



A Training Framework for Local Authorities as Modern Slavery First Responders in England and Wales



In partnership with

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Monitoring Group**

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Development and consultation process

This Training Framework represents the final output of a multi-stage research, consultation, and knowledge-exchange process designed to support local authorities in their role as Modern Slavery First Responders under the Modern Slavery Act 2015. It builds directly on empirical research, practitioner engagement, and survivor-informed insights, ensuring that the framework is both evidence-based and grounded in operational realities.

In May 2025, we published [*The Development of a Preliminary Training Framework for Local Authorities as Modern Slavery First Responders in England and Wales*](#), in partnership with the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group (ATMG). The study, based on an online survey completed by 36 local authorities and semi-structured interviews with Modern Slavery Leads or Coordinators in 15 local authorities across England and Wales, also included an analysis of 48 modern slavery statements published by councils. It underscored the pivotal role of local authorities in identifying and supporting survivors through housing, social care, and safeguarding, while also highlighting gaps in awareness, inconsistent training provision, and barriers to multi-agency collaboration. At the same time, it identified examples of good practice that demonstrate what can be achieved with appropriate investment, partnership working, and leadership.

The framework was subsequently presented at an online Knowledge Exchange Workshop in June 2025, attended by approximately 30 participants representing local authorities and civil society organisations. Local authority attendees included officers from Dorset, Birmingham, Portsmouth, Kent, Derbyshire, Hertsmere, and Oxford, alongside colleagues from Barnardo's and the Snowdrop Project. Participants were divided into two breakout rooms for focused discussion and exchange of views on the preliminary training framework.

The framework was later presented at the National Network Coordinators Forum (NNCF) in July 2025, where further valuable input was received from a similar audience. Following the NNCF presentation, additional feedback was gathered through an online form and a series of one-to-one interviews to explore specific issues in greater depth. Importantly, lived experience experts were also engaged as part of the consultation process, and their perspectives were incorporated into revisions of the framework, particularly in relation to survivor-centred practice, trauma-informed engagement, and the risks associated with overly procedural or compliance-driven approaches to training.

All comments were systematically analysed and synthesised to inform revisions to the structure, content, and delivery model of the Modern Slavery Training Framework for Local Authorities. The final iteration of the framework was subsequently circulated

among all the interviewees and consultation participants, several of whom indicated their intention to adopt or adapt the Training Framework within their own organisations.

We gratefully acknowledge that this framework was informed by examples of good practice and training approaches shared by local authorities, in particular Coventry City Council and Birmingham City Councils, whose [multi-tiered training model](#) serves as a valuable example of locally tailored training delivery. We are especially thankful to Hebe Lawson (Modern Slavery Lead at Coventry City Council) and Anna Iuga (Modern Slavery Coordinator at Birmingham City Council) for their part in developing this approach, which has been instrumental in informing our thinking and strengthening the training framework developed in this study. While the Coventry and Birmingham model reflects an effective, place-specific response, the framework developed here is designed to be applied and adapted nationally, providing a coherent structure that can be tailored to diverse local authority contexts across England and Wales.

It is important to emphasise that what we have developed is a training framework, not a prescriptive curriculum or statutory requirement. The framework sets out guiding principles, tiered training levels, and recommendations, but does not prescribe a one-size-fits-all or directive curriculum or course structure. It is designed to provide a flexible structure that can be adapted to the needs and contexts of individual local authorities. Responsibility for adopting, adapting, and implementing the framework rests with each authority, considering local governance structures, resources, and priorities. Adaptability is also required over time, as modern slavery is a fast-changing landscape. This reflects the need for flexibility across diverse governance structures, geographies, and resources. In practice, this means the framework should be used by local authorities to inform the design of their own training curricula, identifying which elements require national consistency and which should be tailored locally. For example:

Nationally consistent elements: statutory duties under the Modern Slavery Act; survivor rights, including entitlements to support and protection; safeguarding protocols, with emphasis on child and adult protection duties; and National Referral Mechanism (NRM) processes.

Locally tailored elements: regional referral pathways and links to nearby NGOs or specialist services; specific housing and welfare arrangements; structures for partnership working, such as safeguarding boards or community safety partnerships; and the profile of exploitation most prevalent in that area, such as labour, sexual, or criminal exploitation.

Embedding locally relevant case studies, survivor testimonies, and examples of cross-agency working across all levels will also be crucial in ensuring that training is meaningful, contextually grounded, and directly applicable to local realities.

At the same time, it must be recognised that without sufficient budgets, ring-fenced funding, and political support, implementation will remain uneven and challenging. Training alone cannot substitute for the infrastructure, resources, and multi-agency partnerships essential for a sustainable response. Nonetheless, this framework provides a foundation on which local authorities can build context-specific training modules and practices, supporting more consistent, survivor-centred, and accountable responses to modern slavery across England and Wales.

The framework therefore provides both a strategic grounding and a practical tool for local authorities. Building on the feedback gathered through practitioner consultation and lived-experience input, the following section outlines the Training Framework and the key considerations that guided its development.

Purpose of the Training Framework

This document presents the Modern Slavery Training Framework for Local Authorities developed through this research and consultation process. It is intended as a practical, strategic tool to support local authorities in designing, reviewing, and strengthening their internal modern slavery training provision. The framework translates research findings and practitioner insights into a coherent, flexible structure that local authorities can adapt to their own governance arrangements, resources, and local risk profiles.

Structure and content of the Modern Slavery Training Framework

The Training Framework is structured around four tiers, ranging from basic awareness for all staff¹ through to strategic leadership for senior managers. It outlines the purpose, objectives, and delivery methods at each tier, ensuring that training is scalable, flexible, and responsive to both national statutory duties and local contexts.

In refining the Training Framework, we identified a set of key considerations to ensure that it is both practical and adaptable. These principles guided the development of the four-tier structure and should be considered when local authorities design and deliver their own training curricula.

Core design principles for the Training Framework

- **Adopt a four-tier model:** Introduce a dedicated leadership tier for senior managers and Cabinet members, explicitly mapping all tiers to local authorities' statutory duties under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (e.g., First Responder obligations under Section 52).
- **Enhance collaboration:** Strengthen partnerships between local authorities, law enforcement, and community organisations to promote a coordinated response.
- **Increase resources:** Secure dedicated funding to support modern slavery training and the development of specialist teams within local authorities.
- **Strengthen accountability:** Establish clearer processes for responding to instances of modern slavery and monitoring modern slavery risks in supply chains and reporting on actions taken. Support this through well-defined internal referral pathways and clear protocols to ensure that staff, working alongside other professionals where appropriate, provide consistent and informed responses (e.g., signposting to information, support services, or designated staff responsible for completing NRM referrals).
- **Improve communication:** Ensure that all staff understand their First Responder responsibilities and are aware of referral pathways.

1 Throughout this framework, the term *staff* is used to refer to anyone employed in a role that may come into contact with survivors of modern slavery, including individuals employed directly by local authorities who have responsibilities related to modern slavery. The term *professionals* is used where reference is made to practice-based roles, safeguarding responsibilities, or multi-agency contexts that may involve staff working alongside external partners. Where relevant, the framework specifies particular roles (for example, frontline staff, specialist staff, or senior staff) to reflect differing levels of responsibility and engagement.

- **Ensure flexibility:** The Training Framework is designed to be adaptable to different council types (including two-tier authorities) and varied local service contexts, with tailored modules for frontline services such as housing, social care, licensing, and community safety.
- **Diversify delivery methods:** Use a blend of interactive webinars, e-learning, and pre-recorded sessions to reach a wide range of staff (including contractors and commissioned providers), while balancing cost implications.
- **Integrate real-life examples:** Incorporate case studies to demonstrate practical responsibilities and decision-making pathways, helping staff recognise the diverse forms of modern slavery, challenge stereotypes, and identify complex or less visible cases encountered by professionals in practice. This should be supported by a clear knowledge of legislation and well-defined local authority protocols.
- **Embed continuous training:** Develop a rolling training plan to ensure knowledge remains current, mitigate the impact of staff turnover, and link with central repositories (e.g., the Local Government Association, LGA) for updates. This can be further supported through the development of a “train the trainer” programme.
- **Embed lived-experience** engagement throughout training design and delivery. Include varied interactive learning materials such as real-life case studies, survivor-created handouts, and live participation. All engagement should be informed by safeguarding and trauma-informed practice principles, ensuring participant agency and fair compensation.
- **Avoid a “one-size-fits-all” approach** by customising content for different staff roles. Embed cultural sensitivity, trauma-informed practice, and legal expertise consistently across all tiers.

Modern Slavery Training Framework for Local Authorities in England and Wales

Tier 1: Basic awareness training for all staff (e-learning)

Purpose

- Equip all staff with a fundamental understanding of modern slavery, including its forms, indicators, and associated risks.
- Ensure that staff can recognise potential signs of MS and understand their role in responding effectively.
- Clarify legal obligations related to MS.
- Establish a consistent baseline of knowledge across all departments.
- Provide flexible, accessible learning through e-modules that can be completed by staff, contractors, and commissioned providers.

Objectives

- Understand definitions, forms, and real-world examples of modern slavery.
- Recognise key indicators, risk factors, and high-risk environments associated with exploitation.
- Gain familiarity with the legal framework, including the *Modern Slavery Act 2015*, NRM processes, and key policies.
- Apply basic reporting and referral procedures by knowing what steps to take when a case is suspected and how to escalate concerns.
- Develop and enhance cultural responsiveness.

Methods

- E-learning modules for flexibility and cost-effectiveness.
- Short videos and interactive quizzes to reinforce learning.
- Supplementary pre-recorded sessions or webinars.
- Pre- and post-training assessments to evaluate knowledge gained.
- **Recommended:** Reflective exercises, pamphlets, or survivor-informed handouts to move beyond “tick-box” learning.
- **Recommended:** Cultural responsiveness content (e.g., challenging stereotypes and basic trauma-informed concepts.)
- **Recommended:** Include visual materials and clear explanations of staff roles, internal protocols, and referral pathways to strengthen confidence and accountability.
- **Recommended:** Local examples of MS practices to reflect regional context and make the learning more relevant.

Tier 2: In-depth, face-to-face training for frontline staff and councillors

Purpose

- Provide practical training for frontline staff and councillors who engage directly with vulnerable individuals and communities.
- Ensure participants are equipped to confidently identify, respond to, and refer potential cases of MS.
- Strengthen multi-agency collaboration between local authority staff and other professionals, including law enforcement, and community organisations.
- Position Tier 2 as the minimum required level of training for all frontline staff to build confidence and reduce gaps in support.

Objectives

- Develop advanced skills in identifying complex and less visible forms of exploitation across different service areas.
- Apply First Responder responsibilities confidently, following step-by-step guidance on NRM referrals, information sharing, and safeguarding when encountering potential victims.
- Interpret and implement legal and procedural responsibilities relating to modern slavery legislation, supply-chain risks, and compliance requirements.
- Engage in collaborative working and information sharing across multi-agency networks, including law enforcement, NGOs, and other statutory bodies alongside other professionals involved in safeguarding and support.
- Adopt trauma-informed and survivor-centred approaches to engagement, drawing on lived-experience examples from other services, such as domestic abuse models.
- Develop clear role definitions to ensure accountability and alignment with local authority protocols.

Methods

- Face-to-face workshops with role-playing and real-life case analysis.
- Simulation exercises designed to enhance confidence in applying referral procedures.
- Expert-led sessions on safeguarding strategies and victim-centred approaches.
- Include information on available survivor support, including safe accommodation and access to legal advice.
- Hybrid delivery options (face-to-face and online) to maximise accessibility.
- Embed scenario-driven learning that includes real-life examples, practical NRM form completion, and accurate notetaking.
- Pre- and post-training assessments to evaluate knowledge gained.
- **Recommended:** Develop tailored modules for specific service areas such as housing, licensing, and social care.
- **Recommended:** Include survivor-created materials and handouts designed with lived-experience input.
- **Recommended:** Add self-reflective exercises to challenge stereotypes and deepen understanding of trauma-informed practice.

Tier 3: Advanced training for specialist staff working on NRM and long-term support with survivors

Purpose

- Equip specialist staff with expert knowledge and skills on NRM for complex cases, including effective engagement with other professionals involved in long-term survivor support.
- Strengthen case management, risk assessment, and survivor support mechanisms within local authority structures.
- Enhance accountability and quality assurance by ensuring clear processes for monitoring MS response and risks in supply chains and reporting actions taken.
- Equip specialist staff with knowledge of relevant legislation that may apply to different cohorts of survivors, such as housing entitlements, children's rights etc.

Objectives

- Conduct comprehensive risk assessments using advanced techniques to identify survivor vulnerabilities and needs.
- Manage complex cases through long-term, support survivor-centred support and inter-agency co-ordination, ensuring continuity of care.
- Coordinate strategically with law enforcement, social services, and NGOs, working alongside other professionals to maintain consistent multi-agency engagement.
- Strengthen supply chain oversight and ethical procurement by implementing effective internal and external monitoring, documentation, and reporting procedures.
- Ensure Modern Slavery Leads or coordinators and key staff remain up to date with emerging legislation, policy developments, and best practice standards.
- Develop clear role definitions to ensure accountability and alignment with local authority protocols.
- **Recommended:** Deepen legal and statutory expertise in trafficking law and human rights, strengthen communication on NRM consent and process transparency, and embed trauma-informed survivor engagement practices when handling complex cases.

Methods

- Scenario-based training using real-life crisis response simulations that explore trauma-informed, long-term support for survivors.
- Webinars and workshops for managers on maintaining quality support for survivors within existing resource constraints.
- Integration of continuous update cycles linked with the Local Government Association repositories to reflect legislative and policy changes.
- Short and focused learning modules customised for modern slavery leads, coordinators and other key staff.
- Pre- and post-training assessments to evaluate knowledge gained.

Tier 4: Leadership training for senior managers and Cabinet members

Purpose

- Provide strategic-level training for senior leaders, including Cabinet members, Directors, and Chief Executives to understand their statutory responsibilities under the Modern Slavery Act 2015.
- Ensure senior managers understand their statutory responsibilities and governance duties in relation to modern slavery.
- Embed modern slavery awareness and response into corporate planning, safeguarding boards, and multi-agency partnerships.
- Encourage senior leadership to champion transparency and accountability by publishing or strengthening modern slavery statements.

Objectives

- Understand statutory duties and liabilities under Section 52 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, including obligations relating to First Responder roles.
- Evaluate organisational risks, including reputational, legal, and financial implications associated with non-compliance, both within internal operations and supply chains.
- Lead the strategic integration of modern slavery responsibilities into long-term plans, governance frameworks, and policy processes.
- Develop clear role definitions in two-tier council structures within two-tier and unitary councils to ensure effective accountability.
- Embed continuous oversight of training delivery, survivor engagement, and policy compliance within corporate and strategic planning cycles.
- Recognise and utilise modern slavery statements as key governance tools for demonstrating leadership commitment, outlining due diligence processes, and promoting public accountability.
- **Recommended:** Champion survivor inclusion at governance level (e.g., through advisory panels or consultative forums) to ensure leadership decisions remain grounded in lived-experience.

Methods

- Concise and high-level briefings (in-person or virtual) tailored to the needs of Cabinet Members and senior managers.
- Short, focused learning modules supported by real-life examples of local and national practices.
- Interactive policy workshops involving multi-agency partners to strengthen leadership accountability and cross-sector collaboration.
- Pre- and post-training assessments to evaluate knowledge gains.
- **Recommended:** Briefings could include lived-experience consultants in leadership sessions, ensuring participation is voluntary, supported, and compensated.



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