

Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre Strategy

2021-2024

April 2021



Foreword

We all want a world where people are protected from modern slavery by effective, evidence-informed laws and policies. A world where people being trapped, controlled and exploited is not tolerated in any corner of the world and is efficiently dealt with by relevant authorities, and reinforced by comprehensive prevention strategies addressing the systemic factors that underpin it.

However, modern slavery – a relatively new umbrella term for a wide variety of issues, from trafficking and forced labour to forced marriage and domestic servitude – is not widely understood or adequately addressed by existing laws and policies.

Despite some positive developments, the laws and policies addressing modern slavery are in their relative infancy, and the common understanding of its complexities is still relatively low. Our existing legal, economic and cultural systems aren't doing enough to protect people from exploitation, and this was laid bare by the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is a gap that exists between the world of policymaking and law-making, as well as frontline work with people directly affected by modern slavery and high-quality academic research. There is good research carried out both by academics and non-academics, but we need to strengthen the overall evidence base and make it accessible to decision makers.

The Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre, or the Modern Slavery PEC, was created to address these issues and transform the effectiveness of laws and policies designed to overcome modern slavery. This strategy sets out how we are planning to achieve it.

It's important to note that this strategy follows a wide-ranging consultation, with actors working against modern slavery in many areas, on what research we should prioritise and what it should look like. Over 120 people who filled out our survey, nearly 80 who took part in roundtables and many others who we proactively asked for advice, told us that making research more equitable and focused on its policy impact should be at the forefront of our work, as well as helping us identify key themes, topics and challenges.

The strategy sets out what kind of research we will commission – and how – to provide innovative, independent, impartial and authoritative insight and analysis on modern slavery with a game-changing potential. Aiming to drive real policy change and transform the understanding of modern slavery will always be at the forefront of our work.

Collaboration is one of our central guiding principles – we need new partnerships capable of generating innovative solutions to modern slavery. And we need to bring people with lived experience of modern slavery to the table and co-develop ways for them to take an active, not tokenistic, role in policymaking.

I would like to thank everyone who helped us develop this strategy for their invaluable contribution. Now the important work starts to implement it and move us closer towards a world where people are better protected from exploitation by effective laws and policies.

Murray Hunt
Director of the Modern Slavery PEC

1. Who we are

The Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC, or the Centre) was initiated in 2019 following an award of £10m of public funding from the UK Research and Innovation Strategic Priorities Fund. It is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) with support from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC).

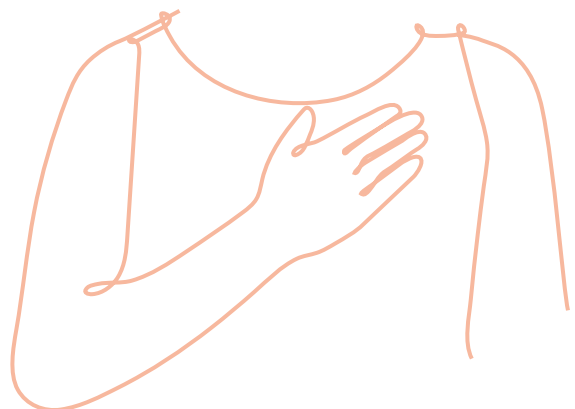
The Centre was created to enhance the understanding of modern slavery and transform the effectiveness of laws and policies designed to overcome it.

It's designed to provide independent, impartial and authoritative insight and analysis on modern slavery based on high quality research it commissions, aiming to have a transformational impact on the understanding of modern slavery and the responses to it.

The Centre brings together academics, policymakers, businesses, civil society, survivors and the public on a scale not seen before in the UK to collaborate on solving this global challenge. The Modern Slavery PEC's approach is rooted in human rights.

Led by the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law (part of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law (BIICL)), the Centre is a consortium of universities and Independent Research Organisations consisting of the Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham, the Wilberforce Institute at the University of Hull, the Centre for the Study of International Slavery at the University of Liverpool, the Bonavero Institute on Human Rights at the University of Oxford and the Alan Turing Institute.

This strategy is published in early 2021 but covers the lifetime of the five-year AHRC funding, that will take the Modern Slavery PEC to 2024.



Vision, mission, objectives

Our **vision** is a world where everyone is protected from exploitation by effective laws and policies, informed by evidence.

Our **mission** is to enhance understanding of modern slavery across the globe and transform the effectiveness of laws and policies designed to overcome it.

To achieve our overall mission, our more specific **strategic objectives** are:

- To influence laws, policies and practices on modern slavery,
- To change the way in which modern slavery research is done, so that it is co-designed and co-produced with those who use it,
- To promote a human rights-based approach to modern slavery, ensuring that the voice of people with lived experience of modern slavery informs research and policy,
- To facilitate new collaborations in modern slavery research between those who have not previously worked together,
- To build and sustain a 'network of networks' of producers and users of modern slavery research.

How we do it

To achieve our strategic objectives, we:

- Collaboratively identify research gaps and develop an agile and dynamic research agenda that meets policy priorities,
- Co-create, conduct and commission research, including rapid research, to fill research gaps,
- Translate and synthesise both PEC-funded and wider research to be accessible to those we seek to influence, and support those groups to make the best use of evidence in decision-making,
- Facilitate two-way communication between researchers and research users and create opportunities for knowledge exchange,
- Ensure that those with lived experience and survivor representatives inform selection, design, production and uptake of research,
- Convene events, roundtables and discussions to facilitate new collaborations capable of generating innovative solutions to modern slavery.

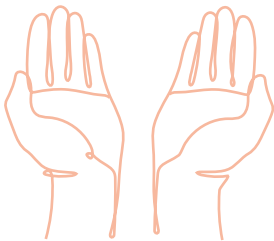
We base our research on four areas: survivor support and recovery, prevention, supply chains, and legal enforcement measures.

Our core values

Our core values are the set of fundamental commitments that guide us in the way our organisation works. Our approach is rooted in **human rights** – protecting the essential rights, freedoms and dignity of people affected by modern slavery is at the heart of its work.

Independent

We approach issues critically and without bias, letting the research and evidence guide our perspective. Building on high-quality academic research, we challenge existing systems and stakeholders to further improve their responses.



Inclusive

We take a human-centred approach to modern slavery. The needs and voices of people affected by modern slavery are at the heart of what we do. We listen intently and are open-minded to diverse perspectives. We seek to include everyone interested in addressing modern slavery and amplify diverse voices wherever possible.

Transparent

We work ethically and treat everyone with respect. We answer questions with honesty and openness. We don't mislead or hide behind ambiguity.



Rigorous

We need cutting-edge research to match our bold ambitions. We maintain a high-quality standard for all of our outputs. We commit to only share information that is rooted in evidence and research.

Collaborative

We know that modern slavery can only be solved if people work together. We create relevant connections between partners to build on our collective knowledge and make progress. We strive to create the biggest impact and actively seek out the best partners around the world to do so.



2. Equality, diversity and inclusion

The Modern Slavery PEC aims to demonstrate a genuine and ongoing commitment to supporting equality, diversity and inclusion across the work that we do. We will do this by:

Involving people with lived experience in our work

The Modern Slavery PEC will support the creation of a committee of people with lived experience (Survivor Standing Committee). The committee will work alongside us to develop a comprehensive survivor engagement strategy, and to inform the selection, design, production and uptake of research. Their guidance will be sought across our remit to ensure that our work is survivor-informed and that we are factoring a broad range of unique lived experiences into the work we undertake.

Diversifying the people undertaking modern slavery research

We are committed to diversifying the research funded through Modern Slavery PEC and will work to build broader representation, for example by opening up opportunities to non-academic and early career researchers. We will make our calls for funding easy to access and will advertise them across non-traditional platforms so more people are aware of our funding opportunities.

Ensuring our recruitment processes actively address and remove bias

The Modern Slavery PEC is committed to being inclusive and diverse and particularly encourages applications from women, people with disabilities, BAME applicants, LGBT+ applicants and other minorities, as well as those who have been directly affected by modern slavery. We commit to proactively challenge bias and offer a fair and equitable recruitment process for all applicants.

Monitoring and evaluating our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion

Effective and ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation is a cornerstone of the Modern Slavery PEC, and this will include regularly reviewing if the work that we do as a Centre promotes equality, diversity and inclusivity. For example, we will measure our success in building survivor inclusion into our work and on diversifying the type of researchers funded through the Modern Slavery PEC calls, including non-academic and early career researchers.

3. Research strategy

Consultation on research priorities

To determine the PEC research priorities, we held a wide-ranging consultation, co-designed by a working group that included academics, policymakers and other actors from the sector. We received more than 120 responses to an online survey and more detailed feedback from 75 people who joined us for a series of online roundtable discussions. We also listened to advice from the various sources the PEC has access to, including from members of the PEC Advisory Group, and we have careful consideration to the Areas of Research Interest identified by relevant Government departments. We published a detailed Report of the Consultation on Research Priorities on the Modern Slavery PEC's website.

From this process, we have selected a set of indicative priorities for PEC research within each of our areas, based on our assessment of the evidence gaps and relevance of the research to the policy agenda. The order of priority will continue to be refined in the light of views and advice we receive and will determine questions such as what will be the subject of the next open call for research proposals.

We remain committed to a stakeholder-informed approach to the PEC's research priorities. We are open to suggestions for research ideas on an ongoing basis and will pilot a form on the PEC website, where stakeholders can submit potential research ideas. The ideas will be assessed by the PEC according to three broad criteria: their alignment with the PEC's strategic objectives; policy impact potential and the PEC's resourcing capacity. If a research idea meets minimum criteria under these thresholds, the PEC will consider the most appropriate mechanism for delivering research (see page 10).

Our guiding principles for research

We have three principles which guide research activities undertaken by the PEC. These are:

1. **Effectiveness:** the aim that research should address evidence gaps relevant to policy and improve understanding of what works.
2. **Equity:** the aim that research should address structural inequalities, root causes and wider issues of social justice alongside a more equitable approach to allocation of research funding.
3. **Survivor-involvement:** the aim that research should involve people affected by modern slavery at all stages, from selection, through design, production and implementation.

Our research priorities

The Modern Slavery PEC's work is divided into four research areas:

1. Prevention
2. Survivor Support
3. Supply Chains
4. Effectiveness of Legal Enforcement

We also have an additional research area that addresses emerging and cross-cutting issues, such as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on modern slavery.

1. Prevention

There are recognised evidence gaps about 'what works' to prevent modern slavery and our consultation identified a need for research on the effectiveness of prevention interventions. Our consultation also highlighted strong interest in what factors make individuals more at risk of modern slavery, and in particular the implications of wider immigration policies for modern slavery risks. There was also a strong suggestion on the need of new insight on the causes and consequences of modern slavery and addressing challenges around data sharing.

Priority 1. Understanding the impact of the new points-based immigration system on potential risks of modern slavery, taking account of the impact on vulnerable groups.

Priority 2. Evaluating effectiveness of prevention efforts with a focus on the role of data and data-sharing in establishing 'what works'.

2. Survivor support

The research consultation highlighted consensus around the need for evidence about effectiveness of support in meeting recovery needs and longer-term outcomes for individuals. In addition, there is a strong interest in how to improve access to justice for vulnerable groups.

Priority 1. Improving survivor recovery and support, including access to justice.

Priority 2. Understanding longer-term outcomes for children and adults .

3. Slavery in supply chains

The Government is introducing changes to the transparency in supply chains provisions in the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Internationally, different regulatory models to address modern slavery risks in supply chains are being adopted. Our consultation highlighted the need for more research on effectiveness of different regulatory and non-regulatory actions to address supply chains risks.

Priority 1. Understanding the non-regulatory levers that work to incentivise more proactive business action to address modern slavery in supply chains, such as factors influencing investor, consumer and shareholder behaviour, and amplifying worker voice.

Priority 2. Identifying the most effective regulatory interventions in tackling modern slavery in global supply chains, such as public procurement levers, transparency, human rights due diligence provisions and import bans.

4. Effectiveness of legal enforcement measures

Our research consultation identified that legal provisions in the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015 for law enforcement to address offending and provide redress for victims are not always being used consistently, with prosecution volumes remaining low. Our consultation emphasised identified a need for more evidence on the linkages between modern slavery and labour market regulation, particularly as a new Single Enforcement Body (SEB) is being introduced.

Priority 1. Understanding how enforcement can protect vulnerable workers from exploitation, including contributing to the design and implementation of the Single Enforcement Body.

Priority 2. Evaluating effectiveness of enforcement powers in Modern Slavery Act ten years on.

Emerging and cross-cutting areas

We introduced a new research area to enable us to respond to cross-cutting issues, such as impact of Covid-19 (projects selected as part of the impact of Covid-19 research call are due to complete in the first half of 2021) and the scale and nature of modern slavery. Our consultation also raised issues around data, including potential of improved data flows and data-sharing.

Priority 1. Scale and nature of emerging patterns, including the impact of Covid-19 and patterns and trends in modern slavery and county lines cases.

Priority 2. Data maturity and modern slavery policymaking – scrutiny of data science and artificial intelligence approaches and improving data-sharing.

Mechanisms for delivering research

We have developed three mechanisms for delivering our research. These differing but complementary mechanisms will enable us to meet our research priorities based upon urgency, scale, type of research required, level of curation needed and the resource available.

1. Modern Slavery PEC open research calls
2. Partner-led work strands
3. Responsive research

1. Modern Slavery PEC open research calls

This mechanism is based on commissioning of research through open calls, led by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and supported by Economic and the Social Research Council (ESRC), both part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

The calls will be focused and targeted to a specific research priority of the Modern Slavery PEC. We will collaborate closely with the Research Councils to make sure the calls are aligned to the PEC's objectives and principles, including policy relevance and practical impact.

We will engage the Modern Slavery PEC Survivor Standing Committee in the development of research funding calls and, where possible, within the process of proposal selection.

2. Partner-led work strands

The collaboration of the six partner organisations is a key part of the Modern Slavery PEC's model and our partner-led work strands are utilising the existing expertise within the PEC partners and allowing both agile and longer-term approaches to meet the needs of policymakers.

Partner-led work strands include a variety of types of work, such as evidence reviews and rapid response policy briefs, all developed in close collaboration with the Modern Slavery PEC Operations Team.



The work strand areas for each partner are as follows:

PEC Partner	Research area
Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law (part of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law (BIICL))	Supply chains, business models and worker voice
Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham	Anti-slavery governance
Wilberforce Institute at the University of Hull	Law enforcement
Centre for the Study of International Slavery at the University of Liverpool	International development
Bonavero Institute on Human Rights at the University of Oxford	Criminal justice; victims' and survivors' rights
The Alan Turing Institute	Data: maturity, sharing and ethics

3. Responsive Research

The Responsive Research mechanism has been created to fund responsive and agile research projects and the research calls will be led by the PEC. Through Responsive Research, the PEC will invite bids for research projects that can be delivered in an agile way.

We will promote diversity, relevance and transparency across our work by opening this mechanism up to non-traditional research partners, including non-academic and early career researchers.

We will develop clear guidance on the workings of this mechanism, including requirements for applications, review criteria, and selection processes, including peer review, so applicants enter into the process fully prepared, even if this is their first time applying for research funding.

4. Achieving impact

Policy impact

Policy impact is central to the Modern Slavery PEC vision. Robust evidence on its own is not enough to influence the laws and policies against modern slavery, so our work will be driven by our strategic focus on evidence-informed laws and policies in order to protect people from modern slavery.

We aim to build bridges between research and the world of policy making, law making and international standard-setting, so that they can guide one another. We aim to enhance the effectiveness of modern slavery policies and laws through relevant, timely, trustworthy and accessible research and evidence:

- **Relevant:** our research covers topics and issues that align with policy priorities. Our research priorities are based on our extensive and ongoing consultation with stakeholders.
- **Timely:** our research and insight are available at the most appropriate points in the policy lifecycle. We map and continually horizon-scan the policy landscape to ensure that research outputs are available when they will have the most impact.
- **Trustworthy:** our research is high-quality and credible. Our values of independence, transparency and rigour guide all of our research.
- **Accessible:** our research is presented in a way that is clear and accessible. We will distil key findings and recommendations from our research into accessible documents to enable those we are seeking to influence to easily understand what our research means for them.

Key decision-makers and audiences

We will regularly engage the following groups we are seeking to influence:

- **Policymakers** and leaders in national agencies, who can directly influence policies addressing and preventing modern slavery.
- **Lawmakers**, who can influence new laws improving responses to modern slavery and hold the government to account for its policies.
- **Businesses**, that can improve their policies and practices preventing exploitation in their supply chains.
- **Practitioners**, who work in the framework of modern slavery laws and policies.

We will also engage the following groups:

- **Survivors and people affected by modern slavery**, who are looking to have their voice heard and influence policies preventing modern slavery and exploitation.
- **Academics**, who have identified gaps in research on modern slavery and are keen for their research to have practical impact.
- **Civil society**: organisations working specifically on modern slavery, as well as those working on issues connected to it such as homelessness, children charities, women's rights organisations or trade unions.
- **The media**, which hold power in understanding of modern slavery and shifting the pressure on decision-makers.
- **The public**, which holds the power of influencing decision-makers, both as citizens and consumers.

Communications

We aim to improve the law and policy responses to modern slavery by promoting evidence and insight produced by the Modern Slavery PEC's research in an accessible way. To achieve that, we will be guided by our values and by following principles:

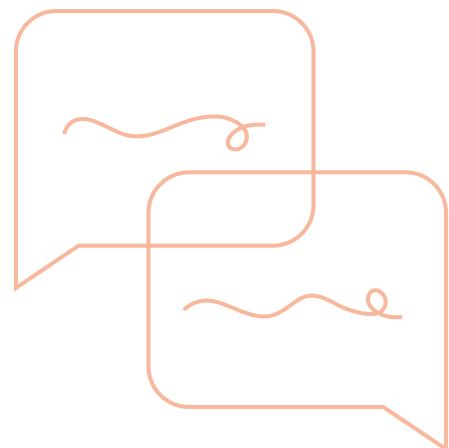
Transparency: we will communicate publicly about Modern Slavery PEC's work and projects, including information on all PEC funded projects, its status, outputs, and the mechanisms of commissioning the PEC research.

Policy impact led: our communications will be guided by maximising the impact of our research on policy and decision makers to enhance their responses to modern slavery.

Collaborative: we will work closely with researchers and a wide range of partners to maximise the impact of the PEC's research.

Holistic: We will use all relevant communication channels available to us to increase overall impact of our research, making sure all our channels contribute to building a consistent narrative.

Building narratives: based on the evidence produced by our research, we will build compelling narratives on modern slavery to transform its understanding amongst our audiences and to help enhance constructive solutions to it.



5. Building collaborations against modern slavery

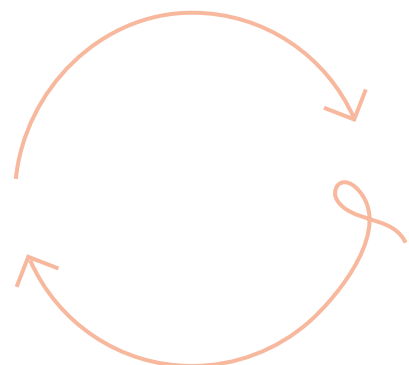
Modern slavery can only be solved if people work together. However, there's a gap that exists between the high-quality academic research and the world of policymaking and law-making, as well as frontline work with people directly affected by modern slavery.

Collaboration is one of the fundamental values that guide the work of the Modern Slavery PEC. We strive to create relevant connections between partners to build on our collective knowledge and make progress. We aim to build an inclusive network of networks to facilitate new collaborations capable of generating innovative solutions to modern slavery.

This involves bringing together and facilitating relationships between the many different actors in the space to maximise their collective influence, for example PEC-funded researchers, policymakers, legislators, businesses, international organisations, other experts researching modern slavery, NGOs and civil society.

Some of the specific activities will include:

- Cultivating a Business Engagement Group,
- Facilitating discussions with and between the projects we fund to support knowledge exchange, identify new avenues and ensure they form a cohesive group working together to further our goals,
- Brokering relationships between expert researchers outside and inside academia, diversifying research in this space and furthering knowledge exchange,
- Convening special networking events to bring about new collaborations,
- Facilitating research sandpits where interdisciplinary groups can come together to dive into specific issues and uncover innovative solutions,
- Supporting workshops to connect research groups with policymakers and other users, ensuring that our funded research achieves maximum impact.

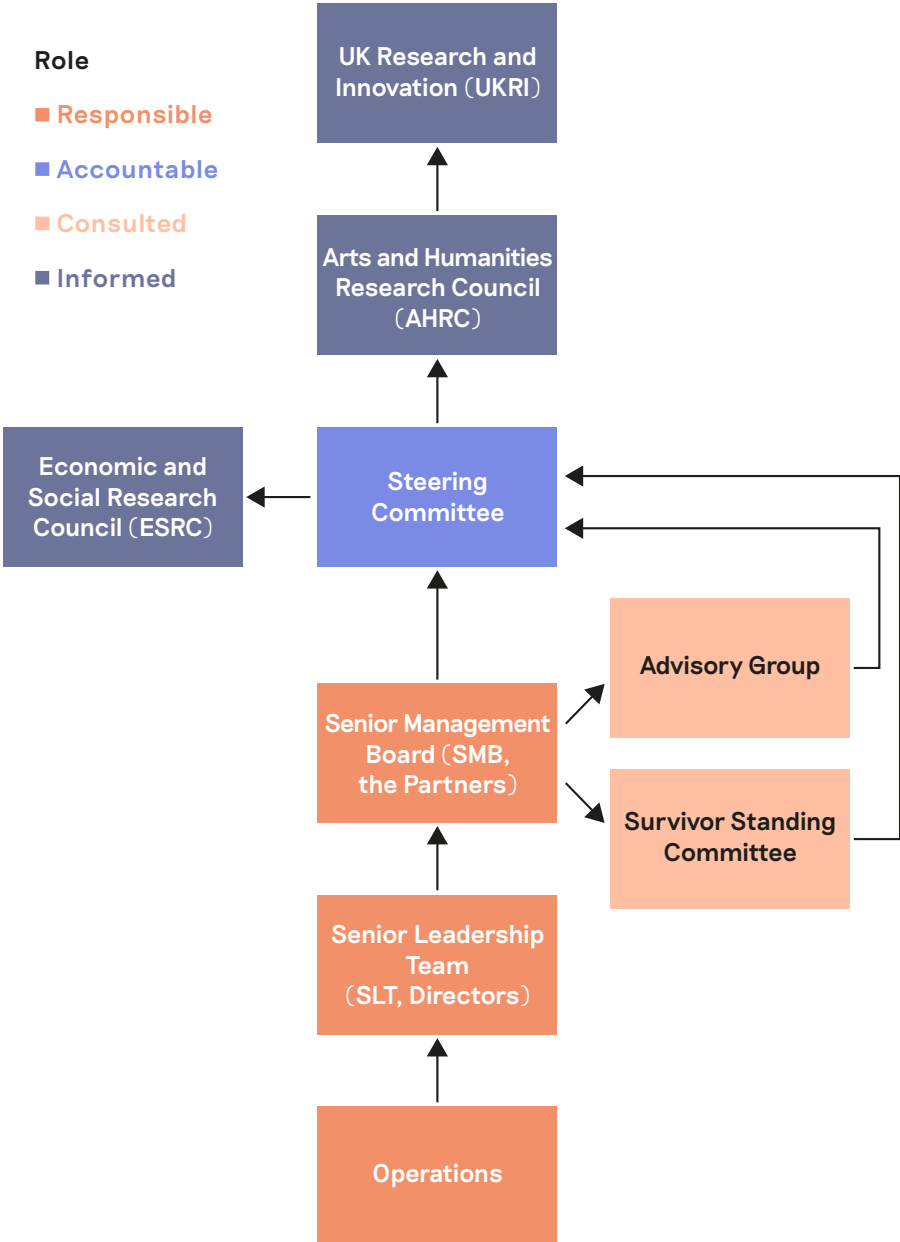


6. Good governance

Good governance is essential for smooth and transparent operations of the Modern Slavery PEC. Our governance structure ensures that decisions made align with our core values, that our direction of travel is in line with our strategic objectives and that any changes we make drive effectiveness and improvement.

How the Modern Slavery PEC is governed

The governance organogram uses a RACI model (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed), which underpins the structure and associated roles.



The Modern Slavery PEC Operations (Operations) is the staff team employed by the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law (part of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law (BIICL)), who are responsible for operational delivery and the day to day running of the Centre.

The Modern Slavery PEC Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is made up of the five Director-level posts in the Centre: PEC Director, Director of Research, Director of Policy Impact, Operations Director and Communications Director. The Senior Leadership Team is effectively the PEC's Executive and is responsible for implementation of the PEC's overall Strategy.

The Modern Slavery PEC Senior Management Board (SMB, aka the Partners) – the Modern Slavery PEC Senior Management Board is made up of representatives from the six main Partners that constitute the Centre, as well as the Centre's Directorship and AHRC's Senior Responsible Officer. A representative from ESRC is entitled to attend as an Observer. The Senior Management Board is responsible for strategic direction, outputs and impacts of the Centre. It is required to refer decisions to the Steering Committee, unless that committee has delegated its authority, to the Senior Management Board or Senior Leadership Team.

The six collaborating partners of the Centre are:

- Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law (part of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law (BIICL))
- Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham
- Wilberforce Institute at the University of Hull
- Centre for the Study of International Slavery at the University of Liverpool
- Bonavero Institute of Human Rights at the University of Oxford
- The Alan Turing Institute

The Modern Slavery PEC Advisory Group (AG) is **consulted** and offers advice and guidance to the Senior Management Board, for consideration when developing or delivering its strategy. That advice is not binding; however, the Senior Management Board is expected to consider its advice.

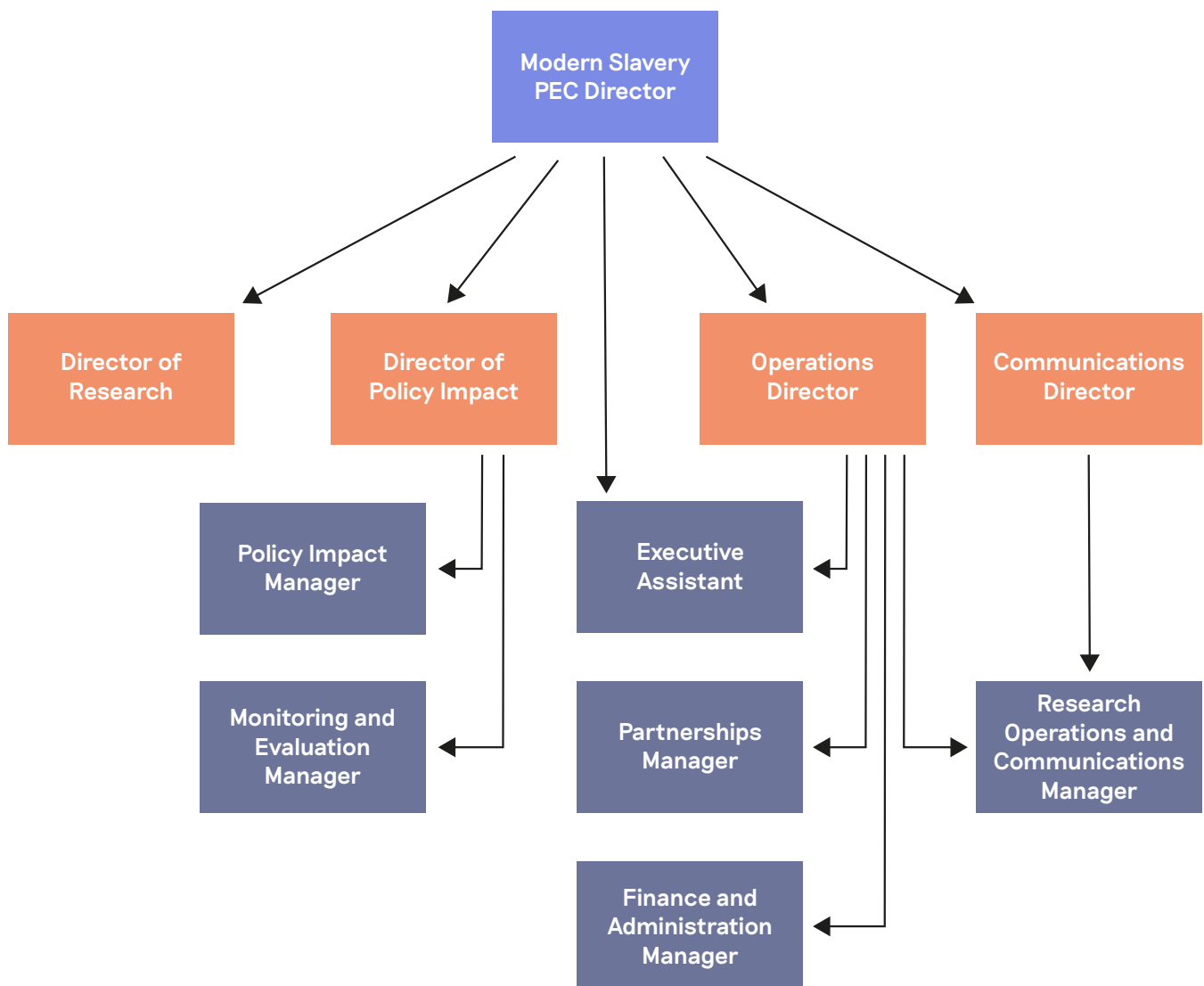
The Survivor Standing Committee (currently being established) will be **consulted** and will offer advice and guidance to the Senior Management Board and the Senior Leadership Team. This guidance will be sought when developing and designing strategies and operations to ensure that our work is survivor-informed and that we are factoring a broad range of unique lived experiences into the work we undertake. The advice from the Survivor Standing Committee will not be binding, however, the Senior Management Board and the Senior Leadership Team will be expected to consider its advice and report back to the Arts and Humanities Research Council on how it has done so.

The **Steering Committee (SC)** is **accountable** to UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) for the outcomes of the investment and for ensuring that funds are spent appropriately, effectively and efficiently. The Steering Committee is made up of senior members of staff from Arts and Humanities Research Council and Economic and Social Research Council, and acts as the final decision-maker on behalf of the Centre.

Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and central UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) are informed of progress.

Effective Operations

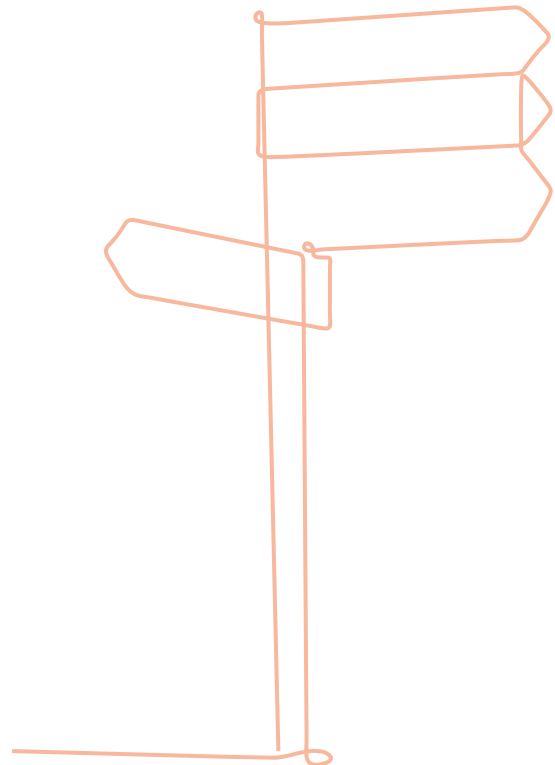
- The Operations Team, working at the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law (part of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law (BIICL)), is responsible for the delivery of the PEC’s vision and objectives, and for the day to day implementation of the strategy.



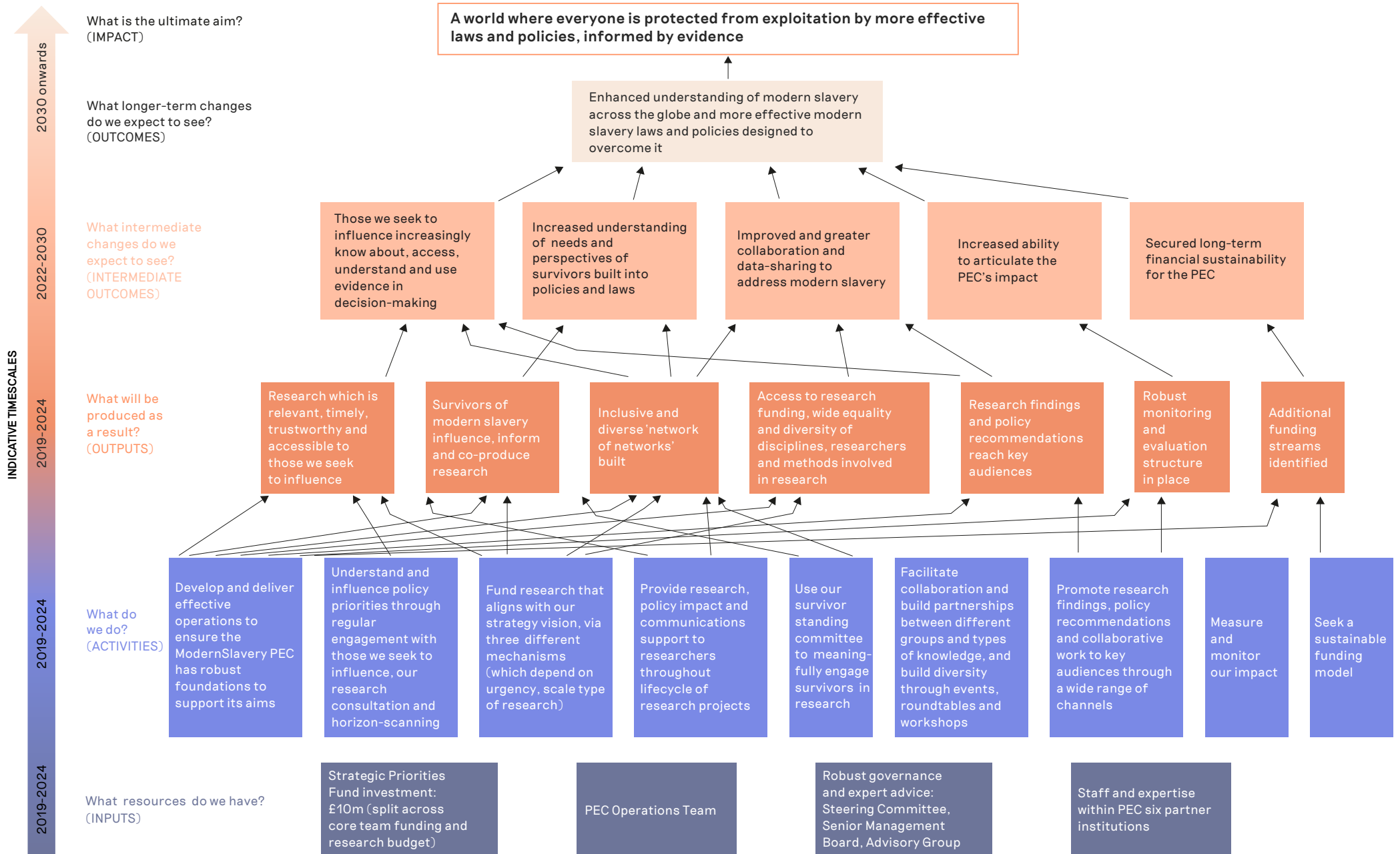
7. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluating the impact of our work is an essential and ongoing activity which runs throughout the whole Modern Slavery PEC Operations Team. The overarching principle which guides our approach to Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is that of continuous improvement and we ensure that we continually measure and consider our impact and, where necessary, change how we work.

Whilst recognising the limits of attempting to fully capture the complexity of the policy influencing landscape, we have developed a bespoke Theory of Change to help us measure the impact of our work and understand the extent to which our activities are helping to achieve our overall mission. Aligned to the Theory of Change, we have developed an Impact Measurement Framework which identifies a set of metrics that we use to measure our outputs and outcomes.



Modern Slavery PEC strategy 2021-2024. Theory of Change.



MODERN SLAVERY & HUMAN RIGHTS

POLICY &
EVIDENCE
CENTRE

Led by the Bingham Centre

The Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre was created by the investment of public funding to enhance understanding of modern slavery and transform the effectiveness of law and policies designed to overcome it. With high quality research at its heart, the Centre brings together academics, policymakers, businesses, civil society, survivors and the public on a scale not seen before in the UK to collaborate on solving this global challenge.

The Centre is a consortium of six academic organisations led by the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law and is funded by the Art and Humanities Research Council on behalf of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).

Our partners:



University of
Nottingham
Rights Lab



UNIVERSITY OF HULL | WILBERFORCE
INSTITUTE

**The
Alan Turing
Institute**



The Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre is funded and actively supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), from the Strategic Priorities Fund.

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