

FACTSHEET

HOW BUSINESSES CAN SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF MODERN SLAVERY

This factsheet brings together the knowledge and insight that Business in the Community (BITC) has gleaned during the Beacon Project – an 18-month-long intervention aimed at helping employers understand how they can best support survivors of modern slavery. Addressing the risks of modern slavery within business operations and supply chains must remain a key focus for employers, but it is not the only way a business can and should respond to the challenge. The aim of this factsheet is to help employers identify the ways that they can most effectively help survivor support organisations. We are thankful to the many support organisations that have contributed their time and expertise to this project, and particularly to Intercontinental Hotel Group (IHG) and Next who have generously funded it.

The scale of the problem in the UK

Modern slavery is the severe exploitation of other people for personal or commercial gain. It is often hidden – from the outside. It can look like a normal job, but the victims are being controlled with the threat of violence, deportation, or inescapable debt. Victims can be women, men, and children of all ages, nationalities, and ethnicities. Poverty, lack of education and opportunities, unstable social and political conditions and economic imbalances are some of the key factors that make someone more vulnerable to becoming a victim of modern slavery.

- In 2019/20, 11,342 potential victims were referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), a 51% increase on the previous year.ⁱ
- Almost three-quarters of victims are women and girls.ⁱⁱ
- Nearly one-quarter (23%) of survivors are UK nationals.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Covid-19 pandemic has made a very difficult situation even worse for many UK survivors:

- 73% have experienced deteriorating psychological health as it has been harder to access mental health services due to reduced capacity and issues of digital poverty.^{iv}
- 65% have struggled financially because of the partial closure of food banks and baby banks, and loss of employment.^v

What support is available for survivors?

In the UK, survivors of modern slavery have access to a system of Government support through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), which provides them with a minimum 45 days' safe accommodation, subsistence, and support while they await a decision on their case. Delays in decision-making can mean that survivors must wait months and sometimes even years in a state of



limbo (the average time taken for the NRM to reach a decision is 322 days^{vi}), and because many are unable to work – for reasons of mental or physical health, immigration status, or lack of employability skills – survivors are dependent on support organisations to meet their needs.

This factsheet provides advice to businesses on how they can help to create a more robust package of support for survivors of modern slavery, complementing the work already undertaken by third-sector organisations.

What are the needs of survivors?

Survivors of modern slavery are unique among the cohorts that BITC has worked with before because their diverse demographics (age, sex, nationality, ethnicity, work experience, work readiness) mean that, as a group, they have very wide-ranging and often complex needs.

To help businesses move forward in identifying the kind of support they can offer, we have grouped different survivor needs together into three overarching categories:

- **Basic needs** – e.g., food, housing, clothing, mental health support, internet access, childcare. Until some of these basic needs are met, it can be impossible for many survivors of modern slavery to start moving forward on their journey towards recovery.
- **Integration needs** – e.g., English language training, financial capability training, legal advice, and transport costs. Once a survivor's basic needs have been met, they will usually need some integration support before they can consider employment.
- **Employability needs** – e.g., building self-belief, English language for the workplace, digital skills, work readiness placements and employment opportunities. Because poverty is a key vulnerability for potential victims of modern slavery, the promise of employment can be a significant driver that leads to exploitation. Good employment is also therefore a key aspect of recovery; however, support organisations suggest that employability help is the service

that they struggle with most in terms of meeting survivors' needs.

Finally, although not a response to an individual survivor's need, many support organisations that we spoke to during this project indicated that they would benefit from 'in kind' support, for example, businesses sharing their marketing, fundraising and strategy development expertise to help organisations build capacity in the long-term.

From our discussions with survivor support organisations, there are gaps in provision in each of these categories of need that responsible businesses can and should help to plug.

The principles of business support

The broad spectrum of survivor needs, and the patchwork of support organisations trying to meet them, can make it difficult for businesses to know where to start. We have therefore developed three guiding principles to help businesses target their support effectively.

Businesses must go further than just their legal obligations

It is of course essential that organisations with legal requirements under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 meet those obligations. However, for a responsible business, this minimum standard does not go far enough. Survivors of modern slavery are some of the most vulnerable people in our society, and businesses are in a unique position to be able to fill many of the gaps in the existing support network. The fact that the needs of survivors are so wide-ranging and diverse means that each and every business is equipped to help in some way.

Support must be needs-led

Survivors of modern slavery are not a homogenous group, and the needs that an individual survivor has will very much depend on his/her precise experience. The difficulty of meeting those specific and often complex needs will be exacerbated by the fact that the type of help available from support organisations, and their capacity to deliver it, varies significantly across the UK. Therefore, the form that business support will take needs to be identified

HOW BUSINESSES CAN SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF MODERN SLAVERY

using a location-sensitive, bottom-up approach, and it needs to be flexible – needs will fluctuate over time depending on demand.

Businesses should look to form strategic partnerships with existing support organisations

Businesses are not expected to be experts when it comes to supporting survivors of modern slavery. There is already an established network of expert organisations that know what is needed, when and where, and that are looking for businesses to step in and help them to build the capacity to deliver it. Therefore, to add real value in this space, businesses should look to form strategic partnerships with frontline organisations and let themselves be guided by those organisations in terms of the support they can offer. A list of survivor support services that businesses may wish to partner with is provided at the end of this toolkit.

What are businesses doing?

With these three principles of support in mind, there are many different ways that businesses of all shapes, sizes and sectors can help to support survivors of modern slavery through every stage of their recovery journey.

Here are some examples of the types of work that our members are already involved in.

CASE STUDY: MORRISONS

Supporting basic needs

Black Country Women's Aid (BCWA) provides safehouse accommodation for survivors of modern slavery in the West Midlands. During the Covid-19 pandemic, BCWA made a number of requests for basic items through BITC's National Business Response Network (NBRN). Morrisons stepped up to deliver a range of products, including food, toiletries, childrenswear, Easter eggs, household items and sanitary products.

"We are so grateful to our dear friends at Morrisons for all their support. Many of the women and children that come to us have next to nothing when they arrive, so donations such as these are

really absolutely essential in helping us to help survivors start to rebuild their lives," says Deb Slater, Fundraising Manager at BCWA.

Nicola is a Community Champion at Morrisons' Wednesbury store in the West Midlands. Of Morrisons' decision to support BCWA, she said: "Morrisons is committed to playing an active role in supporting the community and are proud to have supported us with modern slavery. Since first getting in touch through BITC last year, we've gone on to build a great relationship with Deb and her team and will continue to provide support whenever we can."

CASE STUDY: MWH TREATMENT

Supporting integration needs

The Salvation Army provides specialist support to adult survivors of modern slavery in England and Wales, including access to legal advice, health care and support in finding employment.

Last year, the charity's Survivor Support Service contacted BITC when it became aware that one of its clients was struggling to make appointments and meetings because he couldn't cover the bus fare without impacting on his ability to buy food or pay for the electricity meter. They submitted a request to the NBRN for a bicycle to give him the freedom and independence he needed.

MWH Treatment's National Environmental and Sustainability Manager, Catherine Price, responded:

"We received a request, via BITC, from The Salvation Army in the Manchester area as they were in the need of a bicycle, helmet and bike lock for a survivor of modern slavery. This person could not often attend appointments and meetings as he did not have money to pay for the bus. A request was sent out to all our employees in the Manchester area and within a couple of hours we were able to source a suitable bicycle and bike lock. As we wanted to ensure that the person

would be able to travel safely, MWH Treatment also purchased a helmet, lights, and batteries.

It was important for MWH Treatment to provide this support as we have a zero-tolerance policy regarding modern slavery and expect the same of our supply chain. Over the last three years, improvements have been made in addressing modern slavery, which includes threat assessments on key risk supply chain members, toolbox talks and posters for all our construction sites, ongoing promotion of the 3rd party whistleblowing hotline, development of a modern slavery escalation process, delivering training and holding a supplier event. We are continuing to improve on our approach. Further details are available in our Modern [Slavery Transparency Statement](#).”

CASE STUDY: GOOGLE

Meeting employability needs

In 2021, as part of BITC’s Beacon project, we asked for member volunteers to take part in one-to-one employability interventions with survivors of modern slavery.

Jacques Schooler, an Enterprise Account Lead at Google, was one of the first volunteers to sign up. He took part in BITC’s Careers Conversations programme, engaging in four one-hour online sessions with a survivor, providing help and advice on topics including writing a professional CV, finding employment, and interview practice. He said of the experience: “It was such an interesting process to guide the candidate in building a resume that highlighted so many valuable hidden experiences which could be translated into the workplace. I enjoyed it very much.”

The sessions were not only enjoyable but also extremely successful. Following his participation in the programme, Mark, the survivor who worked with Jacques, went on to find permanent employment at a hotel in London.

CASE STUDY: TIDEWAY

Providing ‘in kind’ business expertise

Hope at Home is a UK-wide charity that trains and supports volunteer hosts to welcome a survivor into their homes, preventing homelessness and re-trafficking. In November 2020, the charity was looking to undertake a major rehaul of its website and logged a request through BITC’s National Business Response Network for a skilled individual to provide practical project management support and guidance. Tideway was delighted that one of its digital professionals was able to provide this help remotely.

Tideway’s Head of Corporate Responsibility, John Sage, explained:

“Tideway has zero tolerance for all forms of exploitation, and we’re committed to doing all we can to stamp out modern slavery; we are the only client organisation to be verified to the Building Research Establishment Ethical Labour Sourcing Standard. As well as taking a sector-leading approach, we always encourage our employees to volunteer where they can and were very pleased that one of our specialists was able to offer his expertise to this fantastic charity.”

The support provided by Tideway was very gratefully received, as Jared Hodgson, CEO and founder of Hope at Home, described: “A small charity, we don’t always have the in-house expertise that we need for back-office projects; our website was in desperate need of a revamp, and we weren’t really sure where to start. We were so appreciative of the practical help that Tideway was able to provide; it was crucial to getting our project off the ground and moving in the right direction.”

Where to start?

The National Referral Mechanism is managed by the Salvation Army, and 13 subcontractors across the UK. To supplement the Government's response, a number of interventions have been put in place by expert support organisations throughout the country. The interventions include outreach and identification, safehouses, long-term integration support and employability support.

A list of those organisations is provided here to help businesses start to target their approach.

National organisations

Barnardo's provides support services to victims of trafficking up to 24 years of age and advocates positive change to anti-trafficking legislation in the UK.

Caritas Bakhita House is a centre for the emergency placement of survivors across the UK who are escaping human trafficking. It offers emergency support, psychosexual therapy, legal and financial assistance, mentoring, and help with accessing accommodation.

ECPAT UK is a leading children's rights organisation working to protect children from child trafficking and transnational child exploitation.

Helen Bamber Foundation provides therapeutic care, medical consultation, legal protection, and practical support to survivors.

Hope at Home trains and supports volunteer hosts to welcome survivors into their homes, preventing homelessness and re-trafficking.

Hope for Justice works to end modern slavery and exploitation through rescuing and supporting victims and raising awareness.

The Medaille Trust is the largest provider of supported accommodation to victims of modern slavery in the UK.

Rahab UK supports women, who are sexually exploited, through regular night outreach.

The Salvation Army manages the delivery of the National Victim Care Contract, providing specialist support for all adult victims of modern slavery in England and Wales, referred through the NRM.

Unseen provides specialist care to survivors, and campaigns for an end to modern-day slavery.

The Midlands

The Adavu Project is a Birmingham-based project that gives on-the-ground support to survivors of modern slavery.

Black Country Women's Aid supports survivors in the West Midlands.

Sophie Hayes Foundation runs employability programmes in London, Birmingham, and Manchester for female survivors of modern slavery.

London

Ella's supports women exiting situations of trafficking and exploitation in residential and outreach capacities.

Hestia is the largest support provider for adult survivors of modern slavery in London. It operates six safe houses in London and Kent as well as a pan-London outreach service working in every London borough.

Kalayaan works with migrant domestic workers to help them access their rights and refers clients into the NRM where it is suspected they are victims of modern slavery.

Sophie Hayes Foundation runs employability programmes in London, Birmingham, and Manchester for female survivors of modern slavery.

Tamar works in partnership with the police to identify victims of modern slavery in the sex industry. It provides regular outreach support through befriending visits, practical support, English lessons, and counselling.

HOW BUSINESSES CAN SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF MODERN SLAVERY

Scotland and Northern Ireland

Migrant Help (Scotland and Northern Ireland) is the lead contractor for modern slavery victim support in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Wales

Black Association of Women Step Out (BAWSO) provides specialist services in Wales to Black, minority ethnic and migrant victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and human trafficking.

Yorkshire

Ashiana Sheffield works to protect Black, Asian, and minority ethnic and refugee women, children and young people trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and domestic abuse.

Palm Cove Society provides secure accommodation and intensive support to survivors across Yorkshire.

ENJOYED THIS CONTENT?

You might also like to:

- [find out more about our Employment & Skills work](#)
- [learn more about our advisory services](#)
- [join us for one of our upcoming events](#)



Talk to one of our expert team [today](#) to learn how membership of BITC can help you take your responsible business journey further and drive lasting global change.

REFERENCES

ⁱ Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify statistics UK, Q2 2020

ⁱⁱ Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Annual Report 2019-2020

ⁱⁱⁱ [Modern slavery in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

^{iv} [Risks & Impacts of Covid-19 for Modern Slavery Survivors in the UK](#), University of Nottingham Rights Lab

^v [Risks & Impacts of Covid-19 for Modern Slavery Survivors in the UK](#), University of Nottingham Rights Lab

^{vi} A Game Change? Long-Term Support for Survivors of Modern Slavery, Centre for the Study of Modern Slavery, St Mary's University