 20](#)), adults with positive Reasonable Grounds decisions should be exempt from the "Local Connection" requirement for social housing and 'priority need' housing status should be extended to adult survivors with a positive Conclusive Grounds decision who are eligible for assistance.
- The Home Office and local authority children's services should work with the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), the NHS and local healthcare providers to provide access to appropriate mental health services for adults and children with lived experience of modern slavery in line with Slavery and Trafficking Care Standards, enabling access to activities that support mental wellbeing beyond counselling and psychotherapy, such as exercise and volunteering.

- The UK Government and devolved administrations need to ensure that commissioned services in the new Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (and equivalent specialist services in Scotland and NI) are properly resourced to provide consistent and appropriate long-term support, taking a trauma informed approach as their starting point, to adults with lived experience of modern slavery.
- The Home Office should improve the clarity of adults' support entitlements in primary legislation and statutory guidance, particularly with respect to psychological assistance, wellbeing support and access to legal advice, working closely with other relevant government departments such as DHSC and Ministry of Justice (MoJ).
- The Home Office, Department for Education and devolved administrations should address the barriers to accessing support. In particular, the Home Office should explore how childcare and transport costs for adults attending support service appointments are compensated and reimbursed through the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract and explore funding to assist adult and child survivors in meeting the costs of re-engaging with family, social support networks and faith communities.

The Policy Brief reflects on [where next for research on survivor support on p23](#).



# Key themes and evidence-based recommendations

**1. A survivor-informed focus on outcomes can influence agendas for policies, research and interventions. Evidence shows a need for policies, research and interventions to adopt survivor-informed outcomes for 'recovery' that recognise the challenges and limitations of the term as well as its iterative, cyclical, non-linear, non-timebound nature and its connection to the wider context of people's lives**

'Recovery' is a contested term, which can have the effect of defining survivors by their experience of trauma or dismissing personal experiences. In participatory consensus-driven research with adult survivors of modern slavery to identify a minimum set of core outcomes for use in the design, delivery and evaluation of interventions (hereafter 'MSCOS project'), survivors described that the term 'recovery' defines survivors by their experience of trauma and can imply an abnormality that needs fixing, or dismisses their experiences and exerts a pressure to meet targets, with a failure to do so impacting on self-esteem. Some survivors did not feel that a full recovery was possible given an experience of trafficking changed people forever, with others concerned that an assessment of recovery might entail losing access to support. Other terms were suggested for use such as healing, restoration and reintegration which imply the ongoing and iterative nature of post-trafficking experiences.<sup>5</sup>

Across the research projects, there was diversity in how survivors described 'recovery'. Recovery was seen by some survivors as an end goal, by others as a life-long process, or at being able to make choices, plan for the future, the regaining of ordinary life and to not be defined by an experience of trafficking. Outcomes for recovery were described by some as key life goals. There is an interconnection between wellbeing and recovery with some survivors describing wellbeing as the ability to function and manage the impact of trauma on a day-to-day basis. Research exploring adult survivors' access to psychological assistance found that survivor support policy uses a narrow, medical approach to mental health, related to diagnosed psychiatric conditions. In contrast, survivors of modern slavery and those that support them highlighted the importance of activities that support wider mental wellbeing, which they understood as "the ability to function and manage the impact of trauma on a day-to-day basis" whereas psychological recovery was often seen as an end goal.<sup>6</sup> In the MSCOS project, outcomes were described by survivors as "key life goals, and symbols of reintegration, or the result of reclaiming what was lost during the trafficking experience".<sup>7</sup> In research with professionals and young people who had experienced trafficking and migrated to Scotland, young people and professionals used various definitions of recovery, describing it as: a long, even life-long, process; being able and feeling confident to make and voice choices; regaining a sense of

control; the ability to think about the future and make plans, as well as acknowledging exploitative experiences. The research indicated that according to both young people and professionals, recovery does not equate to trauma 'disappearing' but rather that it becomes manageable and that children and young people come to understand that they are not defined by their experience of trafficking.<sup>8</sup>

*"Recovery. I'm translating it good in my head, it would mean to me, getting better. And maybe people who come from trauma, they recover from that, they get better slowly, slowly. Trying to support them on getting better and recover. It's not always being sick, where you need to recover, it's mental health, it's emotional support, where you need to recover and move on with your life".*

Interview 6, young person, from 'Survivor-informed support for trafficked children in Scotland' study

The voices of children and young people who are affected by human trafficking are missing from debates in the UK. In a further participatory research project, the Creating Stable Futures project (hereafter 'CSF project') young people who had experienced trafficking and had migrated to the UK were reported to have described outcomes as "interconnected, difficult to disaggregate, rarely linear and interlinked with the wider contexts and structures of their lives".<sup>9</sup> They outlined how outcomes can change over time, alongside changing needs, and in response to their experiences of the systems, people and services they encounter. They conceptualised recovery aligned with the recovery of ordinary life, identifying a clear relationship between protection and inclusion outcomes as well as being able to look to the future. Their physical, emotional and social development was also a key focus. Young people themselves understood what the language, grammar and expression of 'good' systems and practices looked like.<sup>10</sup>

## Promising practices: Community and creative activities

In research exploring access to psychological assistance, adult survivors involved in workshops identified the importance of using their own "internal psychological resources" and taking part in activities that supported mental wellbeing, including physical and creative activities, and the value of being part of community activities, such as volunteering. As well as community resources such as education and healthcare, survivors spoke of "joining choirs, connecting with faith communities and having access to nature, sports and social groups as activities that supported their wellbeing".<sup>11</sup>

Young people who have experienced trafficking and migrated to Scotland with a positive conclusive grounds decision and who participated in interviews "indicated a high degree of satisfaction" with the support provided by and through the Scottish Guardianship Service, particularly highlighting activities that provided a structure to daily life and that brought them into contact with other young people, especially the informal support provided through peer networks.<sup>12</sup>



**Outcomes of 'recovery' were described as holistic, cyclical, non-linear, non-timebound and connected with the wider context of people's lives.** The MSCOS project highlighted a need for researchers, support providers and policymakers to consider outcomes for recovery in a holistic way. The research highlighted that that outcomes for recovery can be relevant at different stages of someone's journey, which are not linear paths, meaning that outcomes should be measured at consistent and regular time points, irrespective of individual circumstances.<sup>13</sup> The CSF project detailed how young people who had migrated to the UK discussed that individual outcomes are not confined within particular stages or timeframes and all outcomes they identified as inter-related, important and meaningful to them should be seen as key to realising a positive future in the long-term.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, in the Scottish study whilst the research project had framed children's short, medium and long-term experiences in numbers of years, this conception obscured how young people's lives were shaped by "critical junctures" i.e. key events or processes that had either a positive or negative impact.<sup>15</sup>

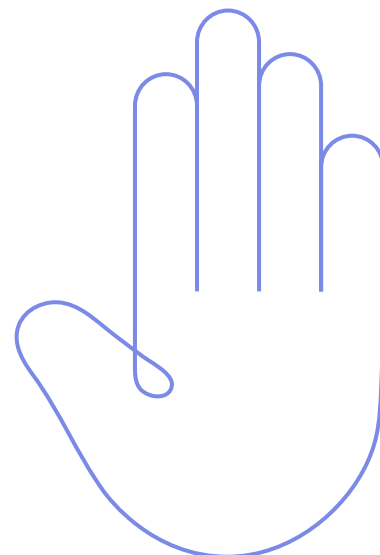
## Promising practices: survivor informed outcomes

The MSCOS project identified a non-exhaustive, minimum core set of seven outcomes, to be used holistically and promote inter-agency collaboration and integration to deliver interventions for adult survivor recovery and reintegration, as well as provide a framework for policy and service design and evaluation. The seven outcomes extend across individual, organisational, governmental, and societal levels thereby moving away from an expectation that achieving recovery and outcomes is placed mostly on survivors and towards a model emphasising the role of institutions and systems, highlighting the need for collaboration and integration:

- Secure and suitable housing
- Safety from any trafficker or other abuser
- Long-term, consistent support
- Compassionate, trauma informed services
- Finding purpose in life and self-actualisation
- Access to medical treatment
- Access to education.<sup>16</sup>

The CSF project conducted participatory research with young people who had experienced trafficking and had migrated to the UK and identified 25 outcomes as important and meaningful to them and 86 associated indicators. These are as set out according to the four General Principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development and the right to participation. Discussions around positive outcomes were structured around the themes of participation, inclusion, protection, empowerment and recovery. Young people highlighted as important rights-based outcomes "being safe and feeling safe, stability and peace, having trust in professionals and systems, being believed, and listened to, freedom, equality, access to quality legal advice and interpreters".<sup>17</sup>

Across several projects, both adults and young people with lived experience of modern slavery described the need for physical and psychological safety as a key outcome for recovery and wellbeing needs, particularly highlighting appropriate accommodation. Young people described safety as interlinked with identity, community and autonomy and foundational to realising other recovery outcomes. 'Safety from any trafficker or other abuser' was identified among the minimum core set of seven outcomes for adult survivors. The study highlighted that safety should be understood as sustained safety from abusers or new perpetrators given the risk of re-trafficking as well as psychological safety from traffickers, which involves multiple aspects including careful police handling, distance from traffickers, and access to a landline in safehouses to be able to reach emergency services.<sup>18</sup> Research with adult survivors and practitioners exploring access to psychological assistance described safety as the foundation for wellbeing for many survivors, relating to both physical safety including in relation to safehouse and asylum accommodation and psychological safety as it relates to engaging with service providers and statutory agencies. It also highlighted the "negative impact on wellbeing of a lack of autonomy for survivors due to lack of available choices, resources and awareness of rights".<sup>19</sup> In the CSF research project, young people who had experienced trafficking and had migrated to the UK identified safety, both being safe and feeling safe, as a key priority and foundational for the realisation of other outcomes. Physical safety was described in terms of age-appropriate accommodation and the role that police and interpreters can play in psychological safety. They discussed a search for safety and protection which drew on their strengths and capabilities.<sup>20</sup> Young people who had experienced trafficking and migrated to Scotland discussed safety, identity, community and autonomy as inter-linked factors that promote recovery. They described how feeling safe extends beyond physical safety and freedom from exploitation to include stability provided by familiar routines and regular contact with trusted individuals, as well as a sense of predictability about the future, without an insecure immigration status.<sup>21</sup> See spotlights below on the importance of and barriers in accessing [psychological assistance](#) and [appropriate accommodation](#).



## Key recommendations

(priority recommendations in **bold**)

- Whilst recognising the use of ‘recovery’ and ‘psychological assistance’ in relevant legal instruments, the UK Government, devolved administrations, service providers and researchers should recognise the limitations of these terms. When designing and implementing policies to provide support to survivors, these groups should take account of survivor-informed outcomes for recovery for both adults and children, which reflect the cyclical, non-linear and non-timebound nature of recovery
- The UK Government, devolved administrations and service providers should adopt a broader conception of psychological needs and related assistance that includes wellbeing, and ensure that policies and services reflect this.
- **The UK Government, devolved administrations and service providers should develop mechanisms for the meaningful participation of adults and children with lived experience of modern slavery in the design, development and evaluation of policies and interventions that affect them, which are trauma-informed, prevent harm, are appropriately remunerated and non-tokenistic. In particular, this should be considered in the design of future adult survivor support models including the re-tendering of the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract for England and Wales.**
- The UK Government and devolved administrations must ensure that all decisions about children in their individual cases and in the development of law and policy are made with their best interests as the primary consideration.
- The UK Government and devolved administrations, service providers and researchers should have regard to the Modern Slavery Core Outcome Set as the minimum standard set of outcomes to be used in research, service and intervention design, evaluation and development, and policymaking for adult survivors of modern slavery.
- The UK Government and devolved administrations should consider operationalising the child survivor led CSF Positive Outcomes Framework in a pilot study with populations who have arrived in the UK and who have experienced modern slavery to measure the effectiveness of current policies in achieving positive outcomes for children and young people with lived experience of modern slavery. This could be at either practice or policy level such as by frontline social workers to assess the progress of looked after child reviews and safety plans for individual children or by Local Authority children’s services in case-audit reviews to determine if the population of children are achieving the positive outcomes.

- **The Home Office, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and local authorities must provide access to secure and appropriate safe accommodation for adults and children with lived experience of modern slavery in line with Slavery and Trafficking Care Standards, which at a minimum standard promotes respect, is gender-sensitive, allows for the proper investigation of complaints and has cooking and cleaning facilities. Given the issues identified with appropriate accommodation and risks of homelessness (see p. 20), adults with positive Reasonable Grounds decisions should be exempt from the “Local Connection” requirement for social housing and ‘priority need’ housing status should be extended to adult survivors with a positive Conclusive Grounds decision who are eligible for assistance.**
- Accommodation providers should explore the creation of survivor-managed safe houses.
- **The Home Office and local authority children’s services should work with the Department for Health and Social care, the NHS and local healthcare providers to provide access to appropriate mental health services for adults and children with lived experience of modern slavery in line with Slavery and Trafficking Care Standards, enabling access to activities that support mental wellbeing beyond counselling and psychotherapy, such as exercise and volunteering.**
- The Home Office should evaluate the appropriateness of service provision on meeting adult survivors’ mental wellbeing needs at various stages of their NRM journey, in particular for psychological assistance.
- The Home Office should commission an independent evaluation of the appropriateness of all the accommodation it provides to adult survivors and related impact on wellbeing.



## 2. Evidence from these projects highlighted ways to improve the delivery of support services, including by providing holistic, long-term, trauma-informed and culturally competent interventions and developing trusted relationships between practitioners and survivors

Several projects highlighted that long-term support is key for 'recovery' 'Long-term, consistent support' was identified among the minimum core set of seven outcomes for adult survivors through consensus-driven participatory research. The study highlighted that key features should include that support is specifically tailored to an individual's needs, risks and circumstances which are regularly assessed. Other key features include that the support is consistent, enables the development of trusting relationships, available throughout a survivor's life that endures beyond the NRM, and that practitioners have training and supervision so as to avoid professional burnout.<sup>22</sup> Research exploring adult survivors' access to psychological assistance revealed that lack of stability in living circumstances made it difficult to focus on recovery. For some, therapy was withheld until a person was in a more settled situation, highlighting the need for psychological and wellbeing support to continue beyond the NRM and in a more stable position.<sup>23</sup> Research with British nationals described challenges associated with the reduction of support when transitioning from children's social care to adult social care, as survivors don't 'fit neatly into boxes' and such as the absence of a specific point of contact for adults, which can lead to further exploitation.<sup>24</sup> Research with young people who have experienced trafficking and migrated to Scotland highlighted that young people looking back over a longer timeframe of receiving support described a gradual process of developing knowledge of relevant systems, confidence in their language skills, and increasing autonomy over time, emphasising the importance of support beyond reaching adulthood.<sup>25</sup> Similarly in the CSF research, submissions to the global call for evidence and participatory research with young people who had experienced trafficking and had migrated to the UK, described gaps in support following transitions to adulthood as significant barriers to achieving good outcomes.<sup>26</sup>

**Digital access enabling the use of services aimed to support adults' recovery is particularly important for survivor wellbeing.** Research on the impact of providing technology to adult survivors of modern slavery indicated that digital access, enabling the use of services aimed to support recovery from exploitation, gaining independence and reintegration into society, is particularly important for survivor wellbeing. Digital access, both via devices such as smartphones and laptops, as well as data packages, are necessary for adults. Importantly not only to access support services but to also undertake essential practical tasks such as paying bills or shopping. However, digital access is also key to both personal and social engagement. This includes engaging with support groups and counselling but most importantly connecting with friends and family, and pursuing professional opportunities. Significant digital inclusion interventions predominantly take place outside the policy domain of support for survivors. There is therefore a need to link up digital inclusion support with survivor support.<sup>27</sup>

## Promising practices: digital inclusion

As part of research on the impact of providing technology to adult survivors of modern slavery, stakeholders interviewed were supported by various programmes in their use of digital technologies. For example the Scottish Government’s national ‘Connecting Scotland’ programme provided funding and equipment to society wide organisations including those who support survivors such as TARA. Similarly, the IOM Skills, Training and Reintegration (STAR) programme was directly focused on survivors and is as a recommended starting point for an example of the provision of digital technology and digital skills training.<sup>28</sup>

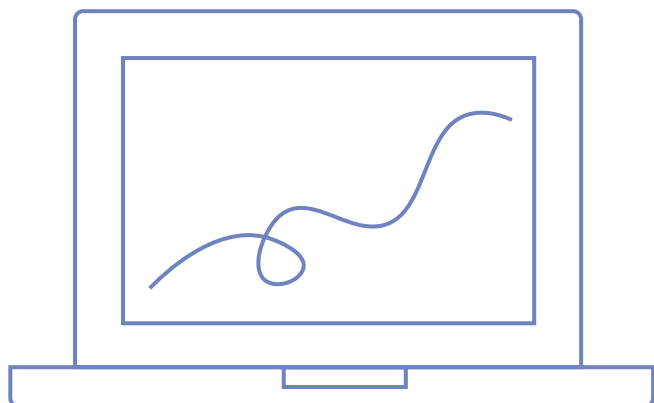
**Projects consistently highlighted the importance of trauma-informed and culturally competent interventions and trusted relationships between practitioners and people with lived experience of modern slavery, to promote agency, safety and to reduce the potential risks of further exploitation.** ‘Compassionate, trauma informed services’, was identified among the minimum core set of seven outcomes for adult survivors. This outcome refers to the need for staff to be trained and experienced so as to be able to develop trusting relationships, and deliver inclusive services sensitively, treating survivors as human beings, listening to them, speaking in their language, and working to and communicating realistic expectations.<sup>29</sup> Research with adult survivors and practitioners indicated that survivors consistently highlighted the need for “holistic, survivor-centred, and culturally appropriate psychological assistance with specialist services”, indicating practitioners’ lack of knowledge of modern slavery, cultural awareness or demonstration of racist attitudes.<sup>30</sup> Research with British national survivors identified that systems, including mental health and criminal justice are not set up to support the complexity of British national survivors’ needs and recovery pathways have not been established for British nationals. The research identified missed opportunities to prevent, identify and protect British nationals from being exploited, particularly those involved in criminal exploitation, among professionals from a range of services and organisations, which can affect trust in authorities, pushing people away from support and towards re-exploitation.<sup>31</sup> Research with young people in who have experienced trafficking and migrated to Scotland emphasised the length of time it can take to build trusting relationships, and their vital role in developing confidence and knowledge, leading to increased autonomy and promoting agency and choice.<sup>32</sup> The CSF research with young people who had experienced trafficking and had migrated to the UK, described a “default of disbelief in professional responses”, causing fear and feelings of unsafety, with some highlighting racist and discriminatory attitudes on occasion from social workers, the police and asylum caseworkers. Trust in professionals was particularly highlighted as key to protection and relational safety and being listened to as contingent on feeling safe with one young person suggesting “If you don’t trust, you don’t ask for protection”. Two specific outcomes were especially relevant here – Outcome 1: ‘I am believed’ with associated Indicators such as ‘Children report their account of

exploitation is believed’ – and Outcome 25: ‘I am trusted’ with associated Indicators of ‘Children report feeling trusted’ and ‘Children report they can trust professionals’. When young people were supported by independent guardians they felt heard, which in turn enabled better child protection.<sup>33</sup>

## Key recommendations

(priority recommendations in **bold**)

- **The UK Government and devolved administrations need to ensure that commissioned services in the new Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (and equivalent specialist services in Scotland and NI) are properly resourced to provide consistent and appropriate long term support, taking a trauma informed approach as their starting point, to adults with lived experience of modern slavery.**
- The UK Government and devolved administrations should allocate increased and more permanent funding to support the provision of digital technology and data to adult survivors. In particular the new Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract should include a minimum digital requirement for adults as well as supporting opportunities for adults’ digital skill and digital safeguarding training. Policymakers should also explore how to facilitate the donation of devices and data by technology companies to adult survivors of modern slavery.
- Policymakers and professionals working with adult or child survivors of modern slavery should receive adequate training and mentoring opportunities on trauma-informed methods of working and culturally competent approaches.
- The UK Government, devolved administrations, service providers, practitioners and researchers should have regard to the recommendations generated from the PEC funded research portfolio on survivor support and recovery (see full list in the Appendix) to improve the effectiveness of the policy and operation of the identification and support system for adults and children with lived experience of modern slavery.



### 3. Evidence from these projects demonstrates practical and structural barriers to more effective support for survivors of modern slavery

Uncertainty around adult survivors' entitlements impacts on access to support, including legal aid, psychological assistance, as well as the interrelationship between NRM support and other statutory entitlements for British nationals, with some adult survivors entering the NRM without awareness of doing so or without providing consent. Adult survivors and service providers have reported a lack of clarity on legal advice entitlements<sup>34</sup> as well as psychological assistance provided through the NRM together with a lack of clarity over what survivors' options are if such assistance does not meet their needs.<sup>35</sup> Research exploring adult survivors' access to psychological assistance indicated that participants often felt that they received insufficient information at the point of referral into the NRM, or that they did not have the time and support to understand the information provided to them. Survivors and service providers indicated that adult survivors are often entered into the NRM without informed consent, impacting on wellbeing.<sup>36</sup> Research with British national survivors identified confusion among professionals about how the NRM relates to entitlements under other legislative and policy frameworks, such as housing or social care, together with a lack of knowledge of the statutory entitlements of British nationals, with the result that British nationals are often not referred into the NRM, or miss opportunities to be offered access to relevant support both in and out of the NRM. The research also revealed that British nationals were often deemed ineligible for legal aid support due to having recourse to public funds, despite it being an entitlement.<sup>37</sup> Research on the impact of providing technology to adult survivors of modern slavery identified a lack of awareness about the NRM itself among some survivors receiving NRM support. This has implications in terms of whether survivors know about their rights and entitlements and their ability to provide informed consent.<sup>38</sup>

Most projects identified several practical barriers to accessing entitlements such as language, geography, lack of funding, lack of resources and capacity, long waiting lists, restrictive eligibility criteria, inconsistent provision, lack of childcare and lack of travel costs. Survivors and service providers described adult psychological support provided as being often resource-led as opposed to needs-led and adult survivors reported that long waiting lists and restrictive eligibility criteria prevented timely access, along with language and geographical barriers, as well as a lack of funding. Other barriers to accessing psychological assistance included a lack of childcare and the ability to pay up front for transport costs to get to appointments, noting issues in the functioning of the statutory entitlement, which it was reported to only be reimbursed after the first £10 spent.<sup>39</sup> Challenges in adults accessing legal advice have been identified with respect to (1) availability and capacity of legal service providers, (2) awareness of rights on behalf of both potential clients and referring organisations, and (3) support needed to facilitate access to legal advice in practice.<sup>40</sup> Research on the impact of providing technology to adult survivors of modern slavery highlighted the inconsistent provision of digital devices to



survivors in receipt of NRM support, due to its dependence on funding or donations, insufficient monitoring, and often temporary duration. Furthermore, current digital safety and skills training provision for survivors of modern slavery is often ad-hoc, varies across providers and lacks a balance between individualised, tailor-made support and formal training.<sup>41</sup> Research with British nationals reported geographical barriers in support provision, highlighting accommodation and inconsistent provision of Independent Child Trafficking Guardians.<sup>42</sup>

**The research projects focusing on children discussed structural, systemic and discriminatory barriers, particularly in the immigration, asylum, criminal justice system and support in care.** Based on a literature review, global call for evidence and participatory research with young people who had experienced trafficking and had migrated to the UK, the CSF research identified structural, systemic and discriminatory barriers to achieving positive outcomes, with immigration, asylum, criminal justice system and support in care highlighted as most crucial.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, the Scottish study highlighted the impact of “critical junctures” on young people’s lives, in particular the experience of navigating the asylum system, with delays in receiving decisions having serious impacts (see page 13).<sup>44</sup>

## Key recommendations

(priority recommendations in bold)

- The Home Office, Department for Education and local authorities should ensure adult and child survivors are provided with information on the services available to them throughout the period that they are provided with support in a language that they can understand, reviewing the context and distribution of existing materials such as leaflets.
- **The Home Office should improve the clarity of adults’ support entitlements in primary legislation and statutory guidance, particularly with respect to psychological assistance, wellbeing support and access to legal advice, working closely with other relevant government departments such as DHSC and MoJ.**
- **The Home Office, Department for Education and devolved administrations should address the barriers to accessing support. In particular the Home Office should explore how childcare and transport costs for adults attending support service appointments are compensated and reimbursed through the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract and explore funding to assist adult and child survivors in meeting the costs of re-engaging with family, social support networks and faith communities.**
- The Home Office should develop a programme of evaluating First Responder training materials which critically reviews how training specifically addresses the experience of modern slavery for different cohorts and considers the extent to which materials provide clarity for First Responders on survivors’ entitlements.

#### 4. Evidence from these projects shows that wider systems such as immigration and housing often have a negative impact on support and wellbeing for survivors

**Procedural delays in criminal prosecutions, as well as NRM and asylum decisions negatively impact on survivors' wellbeing and contribute to the anguish and harm of limbo.** Research exploring adult survivors' access to psychological assistance highlighted how wider policies and procedures impact negatively on survivor wellbeing, including the asylum process, regularising immigration status, accessing appropriate accommodation, delays in the NRM process and having No Recourse to Public Funds.<sup>45</sup> Research on adult survivors' experiences of accessing legal advice highlighted that a lack of access to quality legal advice can directly affect the recovery and wellbeing of people with lived experience of modern slavery by contributing to ongoing uncertainty, anguish and anxiety around their situation. The quality of legal advice was noted as a critical factor in its impact on individuals, determined by the technical expertise of the legal service provider, the adoption of a 'holistic approach' to legal advice provision, effective and trauma-informed communication with the client, and timeliness.<sup>46</sup> Young people who have experienced trafficking and migrated to Scotland as well as practitioners indicated that 'system trauma', a result of navigating complex systems of asylum, care and support, is one of the biggest barriers to recovery. In particular, navigating the asylum process, including being interviewed and waiting for a decision, was reported to interfere with nearly all other areas of their lives, impacting on mental and physical health, education or work and friendships. Many young people described their most difficult interactions with professionals as being interviews on their experiences of trafficking and/or the experiences that led them to move to the UK.<sup>47</sup> The CSF participatory research with young people who had experienced trafficking and had migrated to the UK identified a range of barriers to achieving positive outcomes, describing "the distressing nature of asylum decision making and some described waiting in immigration 'limbo' as being worse than experiences of exploitation" which can put young people at risk of re-trafficking. This research also found that young people found re-telling their histories traumatic with one young person saying "And we always have to start at the beginning. And after we tell the stories it brings back the memories and leaves us feeling bad again".<sup>48</sup>

**Multi agency coordination and consistency of services between specialised modern slavery services and wider systems affecting survivors' lives such as housing, mental health services, the immigration and asylum system is key to supporting identification and recovery.** The MSCOS project indicated that outcomes for adults with lived experience of modern slavery must be considered in a way that is multi-level and holistic, encompassing outcomes across a variety of areas that have traditionally been viewed as separate in interventions.<sup>49</sup> Adopting a holistic approach has been identified as a key factor affecting the quality of legal advice for adults, highlighting the need for greater collaboration and partnerships between statutory service providers and legal advice providers.<sup>50</sup> Research with British national survivors revealed that after an experience of exploitation, British survivors fall

through “significant gaps in support” delivered through the NRM or statutory support services.<sup>51</sup> Research with adult survivors indicated that psychological assistance cannot have a meaningful impact on survivors’ wellbeing without access to other entitlements including safe and secure accommodation, material assistance, legal advice and access to interpreters. Practitioners working with young people in Scotland who had experienced trafficking discussed effective multi-agency working as an ongoing area of concern, emphasising the need for clear coordination, specialist training and consistency of services across the country.<sup>52</sup>

## Promising practices: holistic services and multi-agency working

Through interviews and a survey of practitioners, research with British national survivors highlighted the benefit of multi-agency partnerships and networks and found “evidence of good practice when agencies were able to come together within the same space such as education, police, local authority, health (including mental health), victim navigators, youth workers, specialist support organisations”.<sup>53</sup>

Research on adult survivors’ experiences of accessing legal advice interviewed practitioners and identified a number of promising practices, including dedicated programmes in Scotland and Northern Ireland providing advice prior to entering the National Referral Mechanism; formal collaborations between NGOs, local authorities and legal service providers promoting a holistic approach to legal advice provision; and training and mentoring of legal practitioners by NGOs specialising in modern slavery issues.<sup>54</sup>

Elements of good practice highlighted in the study in Scotland by practitioners included “supervisor training to ensure the appropriateness of responses, early identification of trafficking indicators and timely needs assessment; training to ensure strengths-based practice approaches were adopted; multi-agency co-ordinated working with clear expectations from all participating agencies as well as integration of responses within the child protection system”. In particular, providing choice, empowerment consistency and reliability were discussed as vital aspects of good practice in providing support to young people, as well as child-friendly, compassionate and responsive ways of working.<sup>55</sup>

**Requirements to retell traumatic experiences of exploitation and not being believed, negatively impact on survivors’ wellbeing.** Research with adult survivors indicated that going through the NRM and asylum process concurrently can create psychological harm when requested to re-tell a traumatic history, with no support to manage the emotional impact as well as the negative effect on wellbeing when their credibility is challenged.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, participatory research with young people who had experienced trafficking and had migrated to the UK found that a need to repeat personal information to each professional service young people came into contact with, had the effect of reopening traumatic experiences and setting them back from recovery.<sup>57</sup>

## Key recommendations

(priority recommendations in bold)

- The Home Office competent authorities and asylum casework teams must be adequately resourced and trained to ensure timely decision making on modern slavery and trafficking NRM decisions for adults and children, as well as asylum decisions and to address the backlogs.
- The Home Office should set up Service Level Agreements/Memoranda of Understanding to facilitate the sharing of relevant information related to an NRM referral within the 14 day target timescale and collect data to monitor how information sharing functions in practice for different cohorts.
- The Home Office should publish their evaluation of the Devolving Child Decision Making pilot and consider relevant learnings on timely decision-making as well as learnings applicable to adult decision-making, in particular on the efficiency of decision-making.
- The Home Office should develop mechanisms for greater cross-Whitehall collaboration on survivor recovery and support, such as a senior board of relevant government departments to enhance collaboration and provide clarity on roles and responsibilities.
- The Home Office and devolved administrations should further develop partnerships between specialist adult modern slavery support services with wider systems such as housing and health to increase understanding of survivors' entitlements, and to promote holistic, coordinated and consistent services.
- Local Authorities' Safeguarding Adult Boards and Child Safeguarding Partnerships should coordinate the creation of harmonised and integrated multi-agency safeguarding policies and procedures with clear guidance about modern slavery and exploitation which also include young people in transition between child and adult services.
- Every local authority should have a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) designated lead on modern slavery (in line with Statutory Guidance which recommends this as a principle for referral pathways) to improve understanding of survivors' statutory entitlements and who should work in regular contact with Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract subcontractors running safe houses or outreach support in their area.
- Greater collaboration between legal advice providers and frontline organisations delivering adult Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract services should be promoted, including through partnerships that incorporate feedback sessions and mutual training opportunities to improve the understanding of legal needs, timely supported referrals and promote a model of holistic legal advice. Frontline organisations should receive additional support (including training and financial support) to implement these measures.

## Spotlight: Psychological assistance

'Access to medical treatment' was identified among the minimum core set of seven outcomes for adult survivors in the MSCOS project. The study highlighted that key features should include access to appropriate healthcare services to meet physical, psychological and dental health needs, including funds for travel. The report also described a "desperate need" for therapists to specialise in evidence-based trauma therapy, the need for group therapy and culturally appropriate support.<sup>58</sup>

Research with British national survivors identified a lack of knowledge and training to support British nationals with substance misuse issues, a lack of availability of specialised services, limited numbers of sessions with mental health professionals, long waiting lists and unsuccessful referrals to specialised services.<sup>59</sup>

Research exploring adult survivors' access to psychological assistance highlighted the "vital importance" of mental wellbeing and psychological assistance. Of 90 adult survivors who had been referred to the NRM within the previous five years and who participated in the research, 87 (97%), had expressed a need for psychological assistance while in the NRM, with 73 (81%) having received some form of support, varying between receiving a referral to mainstream or specialised services, informal support from a caseworker or individual counselling. However, 38 people (44%) who needed psychological assistance indicated that their needs were not met; where assistance was either not received or received but it was inadequate or inappropriate. For those who received individual counselling, 20% (10/49) indicated it did not meet their needs, and 8% (4/49) stated they required such support but did not receive it. Of those who received group support, 19% (6/32) indicated it did not meet their needs, and 16% (5/32) stated they required this support but did not receive it. Of those who accessed wellbeing activities, 20% (7/35) said it did not meet their needs, and 17% (6/35) said they needed this support but did not receive it.<sup>60</sup>

Research with young people who had experienced trafficking and migrated to Scotland analysed 166 casefiles of people with a positive Conclusive Grounds decision across an 11 year period. 30 people (18%) had ongoing mental health concerns recorded – including trouble sleeping, social anxiety, depression and issues related to trauma. 45 young people (27%) had been referred to, or were on the waiting list, for a mental health service(s), while 16 (10%) had visited or been referred to a GP, a counselling service, or psychologist for mental health concerns. 13 (8%) had discussed different forms of mental health support with their Guardian and for the remaining 62 no data on mental health support was available which could either indicate incomplete data collection or that they had not engaged with any mental health support. Among the 19 young people interviewed, the majority had been offered some form of mental health support, with those that had attended individual or group therapy or seen a psychologist mostly positive about the impact of this support.<sup>61</sup> The CSF research with young people resulted in a specific outcome around health – Outcome 18: 'I am healthy' with an associated Indicator 'Children have access to appropriate mental health services'.<sup>62</sup>

## Spotlight: Appropriate accommodation

'Secure and suitable housing' was identified among the minimum core set of seven outcomes for adult survivors in the MSCOS project. The study noted that it was the most prominent and consistently highlighted outcome by MSCOS participants, describing that survivors "should live in a place they can call home, where they feel safe and secure, can exercise freedom and independence, and live without suffering, abuse, or exploitation. Housing should offer private personal space, be hygienic, have enough peace to be able to rest and sleep, and preclude worries about being evicted". Key features should include that "safe house accommodation is gender-sensitive, allows for the proper investigation of complaints, has cooking and cleaning facilities, is not overcrowded, and is a place where survivors feel respected". Survivor leaders sitting on the MSCOS Research Advisory Board recommended considering whether safehouses can be survivor-run.<sup>63</sup>

Research exploring adult survivors' access to psychological assistance indicated that of 90 adult survivors who had been referred to the NRM and participated in the research 9 (63%) indicated that they received appropriate and secure accommodation, but 26% felt that they did not, highlighting the standard of accommodation as well as safety concerns and restrictions in safe house accommodation and security concerns and appropriateness of asylum accommodation. Some workshop participants with a positive conclusive grounds decisions discussed difficulties in accessing long-term housing, leading to insecurity and homelessness.<sup>64</sup>

Research with British national survivors found that a theme commonly impacting British adult survivors in their pathway to recovery was safe and secure accommodation, whether or not received as part of NRM support, particularly when access to support tails off. The report described barriers in accessing secure and stable housing, described a 'back-and-forth' process between local authorities and the Salvation Army regarding responsibilities for housing British national survivors. The research further highlighted that local authority accommodation offered to British nationals often fails to provide an environment conducive to recovery, describing incidents in which British survivors were placed with previously incarcerated people or drug users and local authorities refusing to accommodate individuals due to their lack of a local connection, resulting in homelessness in some cases.<sup>65</sup>

In the Scottish study, the Scottish Guardianship service recorded accommodation type for young people, but did not consistently record changes in accommodation. However, among the 19 young people involved in interviews, "nearly all appeared to have relatively stable experiences of accommodation, with few moves", which may not be reflective of others' experiences. Many young people highlighted the important role residential care workers, accommodation key workers, host families and others played in helping them adjust to life in Scotland. It was reported that where young people were unhappy with their accommodation, that this was communicated to their social workers or Guardians and some young people spoke of social workers supporting their accommodation choices.<sup>66</sup> In the CSF project, Outcome 15, 'I feel safe' specifically detailed Indicators of 'Children report being able to sleep safely in their accommodation' and 'Children say their accommodation is appropriate to their age'.<sup>67</sup>

## Where next for research on survivor support

The programme of research presented in this briefing responded to priorities established through the consultation process which the PEC carried out in 2020, and via the PEC's continuous engagement with stakeholders. The findings change our understanding of survivor support in the UK and provide new evidence, tools and instruments that have the potential to shift policy and practice in a way that is more effective, equitable and survivor-informed. What does this mean for the research agenda moving forward? The findings here raise new research questions – about remaining gaps in knowledge, about measuring the impacts of recommended changes, evidence to inform how they should be implemented and translated into more effective policies and programmes. Added to this, ongoing political developments present new areas where research is needed: to understand the evolving nature of the system of support, and how this is being impacted by the rapidly changing UK policy context.

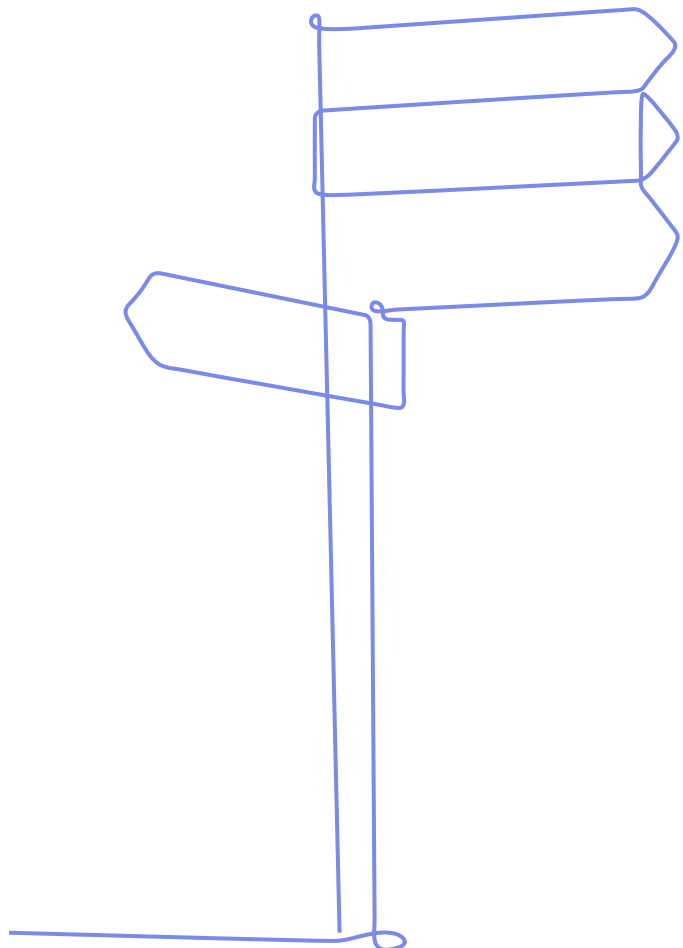
Responding to these questions is a vital part of developing a research agenda that is responsive and relevant. Many of the projects included recommendations for further research, and together with the above synthesis of findings, help inform a roadmap for future research that meets these challenges, while continuing to innovate with respect to equity and survivor-involvement.

**Empirical:** despite the considerable range of new evidence presented here, there remain gaps in knowledge about the way support works (and doesn't work), how this differs across groups, over time, and in different parts of the UK. Further research should build upon this PEC programme of research to deepen understanding of support needs and experiences. This research should adopt a comparative and longitudinal approach that centres the experiences of those directly affected, in this way new evidence can help policymakers understand current challenges and identify the most effective modes and forms of support. Connected to this is understanding the causal relationships between these and ongoing legal and policy changes. In particular, the impact of the operationalisation of the modern slavery provisions in the Nationality and Borders Act and the Illegal Migration Act on support. In our Explainer<sup>68</sup>, we have identified various areas of concern where more evidence about impacts is needed, e.g. the nexus between the irregular migration and modern slavery, and criminalisation of young people subject to immigration controls.

**Engaged:** this programme supported research based on partnership, engagement, and involvement of lived experience, leading to the development of important new tools, instruments and concepts (e.g. the MSCOS and CSF projects). Further research needs to maintain this engagement and spirit of co-production. As these are implemented it is vital that their value and effectiveness are monitored and assessed if they are to be appropriately embedded into policy and practice. This means partnership to build the necessary monitoring and evaluation structures into interventions for this population to enable robust evidence to be generated.

In line with the benefits of adopting a survivor-informed approach, any measurements developed need to be culturally and contextually relevant to gauge the impact of individual instances or particular policies.

**Strategic:** prevention and early identification of exploitation have emerged throughout this research programme as areas of particular interest. Further research could produce evidence about what works, or looks promising, for informing a strategic shift in this direction. Specific areas identified include: understanding the role of cultural competency in statutory service providers and first responders: the ways in which training and guidance can make a difference. The PEC funded research projects have identified specific opportunities here: to enhance collaborative working, to promote holistic, coordinated and consistent services such as investigation of the feasibility of combining cases involving potential victims of modern slavery within one court (similar to the Family, Drug and Alcohol Courts) where victims are within the jurisdiction of more than one system and use of Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)





## Endnotes

1. The Modern Slavery PEC (2021) '[Strategy](#)'
2. AHRC (2020), [Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre: support for victims and survivors of modern slavery](#)
3. See the Modern Slavery PEC's [Explainer: Modern slavery clauses in Illegal Migration Act 11 September 2023](#)
4. The Centre is a consortium of six research organisations led by the [Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law](#) and is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council on behalf of [UK Research and Innovation](#) (UKRI). This response has been prepared by the Modern Slavery PEC's core team and does not necessarily represent the views of all partners making up the Modern Slavery PEC consortium.
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68. Modern Slavery PEC [Explainer: Modern slavery clauses in Illegal Migration Act 11 September 2023](#)

# MODERN SLAVERY & HUMAN RIGHTS

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If you have any questions or feedback about this Explainer please email: [policyimpact@modernslaverypec.org](mailto:policyimpact@modernslaverypec.org).

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