

Editorial: Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

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This special edition of the Prison Service Journal is dedicated to the subject of 'modern slavery and human trafficking' (MSHT) and highlights the important role of prisons within the UK anti-slavery regime. Modern slavery is an umbrella term used by the UK Government which encompasses human trafficking, slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour. This edition seeks to explore the diversity and realities of MSHT crimes which involve the severe exploitation of vulnerable people for economic gain. Readers may find some of the content included in this edition upsetting and disturbing.

The focus on MSHT for prisons and youth custody is timely, with increasing numbers of adults and children seeking support and protection across the UK. At the same time, securing convictions under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (MSA) remains challenging with low charging and conviction rates.¹ Rather than being the 'end of the line', the prison environment provides valuable opportunities in responding to those who have experienced severe exploitation which constitutes MSHT. This includes identifying individuals, protecting them from re-trafficking, and supporting their recovery. Prisons have a responsibility to manage and support those convicted under the MSA, and to those who have committed offences within a modern slavery context (but where other types of convictions have been secured) to reduce their risk of future MSHT offending and disrupt suspected ongoing exploitation.

This special edition is a collaboration between His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, the International Organization for Migration, and the Universities of Essex, Hull, Manchester, and Nottingham.

Jodi Symmonds explores and analyses coercive tactics in MSHT via two vignettes, and considers the victim-perpetrator overlap, risk assessment, treatment/response, and vulnerability to re-exploitation. Professor Rose Broad considers the representation of women in modern slavery offending, their disproportionate higher rates of conviction, and what effective responses may be developed in responding to complex vulnerabilities and needs, informed by

interviews with nine women convicted for MSHT offences. Dr Larissa Sandy, Dr James Tangen, Dr Alison Gardner, and Ann Snowden explore barriers and opportunities faced by prisons in the identification, protection, and support of those subjected to severe exploitation. They assess how sustainable reintegration may be approached for those who are justice-involved. Ann Snowden explores the role of prisons within a single whole system approach, using seven key principles. Dr Marija Jovanović, Vanessa Topp, Franziska Fluhr, and Dr Patrick Burland build on their published research which considered the role and responsibilities of prisons in securing the rights of modern slavery survivors.² They explore the extent to which prisons can act as a safehouse for individuals at risk of ongoing exploitation. The final article, by Ann Snowden, provides case studies which illustrate the four main types of MSHT, as well as 'cuckooing' and 'organ trafficking'.

We were delighted to secure two interviews for this special edition. Ann Snowden interviews Eleanor Lyons, the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, who provides insights into her priorities and sets out her views of how prisons may engage with wider efforts to tackle MSHT. Dr Alicia Heys from the University of Hull interviews Caroline Haughey OBE KC, a criminal barrister in independent practice who specialises in modern slavery cases.

Finally, the edition concludes with a book review by Dr Zahra Shirgholami of 'Demystifying Modern Slavery', co-edited by Professor David Gadd and Professor Rose Broad.

The guest editor, Ann Snowden, would like to thank all contributors for their timely submissions and peer reviews, to Professor David Gadd, Dr Seán Columb, Dr Alicia Heys and Dr Paul Andell for additional peer reviews, and to the PSJ editors for their support in producing this special edition.

In compiling this edition, we also recognise that there are many important areas which require further attention. Not least these include the impact of MSHT on children held in detention; how we develop

1. House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2023). *Human Trafficking: First Report of Session 2023-24*. HM Government.

2. Jovanović, M., Burland, P., Topp, V., & Fluhr, F. (2023). *Tackling the blind spot of the UK anti-slavery regime: The role and responsibility of prisons in securing the rights of modern slavery survivors*. Modern Slavery & Human Rights Policy & Evidence Centre.

culturally sensitive approaches for those recovering from severe exploitation and who remain vulnerable to re-trafficking; a focus on race in a policy environment which prioritises nationality; the prevalence of individual, low-sophisticated opportunistic offending as well as organised crime networks; how responses to individuals convicted of diverse offences and subjected to severe exploitation can be effectively implemented; and an overarching emphasis on the importance of developing an evidence-led approach, encouraging research and accurate data. Further individual articles for future editions of the Journal are encouraged by its editorial team.

We hope that this first special edition focussing on the issues for prisons in responding to MSHT will be a valuable introduction for people living and working in prisons. We also hope it will inspire policy makers within the wider criminal justice system, those involved in the UK's anti-slavery regime and international correctional services to continue to develop effective and co-ordinated responses to MSHT. It is clear that strong multi-agency and partnership approaches are vital in tackling MSHT and the expertise within Non-Government Organisations and civil society is hugely beneficial in progressing this work.