



**Northumbria
Anti-slavery
Network**

Northumbria Anti-Slavery Network Strategy and Delivery Plan 2026-2029

Northumbria Anti-Slavery Network – Standing Together Against Modern Slavery and Exploitation

Introduction

Modern slavery is an umbrella term that encompasses several forms of exploitation and abuse of both adults and children. It can include all forms of slavery, human trafficking and exploitation. Types of exploitation can also include labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, forced marriage, forced criminality, financial exploitation and organ harvesting.

Potential exploiters aim to control the person using threats, force or coercion. They also use methods to deceive the person and often target vulnerable people to exploit for their own gain.

Victims of modern slavery and exploitation can be from any nationality. They can be children and adults from any gender, religion or background and many victims may be experiencing other socio-economic disadvantages such as homelessness, substance misuse and poverty which can put them at increased risk of exploitation.

Prevalence

In 2025, 23,411 potential adult and child victims of modern slavery were referred to the Home Office through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the governments framework for identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery.

The true extent of modern slavery in the UK is likely to be much greater than the statistics suggest. Modern slavery is a largely hidden and complex crime, existing within our communities and affecting vulnerable people within our society.

Many people may not know that they are a victim of modern slavery and exploitation – they may have been told that what they are experiencing is normal or have been deceived by their exploiter. There are also significant barriers that might prevent people from disclosing or reporting their experiences such as: fear over their immigration status; fear of being criminalised; not knowing where or how to get support; language and cultural barriers; and the exploiter making the victim dependant on them for money and/or accommodation.

Current landscape

The risks around modern slavery and exploitation keep increasing and evolving. Exploiters continue to try and find different ways to target and exploit people. When risks and trends around modern slavery are uncovered in one sector, exploiters often adapt their tactics, making it challenging for agencies and legislation to stay ahead of emerging threats.

About the Northumbria Anti-Slavery Network

Northumbria is not immune to modern slavery and exploitation.

The impact of modern slavery is devastating. It can cause both physical and psychological harm and leave people trapped in situations with no freedom to decide where they live, where they work and with no access to their own money. Victims of modern slavery and exploitation are stripped of their rights and can be forced to work in unsafe and inhumane conditions. They live in fear and are often displaced and isolated. Even those who believe they are consenting to something may have only agreed because they have been deceived, with the reality painting a very different picture of violence, abuse and neglect.

Unseen's Annual Assessment of their Modern Slavery and Exploitation helpline for 2025 found that they had received 21 calls in relation to modern slavery for Northumbria which involved labour exploitation, sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation. As previously referenced, the true number of cases is likely to be much higher due to the hidden nature of these crimes.

The Northumbria Anti-Slavery network was established in 2025 to bring key strategic partners across the region together to stand against modern slavery and exploitation. In the government's Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for England and Wales, they state that collaborative partnerships are fundamental to ensure that victims are identified, protected and safeguarded. It also states that staff within public authorities and those who are involved in supporting victims must have a view to developing a more consistent response to modern slavery victims to ensure they are identified and receive the available and appropriate support.

Modern slavery is a key priority in the Northumbria Police and Crime Plan 2025-2029. We know that responding to modern slavery and exploitation requires a multi-agency approach and that efforts must be clear, coordinated and collaborative.

The work of the Northumbria Anti-Slavery network will be informed by the experiences of victims and survivors of modern slavery and exploitation. It is extremely important for our partnership that we listen to the voices of those who have been harmed to increase our understanding of this issue and explore what we can do as a network to improve their experiences and the experiences of victim-survivors in the future.

The anti-slavery network for Northumbria is comprised of key partners from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria and the Violence Reduction Unit, Northumbria Police's Serious Organised Crime Unit, named representatives from the six local authorities across Northumbria and named representatives from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector. Each of these partners can bring their own expertise and experience to help us to share information on key themes and trends and identify potential gaps in intelligence and routes to support.

Whilst our representatives are answerable to their own Joint Strategic Exploitation groups and Community Safety Partnerships, the aim of the Northumbria Anti-Slavery network is to create a wider group of stakeholders with some key shared actions to help us tackle modern slavery and

exploitation and stand together to reinforce our commitments to supporting victims and raising awareness of this highly concerning and prominent issue.

Annex A: Northumbria Anti-Slavery Network - Terms of Reference

Annex B: Northumbria Anti-Slavery Network - Governance Structure

Annex C: Northumbria Anti-Slavery Network – 2026-2028 Delivery Plan on a Page

2026-2028 Delivery Plan

The strategic vision of the Northumbria Anti-Slavery Network is to work collaboratively to try and reduce the prevalence of modern slavery in the region based on four key areas and points of action.

The areas of our delivery plan also link in with the UK government’s ‘4 P Approach to Modern Slavery’ - [Modern Slavery Strategy](#)

Support for Victim-Survivors <i>Links to the government’s ‘4 P Approach to Modern Slavery’ – Protect</i>			
What we want to achieve	Our work in action	Who will be involved	Potential Impact
Understanding victim-survivor support pathways	Working with partners to map out victim-survivor support pathways to ensure effective provision and streamlined routes into specialist support	- Survivor support services - Local authority representatives - Police - OPCC	- More victim-survivors able to access support to cope and recover from their experiences - Clearer understanding of victim-survivor support pathways to ensure that anyone who wants support is not missed
Increased awareness of the support available to victim-survivors	Sharing information within the network and with external stakeholders and frontline professionals about support services available to victim-survivors	- OPCC - Survivor support services - Police - Local authority representatives	- Information on support services being easily accessible and readily available - Increased knowledge amongst professionals of services across the region - More victim-survivors able to access support to cope and recover from their experiences

	OPCC to continue to commission specialist support for victim-survivors		
Multi-agency approaches to supporting victim-survivors	Consistent and ongoing communication between Police and survivor support services to facilitate opportunities for early intervention with specialist support	- Police - Survivor support services	Victim-survivors will have increased opportunities to speak with specialist support organisations at an earlier stage

Information Sharing <i>Links to the government's '4 P Approach to Modern Slavery' – Pursue and Prevent</i>			
What we want to achieve	Our work in action	Who will be involved	Potential Impact
Developing practices for gathering intelligence and information sharing	- Exploring methods for sharing intelligence and information between partners such as partnership information forms - Developing access to a shared resource to provide any updates on trends or themes between ASN meetings	- Police - Local authority representatives - Survivor support services - OPCC	- There will be a better understanding of the prevalence and types of modern slavery and exploitation across the region - Survivor support services will find it easier to share information with the police
Using data to tackle exploitation	Using NRM, Police, Local Authority and Survivor Support services data to help guide our work and identify areas or sectors targeted by potential exploiters	- Police - Local authority representatives - Survivor support services	- Understanding the types of modern slavery and exploitation to help create opportunities for disruption, intervention and the use of legislation - The use of data will identify and influence targeted interventions with sectors causing concerns

Victim-Survivor Voice

<i>Links to the government's '4 P Approach to Modern Slavery' – Protect</i>			
What we want to achieve	Our work in action	Who will be involved	Potential Impact
Ensuring that the work of the partnership is led by the views and experiences of people who have been harmed through modern slavery and exploitation	- Establishing a Victims Voice subgroup to explore how to capture the voices of those with lived experience of modern slavery and exploitation - Ensuring that the voices we are capturing are a consistent and fundamental feature of our delivery plan and ASN meetings	- OPCC - Survivor support services	- Increased opportunities for survivors to share their experiences and influence strategy - Improved understanding of the potential barriers and gaps in reporting modern slavery and exploitation and accessing support

Awareness Raising			
<i>Links to the government's '4 P Approach to Modern Slavery' – Prepare</i>			
What we want to achieve	Our work in action	Who will be involved	Potential Impact
Delivering joint awareness raising campaigns	- Exploring opportunities for joint awareness raising campaigns - Collaboration between partners to identify targets for awareness raising campaigns e.g. businesses, professionals, members of the public	- OPCC - Police - Local authority representatives - Survivor support services	- Consistent and clear messaging around modern slavery and exploitation across the region which will have a positive impact on wider understanding of the issue - Increased reporting
Sharing best practice	- The ASN will act as a platform for organisations to approach for information and support on how to tackle modern slavery and exploitation - Ensuring that tackling modern slavery and exploitation remains	- OPCC - Police - Local authority representatives - Survivor support services	- Tackling modern slavery and exploitation will be actively discussed and reviewed - ASN partners and organisations will understand their responsibilities towards tackling modern slavery and exploitation

	a key priority for ASN members and their organisations		
Access to information about the NRM process for First Responders	Developing and circulating materials, information and training opportunities on the NRM process for First Responders	- OPCC - Police - Local authority representatives - Survivor support services	- Increased reporting - Improved confidence in frontline professionals on their role and responsibilities as First Responders - More victim-survivors of modern slavery and exploitation being identified and offered support

Terms of Reference

V2 – May 2026

1. Background

Modern slavery encompasses several forms of exploitation and abuse of both adults and children. In 2025, 23,411 potential adult and child victims of modern slavery were referred to the Home Office through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the governments framework for identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery.

The true extent of modern slavery in the UK is likely to be much greater than the statistics suggest. Modern slavery is a largely hidden and complex crime, existing within our communities and affecting vulnerable people within our society.

The anti-slavery network has been created through joint working with the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria and Northumbria Police with the purpose of bringing together experts from statutory and non-statutory organisations in a commitment to prevent and address modern slavery. There are over 20 anti-slavery networks and partnerships operating across the UK. These are supported by the Human Trafficking Foundation who together have pledged to prioritise tackling modern slavery through a number of commitments.

2. Aims of the Anti-Slavery Network

Modern Slavery is a key priority in the Northumbria Police and Crime Plan 2025-2029 and requires a multi-agency approach. The Anti-Slavery Network is an important forum for partner members to come together with a clear, coordinated and collaborative response to develop, deliver and lead on strategic actions to tackle modern slavery. The voice of the survivor will be central to the Anti-Slavery network.

Key aims:

- Sharing specialist knowledge and evidencing areas of best practice to improve outcomes for survivors of modern slavery and ensure effective victim support pathways are in place
- Understanding key priorities, trends and themes to ensure coordination between partners on areas of work for further focus and development
- Joint approach to community engagement including awareness raising and training

- Encourage data and information sharing to help understand the scope of Modern Slavery across the region and identify any gaps in knowledge and provision for victims
- Understanding and identifying risk areas and areas of prevalence of Modern Slavery in the region to help target responses for prevention

3. Membership

- Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria
- Northumbria Police
- South Tyneside Council
- Gateshead Council
- North Tyneside Council
- Sunderland City Council
- Newcastle City Council
- Northumberland County Council
- Action for Children
- Children North East
- Changing Lives
- Bright Futures
- Children's Society
- ICOS

Membership will be reviewed on a regular basis.

4. Chair

The Anti-Slavery Network will be chaired by the OPCC for Northumbria in collaboration with Northumbria Police. This will be reviewed on an annual basis.

5. Role of the members

Members of the ASN must provide a named representative and a deputy representative for their organisations and contribute towards supporting the key aims of the ASN. Members are also responsible for ensuring that required actions are implemented. Members may also be invited to provide representation for their organisations in any task and finish groups established through the ASN.

6. Governance and transparency

A record of ASN meetings will be made with actions appropriately recorded and shared with network members.

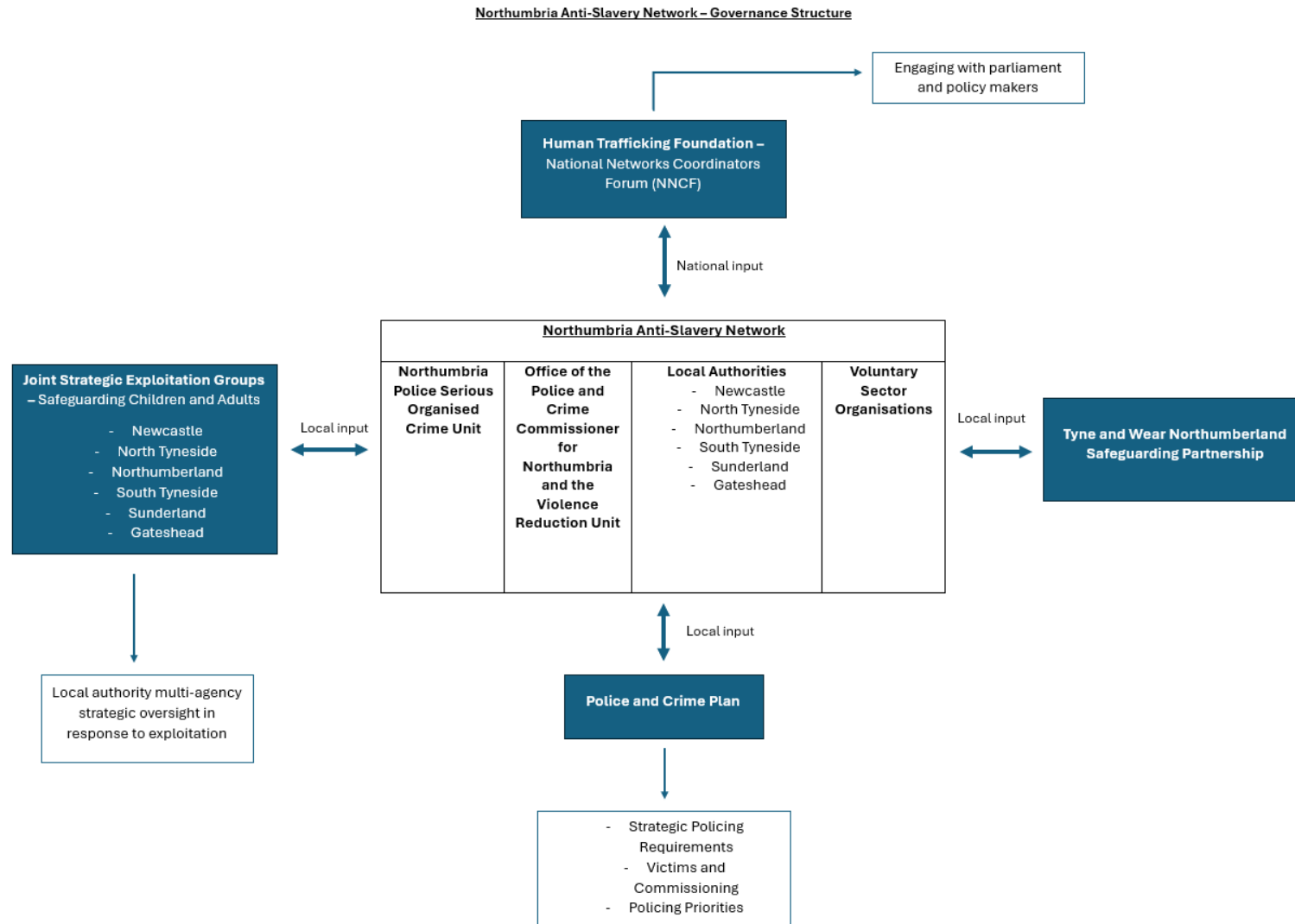
7. Support to the ASN

A member of the OPCC for Northumbria will provide administrative support to the ASN. Administrative support will include making necessary arrangements to convene ASN network meetings and collating the agenda for each meeting. They will also make a record of the meetings and any actions agreed to share with members.

8. Frequency of ASN meetings

The anti-slavery network will meet three times a year. The frequency of ASN meetings will be kept under review.

Annex B: Northumbria Anti-Slavery Network – Governance Structure



Annex C: Northumbria Anti-Slavery Network – 2026-2028 Delivery Plan on a Page

Priority	What we want to achieve	Our work in action
Support for Victim-Survivors	• Understanding victim-survivor support pathways • Increased awareness of the support available to victim-survivors • Multi-agency approaches to supporting victim-survivors	• Mapping out victim-survivor support pathways • Sharing information about the specialist support services available to victim-survivors • Ensuring ongoing and consistent communication between Northumbria Police and survivor support services to facilitate opportunities for early intervention
Information Sharing	• Developing practices for gathering intelligence and information sharing • Using data to tackle exploitation	• Explore and develop effective methods for sharing intelligence and information • Using data to understand the prevalence and types of modern slavery and exploitation to help create opportunities for disruption, intervention and the use of legislation
Victim-Survivor Voice	• Ensuring that the work of the partnership is led by the views and experiences of people who have been harmed through modern slavery and exploitation	• Establishing a Victims Voice group to explore how we capture the voices of those with lived experience of modern slavery and exploitation and ensure that this is used to influence the work of the ASN
Awareness Raising	• Delivering joint awareness raising campaigns • Sharing best practice • Access to information about the NRM process for First Responders	• Collaboration between partners to identify appropriate awareness raising campaigns • Ensuring that modern slavery and exploitation remains a key priority for ASN partners and wider organisations • Developing and circulating materials, information and training opportunities on the NRM process for First Responders