

Rural Needs Impact Assessment

Name of Organisation: Department of Justice

Title of Strategy, Policy, Plan or Public Service: Northern Ireland Modern Slavery Strategy 2021-22

Step 1: Define the Issue

• *What are the objectives of the strategy, policy plan or service?*

The purpose of the strategy is to raise awareness of modern slavery offences and so to reduce the threat from, the vulnerability to, and the prevalence of, modern slavery in Northern Ireland. The strategy:

- enhances the operational response to PURSUE and disrupt offenders and bring them to justice;
- puts the PROTECTION and needs of victims at the centre of our response and;
- engages partners across key services, business, non-Governmental organisations and the wider public in PREVENTING.

• *What impact do you intend it to have in rural areas?*

Human trafficking and slavery practices take place across Northern Ireland and not limited to urban or rural areas.

Forced labour and human trafficking for forced labour may take place in rural areas. For example, there have been incidents of forced labour within the agricultural sector. However, the agricultural sector is not the only sector where forced labour can take place: there have also been instances of forced labour within factories (including food processing factories) and the maritime sector. Modern slavery can take place in any setting.

Raising awareness of modern slavery in rural areas would have a positive impact as it would help to reduce the number of these crimes taking place.

The strategy is not focused solely on forced labour or human trafficking for forced labour. It seeks to address all forms of slavery and human trafficking (including sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and forced begging) which can occur in both urban and rural settings.

• ***How is 'rural' defined for the purposes of this policy/strategy/service/plan?***

N/A. The strategy seeks to address all types of slavery across the whole of Northern Ireland and does differentiate between urban and rural areas.

• ***What would constitute a fair rural outcome in this case?***

A fair rural outcome would result in any potential victims of modern slavery continuing to be recovered from exploitation, and modern slavery crimes being tackled wherever they take place.

Step 2: Understand the situation

- ***What is the current situation in rural areas?***

This is the fourth Modern Slavery Strategy for Northern Ireland. Previous strategies sought to address modern slavery in both urban and rural areas.

There is no evidence to suggest that rural areas are more susceptible to human trafficking/modern slavery than urban areas. Rather, traffickers and enslavers are targeting vulnerable people across Northern Ireland. For example, their crimes can take place in inner city housing estates, in large factories, in rural border areas or, due to immigration controls avoidance, in areas accessible by small boats such as the Glens of Antrim. Therefore, the strategy does not seek to differentiate between rural and urban areas but will impact on all areas of Northern Ireland.

- ***What evidence (statistics, data, research, stakeholder advice) do you have about the position in rural areas?***

There are examples of human trafficking/modern slavery for forced labour occurring in rural areas. For example, a multi-agency investigation into potential human trafficking for labour exploitation in the rural South Armagh area resulted in the recovery of a number of potential victims at a business in the agricultural industry.

However, human trafficking/slavery for forced labour can also occur in urban areas, where the number of potential victims recovered in each case tends to be lower but cases can be more frequent. For example, proactive investigations into alleged human trafficking for forced labour/securing services have been conducted in the Belfast area resulting in the recovery of 5 potential victims.

Likewise, there is evidence of human trafficking/slavery for sexual exploitation occurring across Northern Ireland. For example, two males were sentenced in February 2017 for trafficking vulnerable women for sexual exploitation in Belfast and Banbridge.

- ***If the relevant evidence is not available, can this be sourced?***

N/A

• Do you have access to the views of rural stakeholders about the likely impact of the policy?

The Draft Strategy was developed in close partnership with a broad range of civic society organisations in Northern Ireland. The Department of Justice has engaged directly with the NGO Engagement Group on Human Trafficking to inform the strategic direction and content. A number of these civic society groups have a reach across Northern Ireland, in both urban and rural areas including faith groups which reach into churches across Northern Ireland.

The Gangmasters Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) can report the mistreatment of workers, labour providers operating without a licence or a business using an unlicensed gangmaster to the GLAA. In recent months the GLAA has provided assistance in collaboration with the PSNI to combat exploitation across both rural and urban areas, more specifically in working to publish an awareness raising article in the Farming Life magazine.

Civic society groups also reflect the views of other NGO partners with whom they work, providing the Department with a wide range of input from across the whole of Northern Ireland. Similarly, statutory partners such as the PSNI, Home Office Visas and Immigration and Immigration Enforcement, HMRC, the Health and Social Care Board etc all have reach into all areas of Northern Ireland. An Garda Síochána also work as a partner on cross-border aspects, with issues affecting rural areas on both sides of the border. All of these groups have had the opportunity to input to discussions on the content, measures and actions to be included in the Draft Strategy.

The Draft Strategy will also be subject to public consultation, giving other civic society organisations and the wider public (in both urban and rural areas) the opportunity to help shape the final strategy.

• Are there existing design features or mitigations already in place to take account of rural needs?

N/A

Step 3: Develop and appraise options

- ***Are there barriers to delivery in rural areas?***

No. The Department and its statutory and civic society partners have a reach across all areas in Northern Ireland. PSNI are able to screen potential victims of human trafficking/slavery in any setting; immigration checks can take place in border areas as well as local areas and awareness training and identification of possible victims take place in areas that impact both urban and rural dwellers, for example, with groups across Northern Ireland, at airports and hospital Emergency Departments and through the Health and Social Care Trusts.

The Department also works with NI Councils (NILGA) and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) to raise awareness of modern slavery across Northern Ireland. In partnership with the DOJ, NILGA produced guidance for council workers and frontline officials raising awareness of the potential to encounter trafficking across the entirety of Northern Ireland. Awareness raising material (poster, leaflet and video) has been distributed and displayed in council buildings across all council areas and the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner is exploring the possibility of producing a guidance document on modern slavery for staff across all councils. Also, faith-based groups have received awareness raising material for circulation to churches across Northern Ireland. Media interviews also reach into homes across Northern Ireland.

- ***If so, how can these be overcome or mitigated?***

N/A

- ***Will it cost more to deliver in rural areas?***

No.

- ***What steps can be taken to achieve fair rural outcomes?***

Continued utilisation of the current structures and networks to raise awareness and tackle modern slavery crimes will ensure that rural communities continue to be reached.

Step 4: Prepare for Delivery

- ***Do the necessary delivery mechanisms exist in rural areas?***

Yes. The Department and its statutory and civic society partners have a reach across all areas in Northern Ireland. PSNI are able to screen potential victims of human trafficking/slavery in any setting. The Department also works with NI councils and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) to raise awareness of modern slavery across Northern Ireland. The earlier response to Step 3 is also relevant.

- ***Have you considered alternative delivery mechanisms?***

N/A

- ***What action has been taken to ensure fair rural outcomes?***

Engagement with PCSPs and other networks ensures that rural communities continue to be reached.

- ***Is there flexibility for local delivery bodies to find local solutions?***

Yes. For example, following engagement with PCSPs, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon PCSP were keen to raise awareness of modern slavery. They held a symposium as part of the Home of St Patrick Festival which tied in the story of St Patrick and his links to Armagh, where he founded his first church in Ireland. Through the Engagement Group DOJ works with a number of local civic

society organisations that are providing local solutions that complement the draft strategy.

- ***Are different solutions required in different areas?***

The Department has provided PCSPs with “key messages” and PCSPs will deliver these messages in the most appropriate way for the area.

Step 5: Implementation & Monitoring

- ***Have you set any rural specific indicators or targets to monitor?***

N/A

- ***How will the outcomes be measured in rural areas?***

We have identified a range of measures against each of the strategic priorities of Pursue, Protect and Prevent, and these will help to inform our understanding both of the nature of modern slavery across Northern Ireland and our response. These measures will consider outcomes across both urban and rural areas.

- ***Are there any statistics or data that you will collect to monitor rural needs and impacts?***

N/A

Step 6: Evaluation & Review

- ***What processes are in place to evaluate and review the implementation of the policy, strategy, plan or service?***

An annual progress report against the actions in the Strategy will be published.

- ***Have rural needs been factored into the evaluation process?***

No specific rural needs have been identified and the evaluation process will cover Northern Ireland-wide measures.

- ***How will lessons learned in relation to rural outcomes be used to inform future policy making and delivery?***

If any lessons are learned, these will be used to inform future Strategies.

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