



Every Child Protected
Against Trafficking



INDEPENDENT
ANTI-SLAVERY
COMMISSIONER

A review of what works in multi-agency decision making and the implications for child victims of trafficking

August 2020

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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The authors would like to express thanks to Shu Shin Luh, a barrister from Garden Court Chambers for providing feedback and advice on the legal accuracy of the review's recommendations.

GLOSSARY

ATMG	Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group
CCE	Child criminal exploitation
CSE	Child sexual exploitation
ICTG	Independent Child Trafficking Guardian
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advocate
MACC	Multi-Agency Case Conference
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
SCA	Single Competent Authority
SSL	Slavery Safeguarding Lead
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
WASPI	Wales Accord for Sharing Personal Information

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) was introduced in 2009, there have been multiple attempts to pilot and propose alternative decision making models for both children and adults. This includes the NRM pilots carried out in West Yorkshire and the South West of England between 2015-2017 which introduced the role of the Slavery Safeguarding Lead (SSL);¹ the 'Glasgow model'² first proposed in 2011 and later refined in 2018 which incorporated learning from best practice and research in Scotland to place children at the centre of decision making; and the recommendations made by the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group (ATMG) in 2014 for revised adult³ and child⁴ NRM decision making models.

Each year, referrals into the NRM are increasing, with 4,550 children referred into the NRM in 2019, representing over 43% of all referrals.⁵ Whilst it is acknowledged that this may be an indicator of heightened awareness among professionals, the increase in referrals has highlighted fractures within the current system including concerns about the quality of the NRM decisions;⁶ the timeliness of decisions and the impact of this delay on safeguarding actions; a disconnect between the NRM and local safeguarding processes; continued examples of agencies working in silo and gaps in knowledge among professionals about the NRM and what it means for children. It is understood that the Home Office is now considering a pilot to test approaches to devolve NRM decision making for children to local authorities and local safeguarding partnerships. Recognising that there are many existing examples of multi-agency decision making operating at a local level, the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and ECPAT UK worked in collaboration to review and identify what works in multi-agency decision making to inform thinking on devolved NRM decision making for children.

In order to develop an understanding of the existing models involved in multi-agency decision making, between 14 April 2020 and 8 May 2020, practitioners and policy makers were invited to submit examples of good practice across existing frameworks for safeguarding adults and children to a rapid call for evidence. Responses were received from 14 stakeholders, including the Local Government Association and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). After considering the examples submitted to the call for evidence and carrying out further desk based research, it was agreed that the review would carry out a deeper dive focusing on four models: the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); the Missing and Exploitation Hub; Channel panels and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs), as well as acknowledging some of the existing models within the context of modern slavery and human trafficking. A rapid evidence assessment was carried out for each model to

¹ Home Office (2017), 'An evaluation of the National Referral Mechanism pilot': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/653703/evaluation-national-referral-mechanism-pilot-horr94.pdf.

² Model developed by Catriona MacSween, Clare Tudor, Kirsty Thompson and Paul Rigby.

³ The Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group (ATMG) (2014), 'Proposal for a revised National Referral Mechanism for Adults': http://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/atmg_national_referral_mechanism_for_adults.pdf.

⁴ ATMG (2014), 'Proposal for a revised National Referral Mechanism for Children': http://www.antislavery.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/atmg_national_referral_mechanism_for_children.pdf.

⁵ Home Office (2020), 'National Referral Mechanism Statistics UK: End of year summary 2019': <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-referral-mechanism-statistics>.

⁶ Home Office (2019), '2019 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840059/Modern_Slavery_Report_2019.pdf.

examine existing literature on what works in addition to a small number of consultative discussions with key stakeholders to understand how the models operate in practice.

In reviewing these four models, seven key themes were explored in detail to identify learning and good practice. These were: the function of the decision making models; membership; the inclusion of survivor voices; training; funding and resourcing; information sharing and governance.

The review concludes by making observations on the function of multi-agency decision making models, recognising that each of the four models encompassed both decision making in relation to vulnerability and risk, as well as contributing to safeguarding and action planning. In relation to child trafficking, it is recognised that there are both statutory duties for safeguarding partners under the Children Act (1989),⁷ (2004) and the Children and Social Work Act (2017),⁸ as well as obligations under Article 10 of ECAT relating to the identification of victims. Further exploration is therefore required of how these systems interact in practice at a local level, but it is essential that a devolved decision making model does not exist solely as a binary determination of trafficking status but is intrinsically linked to local safeguarding structures.

Within the context of children, it is recommended that all decisions are made to attain the best interests of the child as a primary consideration as set out in Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Across all four models, information sharing was a critical component of success, but was often a challenge to embed effectively in practice. It is therefore crucial to ensure that there are sufficient information sharing protocols in place and that multi-agency partners understand what information they can share, why they need to share it and that the information they do share is relevant for the purpose with the aim of supporting the best interests of the child. Good practice was identified in the form of Vulnerability Assessment Frameworks used by the Channel process to ensure consistency within assessments across partner agencies, as well as templates for information sharing developed by SafeLives within the context of MARAC.

The conclusion of the review also discusses who should be involved within multi-agency decision making at a local level. Across the four models, variation was identified in terms of membership but it was recognised that involving core safeguarding partners is important and that there is value in decision making models having the flexibility to incorporate other relevant organisations or departments as appropriate. The role of the panel or model chair was also explored and was found to make important contributions to the effectiveness of multi-agency decision making. As a minimum, it is recommended that standards and key competencies should be developed in order to promote consistency within approaches. The review identified examples of some models appointing an independent chair following a strategic review of their process in order to allow external scrutiny and maintain independence within decision making. The inclusion of survivor voices was also identified to be important, with the role of the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) within the MARAC an example of good practice. Within the context of child trafficking, it is recommended that Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs) should participate in models for devolved NRM decision making with careful consideration given to who may fulfil this role in areas where the ICTG service is not yet embedded.

In considering existing models for multi-agency decision making, the review identifies three further areas that are critical components of effectiveness: governance, training and funding.

⁷ Children Act (1989): <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>; Children Act (2004): <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>.

⁸ Children and Social Work Act (2017): <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents/enacted>.

Exploration of the existing models has demonstrated various approaches to training, with tiers of training to incorporate generic training, training for panel members, training for panel chairs and bespoke training for Local Authority Channel coordinators in Dovetail pilot areas as seen within the context of Channel identified as an example as good practice. In addition, for multi-agency decision making to be effective, it must be appropriately situated within the governance structure of the strategic local safeguarding partnership in order to ensure accountability and engagement from stakeholder organisations. This is recognised to be one of the strengths of the Wales Modern Slavery MARAC, which is fully embedded within the strategic safeguarding partnership. Finally, funding is arguably the most significant factor in the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of multi-agency working. Within the context of child safeguarding and children's services, there are significant concerns regarding the continued impact of austerity on statutory services.⁹ Consequently, any devolved NRM decision making model must be accompanied by sufficient funding for local safeguarding partnerships both to resource the decision making function and to enable them to deliver effective safeguarding responses.

This review has drawn upon findings from evaluations and research that has been carried out by academics and by government departments. It has identified that in some cases, there is an absence of an independent, published evaluation. To understand what works and to ensure that developments in policy and practice are evidence based, it is essential that evaluations are carried out, that they are robust and that the findings are published. In addition, it is fundamental that in evaluating the success of devolved NRM decision making there is a focus on the impact on longer term outcomes for children.

Recommendations

The review therefore makes a series of recommendations, both for the UK government and for local safeguarding partners who may be involved in potential pilots for local NRM decision making.

The review recommends that **safeguarding partners** participating in devolved decision making should:

- Ensure that all decisions are made to attain the best interests of the child as a primary consideration as set out in Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Ensure a devolved NRM decision making model does not exist solely as a binary determination of trafficking status but is intrinsically linked to local safeguarding structures to ensure a more holistic approach to protecting child victims of trafficking and preventing further exploitation;
- Ensure that suitable information sharing protocols are in place between all agencies involved in the devolved decision process to facilitate timely and efficient sharing of information between agencies with the aim of supporting the best interests of the child;
- A devolved NRM decision making model should comprise a core membership of local safeguarding partners, with the ability to incorporate other agencies or departments where relevant to the case;

⁹ The Association of Directors of Children's Services Ltd (2018), 'Research Report: SAFEGUARDING PRESSURES PHASE 6': https://adcs.org.uk/assets/documentation/ADCS_SAFEGUARDING_PRESSURES_PHASE_6_FINAL.pdf.

- Facilitate the voice of the child within decision making by ensuring that the wishes and feelings of children are understood and are taken into account, preferably seeking the active participation of ICTGs or where ICTGS are not yet available, an advocate of choice for the child who is independent from public authorities and is at the expense of public funds;
- Ensure that regular training on child trafficking is provided for all local safeguarding partners involved in the devolved decision making model. This should include those who make referrals as well as those who participate in decision making. A tiered structure is recommended which incorporates access to national training resources and is complemented by locally delivered training;
- A devolved NRM decision making model must be appropriately situated within the governance structure of the strategic local safeguarding partnership to ensure accountability and engagement from all agencies.

The review recommends that the **UK government** should:

- Set out in policy or guidance how relevant government departments incorporate the best interests requirement and the duty to create a durable solution for trafficked children as set out in Article 16 of the EU Anti-trafficking Directive;
- Ensure there are key competencies in place for the role of panel chair to encourage consistent standards, with consideration given to a requirement for devolved decision making models to have an independent chair;
- Develop national resources for devolved NRM decision making for children to include detailed operational guidance, template documents and a tiered training programme to assist with standards and consistency across models;
- Conduct a new burdens assessment to determine the extra resources needed to devolve NRM decision making and ensure that adequate funding is provided to local safeguarding partnerships to reflect this;
- Ensure sufficient funding for local safeguarding partnerships to meet the demands of contextual safeguarding interventions for children and young people who have been trafficked and exploited within their overall safeguarding duties, as well as enabling a wider programme of prevention by creating a ‘protective environment’¹⁰ for children;
- Commission an independent evaluation of the pilot to test approaches to devolved decision making, ensuring that this measures impact by focusing on the long-term outcomes for children and young people.

¹⁰ Each party shall take specific measures to reduce children’s vulnerability to trafficking, notably by creating a protective environment for them. Council of Europe Convention Against Trafficking in Human Beings, Art 5.5.

1. INTRODUCTION

This review was designed to consolidate understanding of what works and good practice in existing multi-agency decision making models. An online scoping review was carried out along with further desk based research in order to identify models of interest, with a rapid evidence assessment then conducted for each of the four models selected. Finally, a small number of consultative discussions were conducted with key stakeholders to better understand how each of the four models work in practice. In reviewing these four models, seven key themes were explored in detail to identify learning and good practice and the review concludes with a series of recommendations for both local safeguarding partners and UK government. The review is supported by appendices which contain further documentation as referenced throughout.

For the purpose of this review, child trafficking will refer to all children under the age of 18, in line with the definition of a child within the Modern Slavery Act (2015).¹¹

Objectives and scope of the review

This review had two principle objectives, namely to:

1. Identify examples of good practice and what works in relation to existing safeguarding multi-agency decision making models;
2. Consider how this learning could be applied in the context of multi-agency NRM decision making for child victims of modern slavery.

Changes to child safeguarding frameworks

Over recent years there have been important developments in the frameworks for safeguarding children. Following various high profile cases of child abuse which highlighted significant failings in child protection,¹² many areas began establishing a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). In July 2014, the coalition government published the findings of their review¹³ of multi-agency working models emphasising a need for these arrangements to facilitate early and effective identification of risk, improved information sharing, joint decision making and coordinated action.

As a progression to this review, the coalition government announced a joint inspection regime of the multi-agency arrangements for the protection of children in England which began in January 2016. These Joint Targeted Area Inspections are carried out by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. The 2018 inspection report 'Protecting children from

¹¹ Modern Slavery Act (2015): <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/30/contents/enacted>.

¹² See the death of eight-year-old Victoria Climbié, which led to a report by Lord Laming (2003), 'The Victoria Climbié Inquiry': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/273183/5730.pdf and the death of 17-month-old Peter Connelly ("Baby P") leading to another report by Lord Laming (2009), 'The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/328117/The_Protection_of_Children_in_England.pdf.

¹³ Home Office (2014), 'Multi Agency Working and Information Sharing Project': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/338875/MASH.pdf.

criminal exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery: an addendum'¹⁴ acknowledged that whilst multi-agency working is important, having the 'right system' is not enough. It concluded that multi-agency meetings must result in clear action planning, coordination of work across agencies and close monitoring of plans so that children are protected and supported.

The statutory framework governing the ways by which the three local safeguarding partners must make arrangements to work together and fulfil their safeguarding duties is set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children¹⁵ (2018). This latest version of the guidance sets out the changes needed to support the new system of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements established by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. One of the most significant changes was the implementation of new safeguarding arrangements by replacing Local Safeguarding Children Boards with 'safeguarding partners'.¹⁶ The safeguarding partners should agree on ways to coordinate their safeguarding services and act as a strategic leadership group in supporting and engaging others. They must also set out how they will work together and with any other relevant agencies.¹⁷ The three partners have equal and joint responsibility for local safeguarding arrangements.

It is widely acknowledged that the child protection system and the legislative and policy framework which underpins it was originally designed to protect children and young people from risks posed by their families and/or situations where their family members have reduced capacity to safeguard them. Whilst there are legislative frameworks¹⁸ in place that can be applied in the context of extra-familial harm and statutory guidance¹⁹ does make some reference to contextual safeguarding, it is recognised that in order to suitably equip practitioners and address the current gaps in safeguarding responses, there are important areas requiring further clarification within statutory guidance. These include matters relating to thresholds, consent, escalation where parents are protective factors, as well as detail on how to utilise the legislative framework in practice to develop plans and deliver appropriate interventions to keep children safe from extra-familial harm. There is now an increasing focus on contextual safeguarding,²⁰ an approach developed by Carlene Firmin from the University of Bedfordshire's Contextual Safeguarding Network, which recognises that young people are increasingly vulnerable to abuse in a range of social contexts, therefore safeguarding requires a partnership approach and practitioners need to

¹⁴ Ofsted, Care Quality Commission, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (2018), 'Protecting children from criminal exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery: an addendum': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/756031/Protecting_children_from_criminal_exploitation_human_trafficking_modern_slavery_addendum_1411_18.pdf.

¹⁵ HM Government (2018), 'Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf.

¹⁶ Defined as local authorities, chief officers of police, and clinical commissioning groups.

¹⁷ Relevant agencies include schools, youth offending teams, prison governors, immigration officials and others. See Schedule to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review and Relevant Agency (England) Regulations 2018/789: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2018/789/made>.

¹⁸ Section 17(1) and (10) and Section 47 of the Children Act (1989), Section 10 and 11 of the Children Act (2004), Section 1 and Section 17 of the Children and Social Work Act (2017).

¹⁹ HM Government (2018), 'Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children'.

²⁰ Carlene Firmin (2017), 'Contextual Safeguarding: An overview of the operational, strategic and conceptual framework': <https://www.csnetwork.org.uk/assets/documents/Contextual-Safeguarding-Briefing.pdf>.

engage with sectors who have influence over and within extra-familial contexts. A considerable amount of good practice is being developed in this space, however it is recognised that there is a need for clear statutory guidance, workforce development and sufficient resource in order to effectively safeguard children from extra-familial harm.

The National Referral Mechanism and child victims of trafficking

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the UK's framework for identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery. It was introduced in 2009 to enable the UK to meet its obligations under the 2005 Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. When identifying whether someone is a victim of modern slavery, the United Kingdom government has mandated through policy²¹ that the regional²² and international²³ definitions of a victim are to be applied. Following the implementation of the Modern Slavery Act in 2015, on 31 July 2015 the NRM was extended to all victims of modern slavery in England and Wales, in Northern Ireland from March 2016 and in Scotland from April 2018.²⁴

First Responder agencies including the police and local authorities have a statutory duty under Section 52 of the Modern Slavery Act to notify the Secretary of State when they identify a potential victim of modern slavery and in the context of children must therefore make referrals into the NRM using the digital referral platform.²⁵ Those under 18 do not have to consent to a referral, but it is good practice to ensure that they are informed about the process and what it entails. For children who are referred into the NRM, the local authority will retain the duty to safeguard them, as child trafficking is child abuse and therefore requires a safeguarding response. The Modern Slavery Act also makes a provision for ICTGs under Section 48 which has yet to be commenced nationally. Currently the Home Office has rolled out interim arrangements of the ICTG service in 'Early Adopter Sites' which cover one-third of all local authority areas.²⁶

Once a potential victim of modern slavery has been referred into the NRM, the Single Competent Authority (SCA) within the Home Office will make two decisions on their case. Firstly, within a target of five working days they will make a reasonable grounds decision based on the threshold 'I suspect but I cannot prove'. This decision can either be positive or negative. For those with a positive reasonable grounds decision, the SCA will then proceed to a conclusive grounds decision. The expectation is this decision will be made as soon as possible following day 45 of the recovery

²¹ Home Office (2020), 'Modern Slavery Act 2015 – Statutory Guidance for England and Wales': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875281/March_2020_Statutory_Guidance_under_the_Modern_Slavery_Act_2015.pdf.

²² The two key regional instruments incorporated into the definition set out by the Statutory Guidance are the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (ECAT), ratified on 17 December 2008 by the UK and the Directive 2011/36/EU (Trafficking Directive) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 April 2011 on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims, and replacing Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA.

²³ The international definition of human trafficking is derived from Article 3 the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Crime (Palermo Protocol). Convention No. 29 concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (art. 6) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (art. 35).

²⁴ Home Office (2020), 'Modern Slavery Act 2015 – Statutory Guidance for England and Wales'.

²⁵ Report modern slavery: <https://www.modernslavery.gov.uk/start>.

²⁶ West Midlands, East Midlands, London Borough of Croydon, Greater Manchester, Hampshire, Isle of Wight and Wales.

and reflection period.²⁷ The stated threshold as set out in policy²⁸ is to determine whether ‘on the balance of probabilities, it is more likely than it is not’ that the person is a victim of modern slavery.

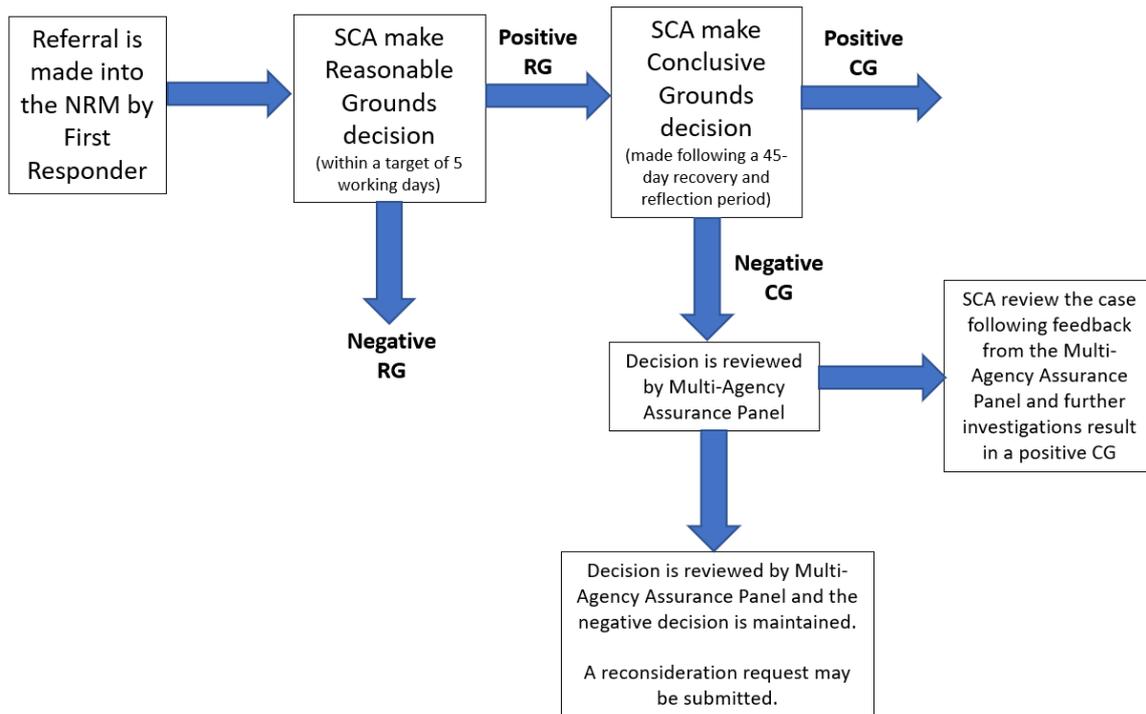


Figure 1: Single Competent Authority decision making process

Alternative models

Since the NRM was introduced in 2009, there have been multiple attempts to both recommend and pilot alternative approaches. In April 2014, Jeremy Oppenheim led a review of the NRM²⁹ which made several recommendations including establishing accredited Slavery Safeguarding Leads (SSL) to professionalise the First Responder role, the implementation of a pilot to test regional multi-disciplinary panels for conclusive grounds decision making led by independent panel chairs and the introduction of a single Case Management Unit within the Home Office.

Between August 2015 and March 2017, pilots were carried out in West Yorkshire and the South West of England to test these recommendations. The evaluation³⁰ of the pilots identified a

²⁷ Home Office (2020), ‘Modern Slavery Act 2015 – Statutory Guidance for England and Wales’.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Home Office (2014), ‘Review of the National Referral Mechanism for victims of trafficking’: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/467434/Review_of_the_National_Referral_Mechanism_for_victims_of_human_trafficking.pdf.

³⁰ Home Office (2017), ‘An evaluation of the National Referral Mechanism pilot’.

positive response to the role of the SSL, with reasonable grounds decisions made more quickly in pilot areas when compared to both non-pilot areas and the baseline year, although for conclusive grounds decisions, the panels had little impact on the time taken to make decisions. Whilst there were a higher proportion of cases that received a positive conclusive grounds decision in the pilot areas compared with non-pilot areas (43% compared to 21%), there was no statistically significant difference when comparing against the baseline year. Despite some positive findings, both the SSL and multi-agency panel member roles were deemed to be unsustainable due to the resourcing commitment of agencies beyond the scope of the pilot and as such, there were no attempts to roll out this model more widely.³¹

Since 2011, various professionals³² have developed proposals for an NRM model which draws on best practice and research in Scotland from 2007. The proposed model, often called the 'Glasgow model' was further developed in 2018. It ensures children are at the centre of decision making, including having a presence at the forum if appropriate. Scotland has consistently led the way with regards to best practice, having developed the Scottish Guardianship Service for separated and unaccompanied children, including foreign national children who have been trafficked.³³ The proposed model uses existing legal architecture, policy and practice for children who require protection as well as ensuring compliance with national, UK and EU obligations. It ensures all key professionals are clear of their role within a child protection framework and timeframes. This model is based on the interagency protocol³⁴ developed in Glasgow, ensuring the panel recognises and involves all the key stakeholders. The proposal also encompasses all children irrespective of nationality and resident status. An infographic providing further detail on this proposed model can be found in Appendix A.

Also in 2014, the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group (ATMG) published a report³⁵ proposing a revised NRM model for children. This model suggested that the NRM decision making process, including both reasonable and conclusive grounds decisions, should be managed by the MASH or another local/regional multi-agency safeguarding body with governance and accountability provided by the Local Children's Safeguarding Board or Department for Education. In utilising this existing structure, the ATMG proposed that identification and protection processes would then operate in parallel, meaning that identification for the purpose of the NRM would not be an 'add-on' to the child protection process, but part of it, embedded within it and handled by those with specialist expertise in child protection, trafficking, exploitation and modern slavery. An infographic providing further detail on this proposed model can be found in Appendix B.

What are the issues?

In 2019, 4,550 children were referred into the NRM, representing over 43% of all referrals.³⁶ A number of referrals were UK national children being criminally exploited. Yet, as professional understanding of the issue is evolving leading to an increase in the identification of child victims, this is highlighting fractures in the current system. Earlier this year the Child Safeguarding

³¹ Ibid.

³² Catriona MacSween, Clare Tudor, Kirsty Thomson and Paul Rigby.

³³ Scottish Guardianship Service: <https://www.aberlour.org.uk/services/scottish-guardianship-service/>.

³⁴ Glasgow Child Protection Committee (2020), 'Child Trafficking & Exploitation Inter Agency Guidance': <https://www.glasgowchildprotection.org.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=12917&p=0>.

³⁵ ATMG (2014), 'Proposal for a revised National Referral Mechanism (NRM) model for children'.

³⁶ Home Office (2020), 'National Referral Mechanism Statistics UK: End of year summary 2019': <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-referral-mechanism-statistics>.

Practice Review Panel³⁷ published their first report which focused on safeguarding children at risk of criminal exploitation. This report recommended a review of Working Together to Safeguard Children to reflect the circumstances of children who are criminally exploited; a review of the use of the NRM; and data collection to improve local and national understanding of prevalence, characteristics and service response.

More broadly in relation to child victims of trafficking for all types of exploitation, there are concerns about the quality of NRM decisions;³⁸ the timeliness of decisions and the potential impact of delays on safeguarding actions; a disconnect between the NRM and local safeguarding processes; continued examples of agencies working in silo; and gaps in knowledge among professionals about the NRM and what it means for children. In the 2017 report 'Time to Transform',³⁹ ECPAT UK found that more than half of frontline professionals believed that the current NRM system should be revised. Over the past twelve months, following the publication of her 2019-2021 Strategic Plan,⁴⁰ the UK Anti-Slavery Commissioner Dame Sara Thornton also made calls⁴¹ for NRM decision making to be devolved to local authorities to encourage decisions to be made by those with knowledge of the case to assist in joining up the systems for decision making and safeguarding.

A time for reform?

It is understood that the Home Office is now considering a pilot to test approaches to devolve NRM decision making for children to local authorities and local safeguarding partnerships. This review therefore seeks to identify the good practice and learning that can be drawn from existing multi-agency decision making models to identify what works and inform thinking on the shape of future models.

³⁷ The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (2020), 'It was hard to escape: Safeguarding children at risk of criminal exploitation':

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/870035/Safeguarding_children_at_risk_from_criminal_exploitation_review.pdf.

³⁸ Home Office (2019), '2019 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery'.

³⁹ ECPAT UK (2017), 'Time to Transform':

<https://www.ecpat.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=cdb8012-7267-41ee-ad51-1569beddb095>.

⁴⁰ Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (2019), 'Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner Strategic Plan 2019-2021': <http://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/media/1329/independent-anti-slavery-commissioners-strategic-plan-19-21-screen-readable.pdf>.

⁴¹ 'Children coerced into drug trafficking face cycle of exploitation due to failings in the system', The Independent (1 March 2020) <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/county-lines-slavery-child-trafficking-drugs-protection-sara-thornton-a9365906.html>.

2. METHODOLOGY

A hybrid methodology was utilised, incorporating a range of research methods which evolved during the review process. This included a scoping review made up of an online scoping exercise and desk based research to identify examples of existing models, followed by a rapid evidence assessment for each of the four specific models selected. A small number of consultative discussions with stakeholders were carried out to supplement the rapid evidence assessment findings.

Scoping review

In order to gain a better understanding of the existing models involved in multi-agency decision making, between 14 April 2020 and 8 May 2020, practitioners and policy makers were invited to submit examples of good practice to a rapid call for evidence.⁴²

The call for evidence was not limited to multi-agency decision making within the field of modern slavery and human trafficking but sought to gather the widest range of examples across existing frameworks for safeguarding adults and children. A Microsoft Forms template was used to gather evidence which can be found in Appendix C.

In total, 14 responses were received to the rapid call for evidence from a range of stakeholders including the Local Government Association, the UNHCR and The Passage. Responses included examples of good practice in relation to both effective multi-agency working and multi-agency decision making models.

After reviewing the examples submitted as part of the call for evidence and carrying out further desk based research to identify existing models, it was agreed that the review would focus specifically on four existing models:

1. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH);
2. Missing and Exploitation Hub;
3. Channel panels;
4. Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs).

This included two models focused on children (MASH and the Missing and Exploitation Hub), one focused on adults (MARAC) and one that considers both children and adults (Channel panels). With the exception of the Missing and Exploitation Hub, all of the models are examples of national models that operate at a local and/or regional level and have been established for a number of years therefore were recognised to provide the opportunity to identify learning and what works.

Rapid evidence assessment

After identifying the models of focus for this review, a rapid evidence assessment was conducted for each of the four models using the search terms contained in the table overleaf. This sought to identify academic papers, grey literature, as well as policy documents and practice-based

⁴² Anti-Slavery Commissioner (2020), 'IASC Call for Evidence: Use of the Modern Slavery Act's Section 45 statutory defence': <https://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/news-insights/closed-iasc-call-for-evidence-use-of-the-modern-slavery-act-s-section-45-statutory-defence/>.

guidance in order to develop an understanding of what works in relation to existing multi-agency decision making models.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	Missing and Exploitation Hub	Channel panel	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-agency safeguarding hubs effectiveness • Multi-agency safeguarding hubs evaluation • Multi-agency safeguarding hubs good practice • Multi-agency safeguarding hubs decision making • Multi-agency safeguarding hubs inspection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Hubs • Multi-agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) • Multi-agency Child Exploitation (MACE) • Missing, Exploitation and Trafficking Hub (MET) • Multi-agency child exploitation good practice • Multi-agency child exploitation decision making • Multi-agency child exploitation evaluation • Multi-agency child exploitation review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Channel panel what works • Channel panel review • Channel panel evaluation • Channel panel effectiveness • Channel panel learning • Channel panel good practice • Channel panel decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference what works • MARAC evaluation • MARAC effectiveness • MARAC learning • MARAC good practice • MARAC review • MARAC decision making • Domestic abuse decision making

Figure 2: Search terms used during review

Stakeholder discussions

After carrying out a rapid evidence assessment for each of the models, it was identified that there would be benefit in speaking to stakeholders to ensure a good understanding of the current picture and to allow further exploration of how the four models operate in practice. Consultative discussions were therefore carried out with a small number of stakeholders including the Home Office, the police and third sector organisations using a semi-structured interview technique. A template containing the questions used can be found in Appendix D.

3. DESCRIPTION OF EXISTING MODELS TO BE EXAMINED WITHIN THIS REVIEW

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) are the most common model for local arrangements designed to fulfil the need for effective information sharing and multi-agency working in order to ensure positive safeguarding outcomes. These models have been established to enable safeguarding partners to respond to their statutory duties under section 11 of the Children Act (2004) (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act (2017)) and are recommended by various reviews, statutory guidance⁴³ and policy documentation.

Local areas will develop their own protocols within each individual MASH in order to effectively respond to the specific challenges faced by the locality and each agency's statutory duties. This review focuses on a particular model of a MASH. The Home Office⁴⁴ identified the main commonalities between the hubs surveyed in that report as being based on these three principles: information sharing, joint decision making and coordinated intervention.

The composition of a MASH can vary from a large team from various different agencies, or it may consist of only a few members of staff from health agencies, Children's Services and the local police force. Co-locating staff is a feature of many hubs and has been highlighted as instrumental in the development of multi-agency arrangements.⁴⁵ These hubs examine concerns regarding children, adults or both. Most models act as a first and single point of contact for new safeguarding concerns, having agreed thresholds to enable the triaging of referrals.

Missing and Exploitation Hubs

Missing and Exploitation Hubs are local and regional initiatives developed to respond to and safeguard children effectively through multi-agency partnerships, as well as to maintain a clear oversight on strategic responses to child exploitation. Following Alexis Jay's report into the sexual exploitation of children in Rotherham,⁴⁶ local areas began to develop a variety of multi-agency models⁴⁷ to respond to child sexual exploitation (CSE).⁴⁸ In recent years, statutory agencies have begun to expand their CSE multi-agency services with a view to bring in a more holistic approach

⁴³ HM Government (2018), 'Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children'.

⁴⁴ Home Office (2014), 'Multi Agency Working and Information Sharing Project'.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Alexis Jay (2014), 'Independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham (1997–2013)': <https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/downloads/file/279/independent-inquiry-into-child-sexual-exploitation-in-rotherham>.

⁴⁷ OFSTED (2014), 'The sexual exploitation of children: it couldn't happen here, could it?': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/386598/The_20sexual_20exploitation_20of_20children_20it_20couldn't_20happen_20here_20could_20it.pdf.

⁴⁸ Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Care Quality Commission and OFSTED (2016), 'Time to Listen – a joined up approach to child sexual exploitation and missing children': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/676421/Time_to_listen_a_joined_up_response_to_child_sexual_exploitation_and_missing_children.pdf.

to child exploitation,⁴⁹ to include missing, trafficking and other forms such as criminal exploitation.⁵⁰ Some areas have developed umbrella-safeguarding approaches such as Missing, Exploitation and Trafficking Hubs⁵¹ whilst others have absorbed the safeguarding aspect of child criminal exploitation (CCE) into their CSE protocols and maintain a separate team for modern slavery.⁵²

This review focuses on the Missing and Exploitation Hub developed by a local police force as part of a regional response to child exploitation. The model encompasses joint safeguarding and joint decision making, leading the strategic intelligence overview and facilitating cross-border cooperation between multiple Local Authority Children Services departments and other police forces. The hub is located within a police building, in the same location as the MASH in order to encourage collaborative working. This model has been designed around the statutory duties of the safeguarding partners, but it is not solely driven by these duties and also incorporates relevant agencies and non-statutory partners with the aim of improving the safeguarding response to vulnerable children.

Channel panels

The Channel programme in England and Wales is an initiative to support the delivery of the Prevent strand of the UK government's CONTEST Counter-Terrorism Strategy⁵³. Initially piloted in 2007, the Channel programme is a voluntary, confidential programme which aims to protect individuals of any age who are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism at the earliest stage. The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015)⁵⁴ placed the Channel programme on a statutory footing and Section 36 of this Act created a duty on each local authority in England and Wales to ensure there is a Channel panel in place for its area.

Channel panels bring together multi-agency partners to jointly assess the nature and extent of the risk of a person being drawn into terrorism and where necessary, develop an appropriate support package tailored to the needs of the individual. Referrals to Prevent can come from a wide range of sources, including the police, social services, health representatives, education sector as well as the general public. The referrals to Prevent may then be deemed to be suitable for a Channel panel.

⁴⁹ Home Office (2020), 'Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/794554/6.5120_Child_exploitation_disruption_toolkit.pdf.

⁵⁰ Calderdale Safeguarding Boards (2020), 'What have we been doing about Child Exploitation in Calderdale?': <https://safeguarding.calderdale.gov.uk/professionals/safeguarding-children/child-exploitation/>.

⁵¹ Peterborough City Council and Cambridgeshire County Council (2020), 'Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET) Hub Information Guide 2020': <http://www.safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/MET-HUB-Information-Guide-Final.pdf>.

⁵² National Working Group (2020), 'CSE and Exploitation Team Structure': <https://www.nwgnetwork.org/cse-and-exploitation-teams-structure/>.

⁵³ HM Government (2011), 'CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97995/strategy-contest.pdf.

⁵⁴ HM Government (2015), 'Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015': <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/contents/enacted>.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences

A Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a victim-focused, multi-agency meeting centred on information sharing and joint action planning in relation to cases of domestic abuse for victims aged 16 and over who are at high risk of serious harm or homicide. The role of the MARAC is to bring multi-agency partners together in order to share relevant information about a victim, discuss options for increasing the safety of the individual and turn these options into a co-ordinated SMART action plan.

The first MARAC was held in Cardiff in 2003 by South Wales Police and was attended by 16 agencies involved in safeguarding including the police, local authority, health, probation, housing, the NSPCC, Refuge and the Women's Safety Unit. The process and outcome evaluations of this model were positive and identified significant reductions in violence experienced by women; therefore it was used as a template for the implementation of other MARACs nationally. Currently there are approximately 290 MARAC meetings operating across the UK managing over 100,000 cases per year.⁵⁵

Unlike other safeguarding and risk assessment frameworks such as Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements and Channel panels as described above, the MARAC is not a statutory requirement. However the model is recommended and endorsed by a number of government reports.⁵⁶

Existing multi-agency decision making models in the context of modern slavery

Over recent years, various localised models for multi-agency decision making in the context of modern slavery have been established, largely in order to improve the safeguarding response to potential victims at the point of identification.

Since 2013, Wales has utilised a Modern Slavery Safeguarding Pathway (outlined in Appendix E) which encompasses a specific MARAC process for adult modern slavery cases, bringing together multi-agency partners to discuss initial safeguarding actions as well as to inform the completion of an NRM referral. This pathway is embedded within all four police forces with 18 modern slavery MARACs established across 22 local authorities. It is facilitated by a Modern Slavery MARAC coordinator who is employed by BAWSO Wales and is jointly funded by each of the police forces. MARAC meetings can take place virtually or in person and are chaired by law enforcement, often at detective chief inspector or detective inspector level within Public Protection Units where there is less movement between roles to provide consistency. Meetings usually take place weekly or fortnightly, with the ability to convene an emergency meeting as required. Information is shared between partners based on the Wales Accord for Sharing Personal Information (WASPI). Consistency is cited to be a key component of the success of the model with the modern slavery MARAC now well established within strategic local safeguarding partnerships with good multi-agency engagement.

⁵⁵ SafeLives (2020), 'Latest Marac National Dataset': <https://safelives.org.uk/practice-support/resources-marac-meetings/latest-marac-data>.

⁵⁶ Nerissa Steel, Laura Blakeborough and Sian Nicholas (2011), 'Supporting high-risk victims of domestic violence: a review of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/116537/horr55-report.pdf.

At a more localised scale, the Modern Slavery Multi-Agency Case Conference (MACC) was introduced as a pilot in November 2018 as a partnership between The Passage, Westminster City Council and the NHS Central London Homeless Team. Within 48 hours of a potential victim being identified, in a similar vein to the Modern Slavery MARAC in Wales, key partners convene to conduct a risk and needs assessment, arrange emergency accommodation, facilitate an NRM or Duty to Notify referral if appropriate or alternatively, consider signposting to other agencies. Between November 2018 and March 2020, The Passage held 13 MACCs for 10 potential victims with broadly positive results,⁵⁷ such as improved coordination between agencies and more effective support for potential victims prior to them entering the NRM. There are plans to continue to facilitate MACCs beyond the scope of the pilot, as well as to introduce Modern Slavery Navigators to assist with facilitating conversations between agencies to arrange support for victims.

The West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network is also in the process of implementing a MARAC and has recently recruited a Slavery and Trafficking Victim Safeguarding Pathways Co-ordinator⁵⁸ to ensure a multi-agency approach to victim care and support at the point of identification and enable monitoring of long term outcomes for survivors. This is funded by the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner.

⁵⁷ The Passage (2020), 'The Passage Anti-Slavery Project 2018-2020': <https://passage.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/The-Passage-Anti-Slavery-Project-Report-2018-2020.pdf>.

⁵⁸ West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network (2020), 'Slavery and Trafficking Victim Safeguarding Pathway Co-ordinator job description': <https://www.bvsc.org/sites/default/files/Slavery%20and%20Trafficking%20Victim%20Safeguarding%20Pathway%20Co-ordinator%20-%20-%20Job%20Description%20.pdf>.

4. A REVIEW OF KEY THEMES

A rapid evidence assessment of the four models, including a review of the information submitted to the call for evidence and further literature identified through desk based research highlighted seven key themes that are important to consider in identifying good practice and determining what works in relation to multi-agency decision making models. These will be discussed in turn in this section.

Function of the model

A central element of all the models reviewed is their role in both making decisions and assessing risk, as well as discussing and agreeing further safeguarding actions. A mechanism for re-visiting cases within certain timeframes to assess the effectiveness of interventions was also highlighted in two of the models.

The MASH examined brings together key professionals from a range of agencies to facilitate early, better quality information sharing, analysis and decision making to deliver the best possible outcomes for children, young people and families. The core aim of this model is for decisions to be made quickly to enable targeted support for the most urgent cases by triaging referrals. Following a reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, a strategy meeting is undertaken to determine whether to proceed to a Section 47 Child Protection investigation or other outcomes such as a Child and Family Assessment. The staff work on the continuum of need,⁵⁹ a visual tool for services, which provides a common language to describe needs and risks. Strategy meetings are specific to one child, unless cases are intrinsically linked; but they will all have individual outcomes. This MASH does participate in some strategic meetings of intelligence patterns and receives information from other operational strategic groups such as the Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation Group (MASE).

The Missing and Exploitation Hub determines, through multi-agency decisions what actions to take. These include an action plan, a safety plan, a discussion if the NRM is the right choice for the individual case, to appoint the most appropriate First Responder to complete the referral and a review of NRM referrals if these were completed by a partner agency that did not notify the hub. Additional decisions are made on whether the case meets particular thresholds, such as undertaking a joint or single investigation, or if a live investigation is already taking place practitioners will coordinate and support the officer in charge of the case. The hub staff may carry out video recorded interviews or consider joint visits with children's social care if beneficial. The hub partners have the capacity to undertake holistic decisions to safeguard children as well as approaches for disruption of child exploitation in the area by holding a strategic intelligence overview to enable the hub to be a docking point for all information of both individual cases and general patterns.

MARACs are a risk-led model specifically held to discuss high-risk domestic abuse cases identified by the Domestic Abuse Stalking and Honour Based Violence Risk Assessment Checklist which was developed in partnership between SafeLives and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO).⁶⁰ During the panel meeting, each agency is invited to share information and then volunteer actions on behalf of their organisation which could increase the safety of the individual and their family

⁵⁹ Children and Young People's Trust, East Sussex (2020), 'Continuum of Need': <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/5443/continuum-a4-poster.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Laura Richards (2009): <https://www.dashriskchecklist.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/DASH-2009.pdf>.

in collaboration with other organisations. This could include the police taking action against a perpetrator, additional support to the family from Children's Social Care, assistance with finding alternative accommodation or sharing information with education services.⁶¹ MARAC organisational representatives are Single Points of Contact and their role is to come prepared to the meeting with information on the case, offer actions and then inform the case worker of the actions. Action planning is one of the 'Ten Principles of an Effective MARAC' developed by SafeLives,⁶² however this has been identified as one of the challenges reported by MARAC attendees.⁶³ The MARAC itself is not a case management tool, as it relates to the immediate actions required to prevent homicide or a person coming to serious harm. The information shared remains the responsibility of the agency sharing it, but effective MARACs are centred on effective multi-agency working. If there is a further incident in the following 12 months, the case will return to MARAC as a repeat.

In the case of Channel panels, in advance of the meeting a Vulnerability Assessment Framework⁶⁴ document should be circulated to members and those in attendance at the meeting will then collectively assess the risk and decide whether the person is vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism and is therefore appropriate for Channel, should be referred to a different support mechanism, or should exit the process. For those who are deemed to be appropriate to receive support, the panel should then use the vulnerability assessment and their professional expertise to develop a tailored package to support the needs of the individual and to inform the assessment of risk posed to any potential support providers.⁶⁵

Appropriate support could include assistance with housing and homelessness pathways, drug and alcohol awareness, education or career advice and online safety training for parents. This is felt to be a significant benefit of local decision making as local safeguarding frameworks are well-placed to know about the support that is available in their area. Where the individual has a need for theological or ideological support, Home Office approved intervention providers must be commissioned to mentor them. All cases exiting the Channel process should be reviewed again by the panel at six months and again at twelve months from the point at which an individual exits the process.

⁶¹ Ruth Phillips (2018), 'Not Everyone is Created Equal Under the MARAC Model': A Literature Review of Domestic Violence Risk Management Process for High, Medium and Standard Risk Cases in the UK': https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328420872_'Not_Everyone_is_Created_Equal_Under_the_MARAC_Model'_A_Literature_Review_of_Domestic_Violence_Risk_Management_Process_for_High_Medium_and_Standard_Risk_Cases_in_the_UK.

⁶² SafeLives (2017), 'Ten principles of an effective MARAC': <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/The%20principles%20of%20an%20effective%20MARAC%20FINAL.pdf>.

⁶³ Steel et al. (2011), 'Supporting high-risk victims of domestic violence: a review of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs).

⁶⁴ Home Office (2012), 'Vulnerability Assessment Framework': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/118187/vul-assessment.pdf.

⁶⁵ Section 36 (4) of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act requires panels to: a) prepare a plan for an individual whom the panel considers appropriate to be offered support; b) make arrangements for support to be provided as described in the plan where consent is given; c) keep the support given under review; d) revise or withdraw a support plan if considered appropriate; e) carry out further assessments, after such periods as the panel considers appropriate (of an individual's vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism where the necessary consent to the provision of support is refused or withdrawn; and the panel has determined that support should be withdrawn); and f) prepare a further support plan if considered appropriate.

In terms of the frequency of meetings, MASH and the Missing and Exploitation Hub have operational safeguarding functions, therefore are responsive to need on a daily basis. In the case of MARACs, when they were first established the recommendation was for them to meet once per month, but as the volume of cases has increased it is now more common for them to be held on a weekly or fortnightly basis. Guidance provided by SafeLives⁶⁶ suggests that between 12-15 minutes should be allocated for each case. For Channel panels,⁶⁷ Channel Duty Guidance suggests that in areas with a high number of referrals it is good practice to meet on a monthly basis, however this decision ultimately lies with the panel chair and should be based on the number of referrals and the specific actions that may be required.

Membership

All models involved the three core local safeguarding partners (police, local authority and health) plus additional agencies as core members, with some also offering the ability to invite other organisations on a case-by-case basis. Multi-agency engagement was identified to be a key factor of success for all models.

The MASH examined has three core co-located agencies: the police, Children's Social Care and health. There are additional public agencies who attend the MASH on a weekly or fortnightly basis but are not permanently co-located, for example a staff member from probation or from housing. The local authority provides permanently embedded social workers, two staff members from the Missing Person team and a staff member from Adult Social Care can also join on an ad-hoc basis. The local police force also provides for a detective constable resource. Finally, the MASH team also includes three administrators, a case conference coordinator and domestic abuse coordinator for the MARAC. The co-location of the members has been described as one of the biggest strengths of the MASH with the relationships developed between professionals from all agencies key to an effective response. The professional experience and consistency of staff has been highlighted as incredibly beneficial for the successful operation of the model, along with the common goal to act in the best interests of children.

Similar to the MASH, the Missing and Exploitation Hub examined has core co-located safeguarding partners (Children's Social Care, health and police) as well as additional staff from the Youth Offending Team and a parent or support worker. The local police partner also developed the position of a missing and exploitation coordinator who reports to the detective sergeant lead for missing and exploitation. The purpose of the coordinator role is to have oversight and co-ordinate a multi-agency response to missing and exploitation cases to ensure information provided to operational police officers is timely, in live time and that incidents are escalated as appropriate. The coordinator also undertakes office-based enquiries to support criminal prosecutions. The hub is currently working to bring in a permanent co-located partner from education and already has a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services virtual connection as well as NHS liaison and Drug and Alcohol service representatives who are invited as needed to particular meetings. The Children Missing or Exploited Panel meetings are chaired by the Children's Social Care lead for missing children.

⁶⁶ SafeLives (2015), 'Toolkit for MARAC':

https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/MARAC%20Chair%20toolkit_0.doc.

⁶⁷ HM Government (2015), 'Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism':

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/425189/Channel_Duty_Guidance_April_2015.pdf.

In the case of MARACs, there are nine core organisations or departments who should be represented: the police, primary health, mental health, housing, substance misuse, probation, Adult Social Care, Children’s Social Care and an IDVA. As MARACS discuss the highest-risk domestic abuse cases where individuals are at significant risk of serious harm or homicide, representatives are not usually practitioners, but senior members of staff able to command the allocation of resources from their agency.⁶⁸ It is not usually deemed appropriate for allocated workers to attend the meeting, therefore representatives should be appropriately briefed to provide an update and participate in discussions. Due to the high-risk nature of cases discussed, MARAC panels are typically chaired by the police. However, in recent years MARACs across the country have begun to introduce a deputy role, often from the local authority, to encourage consistency within panels. A review of MARACs carried out by the Home Office in 2011 identified that leadership is a significant MARAC requirement, with a strong chair described as being most important.⁶⁹ In recent years, following strategic reviews of the MARAC process both Derbyshire and Cleveland constabularies have commissioned an independent MARAC chair to provide strategic leadership as well as the ability to independently scrutinise MARAC outputs.

Under Section 37(1) of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act members of Channel panels must include the responsible local authority and the police force for the relevant local authority area. Depending on the nature of the referral, additional panel representatives may also include, among others, health, education and probation services. Schedule 7 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act details those partner agencies who are required to co-operate with local panels. Those who have provided information to the panel will often be invited to discuss the case. In the current Dovetail pilot areas,⁷⁰ the police retain the counter-terrorism risk whilst the local authority owns the safeguarding risk. Local Authority Channel coordinators introduced within the pilot areas are therefore responsible for gathering information about referred individuals, assessing risk, commissioning support, reviewing progress and administering panels. Significantly, the evaluation of the Dovetail pilots identified that the shift in coordinating the panels from the police to local authorities enabled a greater willingness from partner agencies to share information which improved the quality of discussions. Section 37(5) of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act requires Channel panels to be chaired by the responsible local authority (that is, the authority responsible for ensuring a panel is in place). This will be a senior local authority officer such as Safeguarding or Community Safety Manager. The Home Office is currently updating the Channel Duty Guidance to provide further clarity on who would be best placed to undertake this role, including some key competencies.

Channel Duty Guidance Section 41(3) of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act informs that two or more local authorities may have a panel in place for a combined area. Channel Duty Guidance⁷¹ provides further detail on running ‘combined panels’ in conjunction with one or more other local authorities where appropriate, for example in cases where the individual resides in one local authority area but works or attends school in another. In these panels, the lead

⁶⁸ Robbins et al. (2014), ‘Domestic violence and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs): a scoping review’.

⁶⁹ Steel et al. (2011), ‘Supporting high-risk victims of domestic violence: a review of Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)’.

⁷⁰ In 2017 the Home Office introduced the ‘Dovetail’ pilots to transfer the responsibility for administering the process of Channel from the police to local authorities. This change was introduced to ‘de-securitise’ the process and encourage closer alignment to the safeguarding responsibilities of local authorities. The approach was initially piloted in seven single sites in 2017 and was then rolled out as a regional model in the North West in January 2019.

⁷¹ HM Government (2015), ‘Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism’.

authority is always the authority in which the individual resides and there must be both police and representation from each local authority relevant to the referral.

Survivor voices and the voice of the child

When working with children or young people it is essential to gain a clear picture of their wishes, thoughts and feelings in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child⁷² in order to determine, as a primary consideration, the best interests of each child in every decision affecting them. The right of a child or young person to be heard in decisions that affect them is enshrined in Article 12 of the Convention⁷³ and The Children Act (2004). This legislative framework sets out the rights of children to have their wishes and feelings given due consideration in decisions made by the local authority in order to assess their best interests. As the four models examined within this review involved both adults and children, the inclusion of survivor voices more broadly was considered.

The Working Together Guidance⁷⁴ clearly sets out how children should be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans. The principle in all safeguarding matters is that the child should be seen and heard. The MASH follows these principles in statutory guidance by, for example, inviting children to participate in meetings if and when appropriate and by taking into account the feedback from social workers and other practitioners who have seen and heard the child. The duty to ascertain children's wishes and feelings applies in individual cases and additionally a broader range of views are sought on wider safeguarding matters in a range of ways. Other multi-agency safeguarding arrangements such as those in the tri-borough area of Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster have sought to recruit a Children and Communities Engagement Officer.⁷⁵ The purpose of this role is to assist in seeking the voices and experiences of children and young people across the three local authority areas in relation to safeguarding matters as well as liaising with Children in Care Councils, Youth Parliaments and other local forums that children contribute to. The Missing and Exploitation Hub complex meetings may also on occasion have children present as part of the decision making process, if deemed appropriate.

Whilst neither MARACs or Channel panels invite the individuals being discussed to the meeting itself, in the case of Channel panels, the individuals discussed must provide consent to participate in the support plan that is developed. For MARACs, a core member of the panel is the IDVA, a specialist role which is accredited by SafeLives. The IDVA attends the panels to ensure that the victim's voice is heard and acts as the point of contact to feed back actions to the victim and liaise with partner agencies to ensure implementation of the safety plan. In their 2014 report,⁷⁶ McLaughlin et al. raise concerns about disempowerment of women who are not directly involved in the process, however other research has suggested that women value the opportunity to hand over responsibility for complex processes such as housing to other agencies.⁷⁷ It therefore appears that there is a balance to be struck, but there is clearly value in incorporating survivor

⁷² Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3.

⁷³ Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12.

⁷⁴ HM Government (2018)

⁷⁵ Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (2019), 'Safeguarding Children Partnership Arrangements': <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/lscb/sites/default/files/atoms/files/LSCP%20Multi-Agency%20Safeguarding%20Children%20Arrangements.pdf>.

⁷⁶ Robbins et al. (2014), 'Domestic violence and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs): a scoping review'.

⁷⁷ Phillips (2018), 'Not Everyone is Created Equal Under the MARAC Model': A Literature Review of Domestic Violence Risk Management Process for High, Medium and Standard Risk Cases in the UK'.

voices. In the context of MARAC, this review identified some good practice such as the development of resources for individuals who are discussed within a MARAC in order to make sure they are informed about the process.⁷⁸

Training

Training was also an important theme to consider in identifying what works within multi-agency decision making models. In examining the four models, there was significant variation in the training available for practitioners, with some being able to access training produced at a national level and others being required to commission training at a local or regional level. Incorporating tiers of training was recognised to add value in enabling practitioners to develop the required skills to identify vulnerability and make referrals, with more in-depth training for those participating directly in decision making. Establishing training standards was seen as a means to encourage consistency in approaches.

In the context of MASH, various reviews have recommended the development of joint training between each agency participating in the MASH and this is the model on which the safeguarding partnerships that provide the governance structure operate. More broadly, research has shown that multi-agency training is highly effective and valued by professionals in developing a shared understanding of child protection and decision making, as well as ensuring a culture of inter-agency cooperation.⁷⁹ However, for both the specific MASH model examined and the Missing and Exploitation Hub, significant emphasis also appears to be placed on staff having experience and knowledge prior to recruitment. For example, MASH supervisors are required to have PIP level 2⁸⁰ accreditation, Specialist Child Abuse Investigation Course⁸¹ accreditation, experience supervising PIP 2 investigations involving domestic abuse, serious sexual offences and child abuse and well as serious and complex investigations. For practitioners within the Missing and Exploitation Hub, existing knowledge is enhanced by further training on the National Intelligence Model as well as legislation on modern slavery and sexual offences. The hub staff are also encouraged to access national training provisions such as the newly developed e-learning course for modern slavery First Responders with additional local training commissioned by Local Safeguarding Partners as required.

In relation to MARACs, the provision of training on domestic abuse and on MARACs more specifically is largely the responsibility of local Safeguarding Partnerships. SafeLives is an example of an NGO delivering training specifically for MARAC representatives nationally covering aspects such as the MARAC process, the benefits of a MARAC approach, the principles of an effective MARAC and the legislative frameworks for information sharing in the context of MARACs, however this training must be locally commissioned. In 2019, the Scottish government⁸² consulted on how multi-agency risk assessments for victims of domestic abuse could be

⁷⁸ SafeLives (2015), 'Information for a victim referred to MARAC': <https://safelives.org.uk/practice-support/resources-marac-meetings/resources-people-attending>.

⁷⁹ John Carpenter et al. (2010), 'Outcomes of Interagency Training to Safeguard Children: Final Report to the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Department of Health': <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/809/1/DCSF-RR209.pdf>.

⁸⁰ College of Policing (2020), Investigator Serious and Complex Crime (PIP2): <https://profdev.college.police.uk/professional-profile/investigator-serious-complex-crime-pip2/>.

⁸¹ College of Policing (2020), Child Abuse Investigator: <https://profdev.college.police.uk/professional-profile/child-abuse-investigator/>.

⁸² Scottish Government (2019), 'Risk assessment and interventions for victims of domestic abuse: consultation response analysis': <https://www.gov.scot/publications/improving-multi-agency-risk-assessment-interventions-victims-domestic-abuse-analysis-consultation-responses/pages/4/>.

improved. Many responses suggested a standardised national training programme, with minimum training standards and the provision of national resources to improve consistency. Numerous responses also proposed that training on multi-agency risk assessments and interventions for victims should be made mandatory for frontline staff.

Alternatively, Channel panels utilise a centralised training provision for practitioners. The Home Office has developed three tiers of e-learning for Prevent more broadly: 'Prevent Awareness'⁸³ as a generic introduction to the Prevent duty and safeguarding those vulnerable to radicalisation; 'Prevent Referrals'⁸⁴ to ensure that referrals are robust and with good intention; and 'Channel Awareness'⁸⁵ for anyone who may be involved in a Channel panel. The e-learning packages incorporate learning from existing panels, as well as case studies, and following feedback from users now includes a section on information sharing. Separate training is delivered for panel chairs, as well as for Local Authority Channel Co-ordinators and Supervisors in Dovetail pilot areas. In addition, there are regular national forums for panel chairs to share good practice with national colleagues.

Funding and resourcing

Within multi-agency decision making models, funding can be a critical factor in success and sustainability. Despite this, of the four models examined by this review, only local authority areas that are part of the Dovetail Channel panel pilots currently receive any central government funding. The other models are required to make their own local funding arrangements, with multi-agency working considered business as usual.

Working Together to Safeguard Children⁸⁶ provides that local safeguarding partners should agree the level of funding secured from each partner to support the new safeguarding arrangements. The level of funding secured should be equitable and proportionate, with contributions from all relevant agencies. The MASH examined is jointly funded by the local police force and Children's Social Care. Children's Social Care pays half of the salary of the health staff member who is not exclusively funded to provide MASH support, but assists the social work team in other areas. Probation and housing also contribute to this model in funding their own staff members. This is a similar approach to the Missing and Exploitation Hub where each individual agency pays for their own staff member. In addition, the Parent's Support Worker is funded by the Local Safeguarding Partnership and Children's Social Care with the physical space hosted by the police force.

Historically, local authorities have received central government funding to recruit IDVA and MARAC coordinators, however across England and Wales, these roles are now largely funded by local safeguarding partners. The Scottish government however is currently funding SafeLives to support the development of MARACs across Scotland and to independently collect and report on MARAC data. In 2010, SafeLives estimated that for every £1 invested into MARAC, at least £6 was saved annually on direct costs to agencies including those in health services and the criminal justice system, demonstrating the benefits that can be brought when interventions are

⁸³ Home Office, Prevent Awareness e-learning:

<https://www.elearning.prevent.homeoffice.gov.uk/edu/screen1.html>.

⁸⁴ Home Office, Prevent Referrals e-learning:

https://www.elearning.prevent.homeoffice.gov.uk/prevent_referrals/01-welcome.html.

⁸⁵ Home Office, Channel Awareness e-learning:

https://www.elearning.prevent.homeoffice.gov.uk/channel_awareness/01-welcome.html.

⁸⁶ HM Government (2018), 'Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children'.

effective.⁸⁷ Between 2016-2019, using funding from the UK government's Tampon Tax, SafeLives received funding to set up seven 'One Front Door' pilots across England.⁸⁸ This model brought together specialist, multi-agency teams to facilitate earlier intervention and identify the needs and risk to all family members at the same time. The evaluation⁸⁹ found that existing systems for safeguarding children, protecting victims of domestic abuse and challenging perpetrators work well, but often in silo; therefore there is a need for a shared understanding of risk and need across all agencies. The One Front Door model helped to improve both structural approaches and collaborative ways of working.

In relation to Channel panels, whilst some higher risk areas receive central Home Office funding for Prevent activity, unless the area is a Dovetail pilot site, it will not receive any funding for coordinating Channel panels. Across Dovetail pilot sites, the Home Office will provide additional Prevent funding annually which is allocated relative to the number of Channel panel referrals and the management of cases for the region as a whole. The expectation is for this to become business as usual post-pilot. It is also worth highlighting that Channel panels also have the ability to access an Intervention Support Fund, which is a grant fund of up to £500. This is not intended to fill gaps in statutory service provision, however can be used for innovative and creative interventions that may help to address factors that may cause a vulnerable person being drawn into terrorism.

Information sharing

It is recognised that even where there are multi-agency arrangements set up explicitly to foster partnership working, information sharing can be a barrier to success either through capability issues such as incompatible IT systems or where partner agencies are not properly engaged in the processes. The four models reviewed varied in terms of their information sharing agreements, with some developing specific protocols and others utilising existing local safeguarding partnership information sharing protocols. In addition, there were also variations identified in how information is shared among partners between the different models.

The MASH examined has a specific information sharing protocol in line with the seven golden rules to sharing information as set out in the government's practice guidance.⁹⁰ Any information relevant to take action with a child protection concern will be shared, with most information sharing taking place during strategy meetings. The information sharing protocol used by the MASH sets out the criteria by which the police can conduct a check on the Police National Computer and share those results with the social worker. Some MASH models ensure the hub is firewalled, keeping MASH activity confidential and separate from operational activity, providing a confidential recording system of activity to support this. The Missing and Exploitation Hubs also have similar information sharing protocols, but as the model developed, information sharing

⁸⁷ SafeLives (2010), 'Saving lives, saving money: MARACs and high-risk domestic abuse': https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Saving_lives_saving_money_FINAL_VERSION.pdf.

⁸⁸ The pilot ran in seven locations across England: Bexley, Norfolk, North Somerset, North Tyneside, St Helens, Suffolk and West Sussex.

⁸⁹ SafeLives (2019), 'Seeing the whole picture: An evaluation of SafeLives' One Front Door': <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Seeing%20the%20Whole%20Picture%20-%20An%20evaluation%20of%20SafeLives'%20One%20Front%20Door.pdf>.

⁹⁰ HM Government (2018), 'Information sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721581/Information_sharing_advice_practitioners_safeguarding_services.pdf.

improved due to the rapport that has been built among professionals and the value that co-location can bring in facilitating information sharing in the absence of joint IT systems.

For Channel panels, information is usually shared through existing information sharing protocols such as those agreed by Local Safeguarding Partnerships. For those organisations that may be asked to join a panel but are not already signed up to an information sharing protocol with the relevant party, they are asked to sign a bespoke protocol created for the purpose of the Channel Panel. For MARACs however, each MARAC will usually have its own protocol. The Scottish government's consultation on MARAC⁹¹ identified the key areas that a MARAC information sharing protocol should cover: consent; source of information; storage and the sharing of information within/outside of meetings; GDPR, complaints and breaches; and principles that should govern the information that is shared (i.e. duty to prevent harm).

In relation to how information is shared between panel members, for Channel cases, hard copies of information are often distributed at the panel meeting and will be shown digitally on the screen rather than being shared electronically to assist with data protection. For MARAC cases, an agenda will be circulated before the meeting including the name, date of birth and address of the victim, children and alleged perpetrator and the referring agency/reason for referral. The MARAC representative is then expected to research the cases and bring any relevant information to the meeting. A MARAC Research Form⁹² has been developed by SafeLives in order to help the MARAC representatives structure the information they will collect and share at the meeting.

In the case of Channel panels, the outcome of meetings is recorded on the Case Management Information System run by the Home Office. This can be beneficial as the Home Office continues to be the data owner for this information, therefore can respond centrally to Freedom of Information requests.

The ability to share information between decision making models operating in different geographic areas was also an important area considered. Within the context of MARAC, there is a mechanism that enables one MARAC to make a referral to a MARAC in another area should the victim re-locate; whilst in the context of MASH, there are protocols in place to request and/or share information with another MASH where appropriate. It must be acknowledged however that in order to be effective, there needs to be an awareness of this process and it must be utilised consistently.

Governance

The review of the four models highlighted the importance of robust governance frameworks to enable the success and accountability of the operational and strategic outcomes intended. As joint decision making carries the potential for inadequate accountability mechanisms, the structures described aimed to ensure clear leads and facilitate high standards of decision making.

Various MASH models will have an operational manager. The responsibility for the actions of the MASH is shared by all line managers from the safeguarding partners, regardless of the level of seniority. Some reports have outlined that in some cases there was a lack of clarity as to who was

⁹¹ Scottish Government (2019), 'Risk assessment and interventions for victims of domestic abuse: consultation response analysis'.

⁹² SafeLives (2015), 'MARAC research form': <https://safelives.org.uk/node/374>.

accountable for the MASH.⁹³ That report highlighted the need to obtain strategic buy-in as essential to facilitate a clear chain of responsibility; a strategic board which reports to and is accountable to the partnership board was seen to facilitate this. A MASH is set up to facilitate the discharging of statutory duties by the safeguarding partners and is accountable to the partnership; these duties are also fulfilled through the creation of the Missing and Exploitation Hubs as there is widespread recognition that conventional statutory procedures for children at risk of harm may not meet the needs of various forms of child exploitation.

One significant distinction between the MARAC and Channel panels is that whilst Channel panels are on a statutory footing and under Section 36 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act (2015) local authorities in England and Wales are required to have a panel covering their area, MARACs are not a statutory requirement. Despite this, MARACs have now been running for over 15 years and there is a MARAC covering every local authority area in the UK in some form. There are mixed views on whether MARACs should also be on a statutory footing, however it is recognised that in order to be effective, a MARAC must have strategic support and leadership.

Most local authority areas also have a MARAC Strategy or Steering Group which is responsible for monitoring and conducting regular assessment of the overall performance of the MARAC. This can include addressing operational issues, raising awareness of the MARAC and maintaining effective partnerships with key bodies. In relation to monitoring, for Channel panels, use of the Channel Management Information System enables the Home Office to run a quarterly report for each area to monitor the number of referrals on outcomes as well as the opportunity to dip sample cases.

⁹³ Home Office (2014), 'Multi Agency Working and Information Sharing Project': https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/338875/MASH.pdf.

CONCLUSIONS

This section of the review responds to the two key objectives by: summarising the learning that can be drawn from existing safeguarding multi-agency decision making models; and making recommendations for how this can be applied in the context of multi-agency decision making for child trafficking victims. It includes recommendations for local safeguarding partners who may be involved in potential pilots to test approaches to devolved decision making for children as well as for the UK government.

What function should multi-agency decision making models have?

Each of the models considered within this review had a dual function, involving both decision making in relation to vulnerability and risk as well as in making contributions to safeguarding and action planning. This has been identified as significant to ensure that these processes are joined up and are viewed through a multi-agency lens. It is recognised that in relation to child trafficking however there are statutory duties for safeguarding partners under the Children Act (1989), (2004) and the Children and Social Work Act (2017), as well as obligations under Article 10 of ECAT relating to the identification of victims where the primary question is whether or not someone meets the definition of trafficking. As such, further exploration is required of how these two systems interact in practice at a local level, but it is essential that any devolved NRM decision making model is intrinsically linked to local safeguarding structures to address the disconnect between decision making and safeguarding that currently exists.

The models examined varied in terms of frequency of meetings, but were usually held either weekly, fortnightly or monthly, depending on volume of referrals and caseload with the ability to call urgent meetings as required. It is acknowledged that the MASH has an operational safeguarding function and so is not centred around specific meetings but is responsive to need on a day to day basis. A valued aspect of Channel panels was also the six and twelve month review of cases that have been discharged from the Channel process in order to assess the effectiveness of any intervention.

Across all four models examined, information sharing was a critical component of success, but often a challenge to embed effectively in practice. Some models such as MARAC have developed specific information sharing protocols for their decision making model, whereas others look to existing frameworks such as those established by Community Safety Partnerships or in the case of Wales, the WASPI. It is crucial for multi-agency partners to understand what information they can share, why they need to share it and to ensure that the information they do share is the most relevant for the purpose. Frameworks for information sharing can therefore add value, for example through the Channel process a Vulnerability Assessment Framework has been developed and in the context of MARAC, SafeLives has produced a research form for information sharing.⁹⁴ The ability to share information between decision making models, for example in cases where a potential victim re-locates, or there is a cross-border element to the case can also be important. Consideration of appropriate external firewalls with other agencies in line with the best interest of the child may be beneficial, such as implementing a standard pro-forma to communicate NRM determinations to the Home Office.

Recommendation 1 for local safeguarding partners: Ensure that all decisions are made to attain the best interests of the child as a primary consideration as set out in Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

⁹⁴ SafeLives (2015), 'MARAC research form': <https://safelives.org.uk/node/374>.

Recommendation 2 for local safeguarding partners: Ensure a devolved NRM decision making model does not exist solely as a binary determination of trafficking status but is intrinsically linked to local safeguarding structures to ensure a more holistic approach to protecting child victims of trafficking and preventing further exploitation.

Recommendation 3 for local safeguarding partners: Ensure that suitable information sharing protocols are in place between all agencies involved in the devolved decision making process to facilitate timely and efficient sharing of information between agencies with the aim of supporting the best interests of the child.

Recommendation 1 for UK government: Set out in policy or guidance how relevant government departments incorporate the best interests requirement and the duty to create a durable solution for trafficked children as set out in Article 16 of the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive.

Who should be involved?

The four models explored in this review varied in their approach as to who to involve within multi-agency decision making. For MARACs, there are nine core organisations or departments that would usually attend, with a standing member providing representation for each. Whilst Section 37(1) of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act requires the responsible local authority and the police force for the relevant local authority area to participate in Channel panels, this model also has the ability to incorporate additional members as relevant to the case, including those who have provided information to the panel. This element of flexibility was also seen within the other models examined.

As a minimum, core local safeguarding partners should be involved in decision making, but there should be recognition of the benefits that can be brought by panels having the flexibility to accommodate other agencies as required.⁹⁵ Within Channel panels, education has been seen to offer value and in the context of CCE, Youth Offending Teams can often be involved in the safeguarding response. The Serious Case Review recently published on the case of Jaden Moodie evidences this further, highlighting the contributions that the local authority housing department could have made to multi-agency discussions, therefore recommending that Waltham Forest Safeguarding Children's Board review its current arrangements for multi-agency case discussion and agency involvement.⁹⁶

The role of the chair was also found to make important contributions to the effectiveness of multi-agency decision making. Again, all four models considered by this review demonstrated significant variation; for those models with panel meetings, MARACs are often chaired by the police with a local authority deputy in some instances and Channel panels are chaired by a local authority. It is suggested that key competencies and standards for chairs are developed to promote consistency across models. This is an approach that is being developed within Channel panels, where revised Duty Guidance is intended to include key competencies for panel chairs. Additionally, SafeLives has produced guidance on effective chairing within MARACs.⁹⁷ It was identified that some models have introduced an independent chair to maintain independence

⁹⁵ Children and Social Work Act 2017: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents/enacted>.

⁹⁶ Waltham Forest Safeguarding Board (2020), 'Serious Case Review: Child C a 14 year old boy': https://www.walthamforest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/WFSCB%20-%20SCR%20Child%20C%20May%20final_.pdf.

⁹⁷ SafeLives (2015), 'Guidance for MARACs: Effective chairing': <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Effective%20chairing%20at%20Marac.pdf>.

within decision making and encourage external scrutiny, for example Derbyshire and Cleveland constabularies within their MARACs following strategic reviews of the process. Outside of the scope of the four models examined, a proposal⁹⁸ by the UNHCR was for an Independent Reviewing Officer to chair a formal best interests determination procedure for unaccompanied and separated children in view of the complexity of systems impacting decision making.

A final aspect considered within this review in relation to who should participate in multi-agency decision making is the inclusion of the voice of the child and survivors. Within this review, an example of good practice has been identified within the role of IDVAs who are involved in the MARAC and play a significant role in ensuring that the voice of the survivor is reflected and that their needs and wishes are effectively communicated. Within the context of child trafficking, the Modern Slavery Act makes provision for ICTGs at a national level, therefore must be involved in multi-agency decision making locally and careful consideration must be given to who may fulfil this role in areas where the ICTG service is not yet embedded. Importantly, a child should have a say in who represents their voice. The involvement of parents or guardians should also be explored further, recognising their role as protective factors in safeguarding and in line with recommendations made by Parents Against Child Exploitation on relational safeguarding models.⁹⁹ The Missing and Exploitation Hub model has started to incorporate this approach in recruiting a Parent Support Worker to encourage effective communication between parents and safeguarding partners.

Recommendation 4 for local safeguarding partners: A devolved NRM decision making model should comprise of a core membership of local safeguarding partners with the ability to incorporate other agencies or departments where relevant to the case.

Recommendation 5 for local safeguarding partners: Facilitate the voice of the child within decision making by ensuring that the wishes and feelings of children are understood and are taken into account, preferably seeking the active participation of ICTGs or where ICTGs are not yet available, an advocate of choice for the child who is independent from public authorities and is at the expense of public funds.

Recommendation 2 for UK government: Ensure there are key competencies in place for the role of panel chair to encourage consistent standards, with consideration given to a requirement for devolved decision making models to have an independent chair.

What else is important?

In considering existing models for multi-agency decision making, this review has identified three further areas that are critical components of effectiveness: governance, training, funding.

Training and awareness are recognised to be key in relation to multi-agency decision making, both in relation to those involved in making decisions as well as for partner agencies who are involved in the wider process and therefore require an understanding of how to recognise those who are vulnerable and how to make referrals accordingly. Exploration of existing models has demonstrated various approaches to training, including both national and local training provision. The Channel panel provides a useful reference point, including three tiers of training

⁹⁸ UNHCR (2019), 'Putting the child at the centre':

<https://www.unhcr.org/uk/publications/legal/5d7f7ecb4/putting-the-child-at-the-centre-summary.html>.

⁹⁹ Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation (2014), 'The relational safeguarding model: Best practice in working with families affected by child exploitation': <https://www.paceuk.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Relational-Safeguarding-Model-FINAL-PRINTED-MAY-2014.pdf>.

within an e-learning platform to incorporate generic Prevent training, training on Channel panels and then more bespoke training for panel members, along with face-to-face training for panel chairs and local authority co-ordinators involved in the Dovetail pilots. However, it is recognised that whilst e-learning can provide a useful foundation, it should not be a replacement for face-to-face training and national training programmes will therefore need to be complemented by training that is provided at a local level. From a modern slavery perspective, the recently introduced e-learning programme for First Responders could provide a useful place to start, as well as a forthcoming tiered model of Survivor Training Standards developed by St Mary's University and Snowdrop. With any devolved decision making model, there will inevitably be concerns relating to consistency and standards across different areas, therefore a robust training programme will be key.

For multi-agency decision making to be effective, there needs to be the governance structure in place to support this. In relation to child safeguarding, the Local Safeguarding Partnership arrangements as required by Working Together to Safeguard Children¹⁰⁰ provide an appropriate governance mechanism bringing together the three key safeguarding partners as well as relevant agencies, but there will be a need for local areas to consider how the wider organisations involved in devolved decision making can be brought into this structure. Senior level buy-in from key stakeholder organisations is essential. In the context of the Wales Modern Slavery MARAC, the approach has been embedded across Wales and it is understood that a robust governance structure around their response to modern slavery is essential to this.

Finally, funding is arguably the most significant factor in the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of multi-agency working. The four models considered within this report all utilise different funding arrangements for example local authorities within Dovetail pilot areas will receive funding to host Local Authority Channel coordinators, whilst the MARAC and MASH are required to use locally commissioned resources. Within the context of child safeguarding and children's services, there are concerns more broadly regarding the continued impact of austerity on statutory services¹⁰¹ and research has found that funding within Children's Social Care has shifted to late intervention, more often allocated to child protection responses while preventive services have been cut or closed down.¹⁰² As a result, local authorities are often reliant on thresholds to manage demand, leading services to screen more cases out, work with families for shorter periods, and spend less per child in need.¹⁰³ This can have significant implications for how local areas are able to develop multi-agency arrangements and effective safeguarding interventions in cases of child exploitation which often involve heightened complexity and risk. Adequate funding is therefore essential to success. In the context of devolving NRM decision making to local authorities, this must be accompanied by sufficient funding both to resource the decision making function and to enable effective safeguarding responses.

Recommendation 6 for local safeguarding partners: Ensure that regular training on child trafficking is provided for all local safeguarding partners involved in the devolved decision making model. This should include those who make referrals as well as those who participate in decision

¹⁰⁰ HM Government (2018), 'Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children'.

¹⁰¹ Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) (2017), 'Impact of austerity on children's services': <https://adcs.org.uk/funding/article/impact-of-austerity-on-childrens-services>.

¹⁰² Rick Hood, Allie Goldacre, Sarah Gorin, Paul Bywaters and Calum Webb (2020), 'Identifying and understanding the link between system conditions and welfare inequalities in children's social care services': https://www.healthcare.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/System-conditions-and-inequalities_Full-report_Final_March-2020.pdf.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

making. A tiered structure is recommended which incorporates access to national training resources and is complemented by locally delivered training.

Recommendation 7 for local safeguarding partners: A devolved NRM decision making model must be appropriately situated within the governance structure of the strategic local safeguarding partnership to ensure accountability and engagement from all agencies.

Recommendation 3 for UK government: Develop national resources for devolved NRM decision making for children to include detailed operational guidance, template documents and a tiered training programme to assist with standards and consistency across models.

Recommendation 4 for UK government: Conduct a new burdens assessment to determine the extra resources needed to devolved NRM decision making and ensure that adequate funding is provided to local safeguarding partnerships to reflect this.

Recommendation 5 for UK government: Ensure sufficient funding for local safeguarding partnerships to meet the demands of contextual safeguarding interventions for children and young people who have been trafficked and exploited with their overall safeguarding duties, as well as enabling a wider programme of prevention by creating a 'protective environment'¹⁰⁴ for children.

Learning about what works

In exploring the four existing decision making models outlined within this review, it has been useful to understand and reflect upon the changes and adaptations that have been seen over time in response to learning. This review has drawn upon findings from evaluations and reviews that have been carried out by academics and by government departments, but has also identified that in some cases, there is an absence of an independent, published evaluation. In order to understand what works and ensure that developments in policy and practice are evidence based, it is essential that evaluations are carried out, that they are robust and that the findings are published. In addition, it is fundamental that in evaluating the success of any approach, that there is a focus on the longer term outcomes for children.

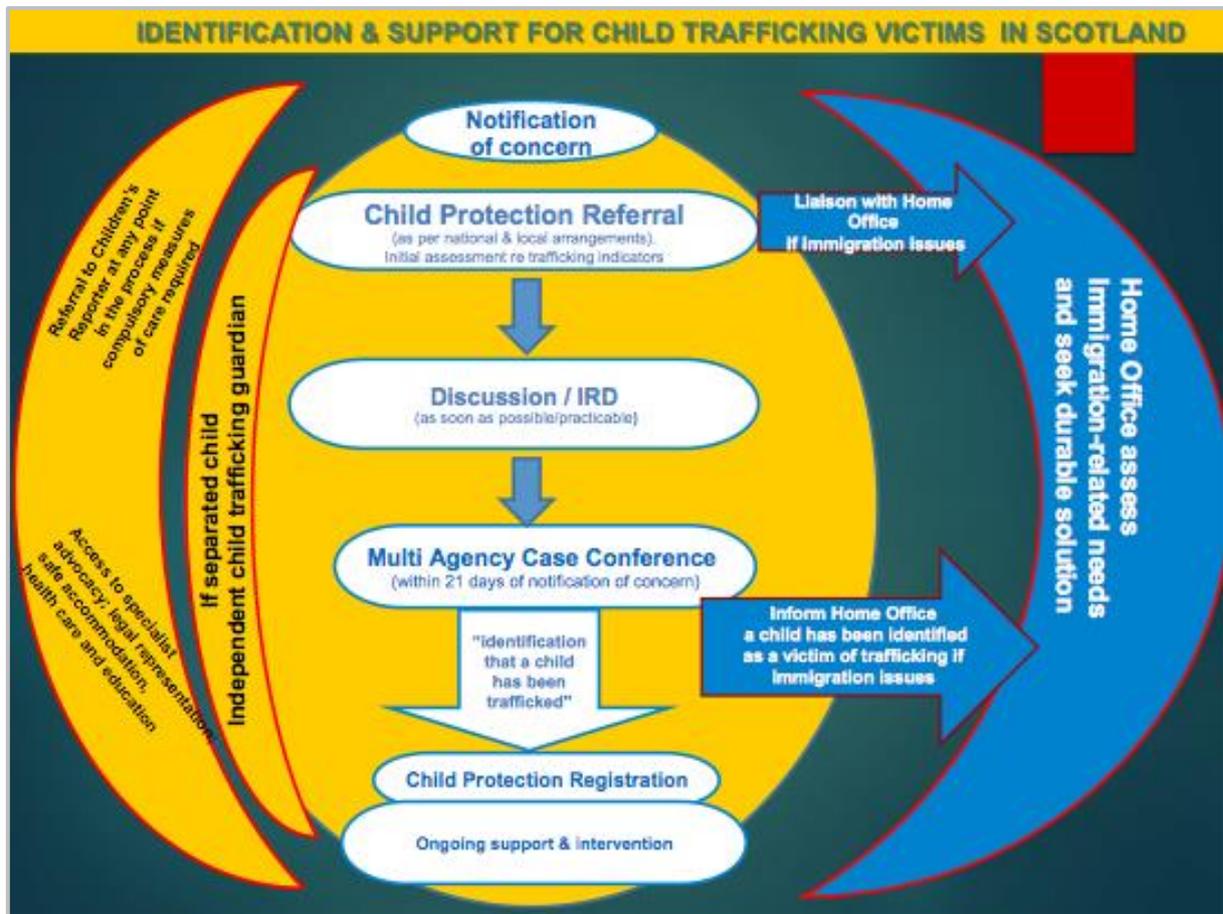
Recommendation 6 for UK government: To commission an independent evaluation of the pilot to test approaches to devolved decision making, ensuring that this measures impact by focusing on the long-term outcomes for children and young people.

Additional considerations

It is recognised that there are other important aspects to consider in the context of devolved NRM decision making for children such as the ability for children to access specialist legal advice upon referral and the availability of mechanisms for formal review and the right of appeal. These were beyond the scope of this review, however are worthy of further exploration.

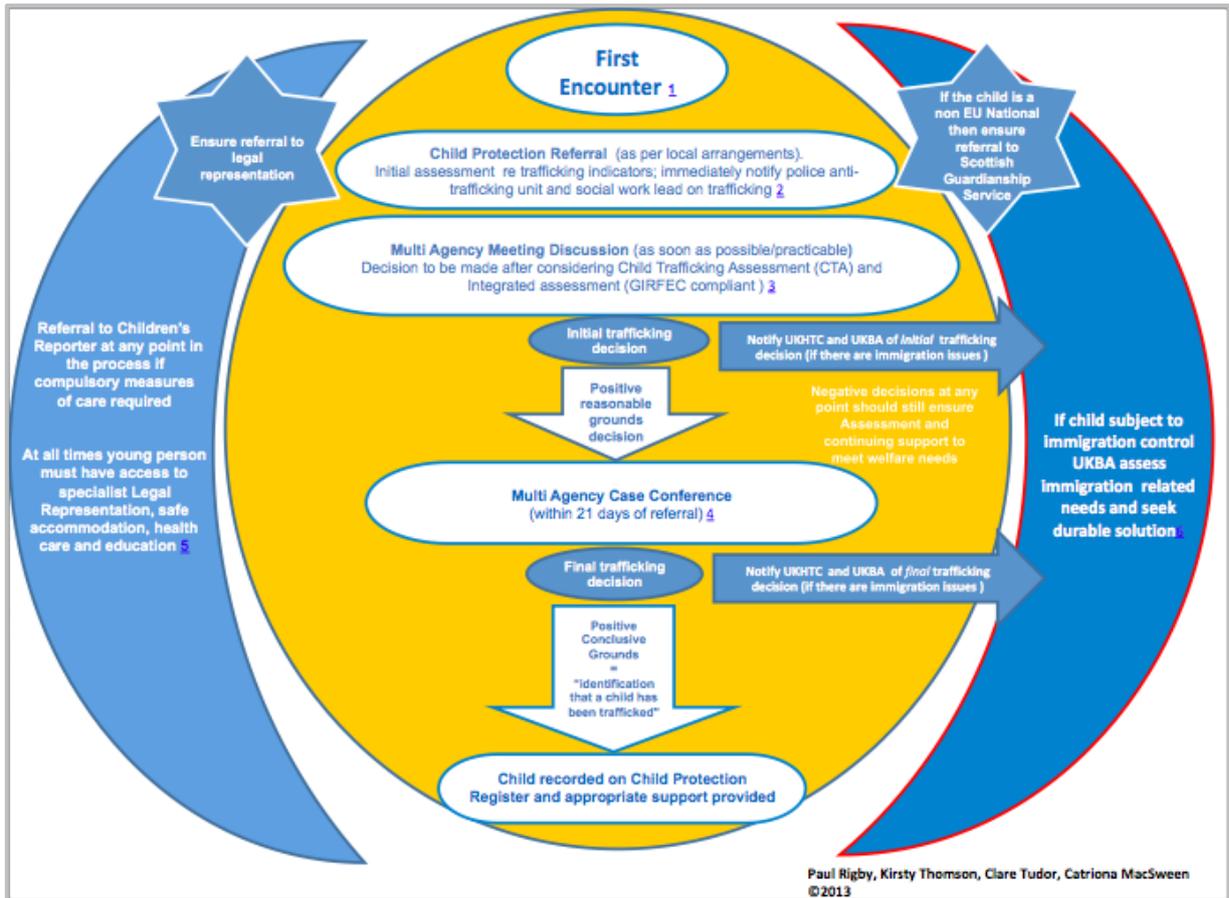
¹⁰⁴ Each party shall take specific measures to reduce children's vulnerability to trafficking, notably by creating a protective environment for them. Council of Europe Convention Against Trafficking in Human Beings, Art 5.5.

APPENDIX A: IDENTIFICATION AND SUPPORT FOR CHILD TRAFFICKING VICTIMS IN SCOTLAND



Figures 3 (above) and 4 (overleaf): The Glasgow model¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Catriona MacSween, Clare Tudor, Kirsty Thompson and Paul Rigby.



APPENDIX B: MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB

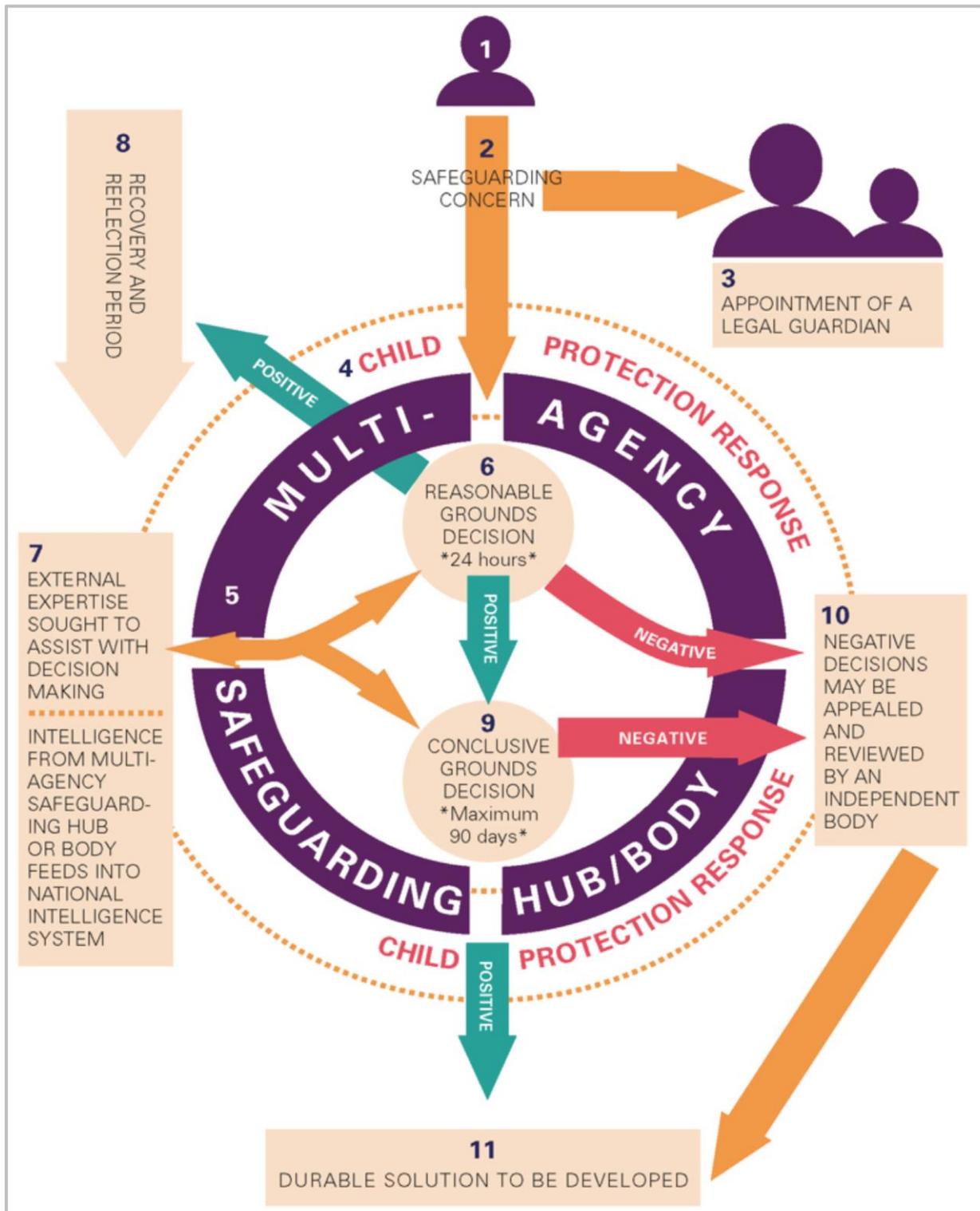


Figure 5: Infographic of revised NRM model for children¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ ATMG (2014), 'Proposal for a revised National Referral Mechanism for Adults'.

1. **A child** - or person claiming to be a child, or where there is reason to believe he or she is a child – who is a potential victim of trafficking, exploitation or modern slavery (i.e. meets the known indicators of trafficking – see the 2011 London Safeguarding Trafficked Children Toolkit matrix) should be referred into the local multi-agency safeguarding hub or equivalent body. Any unaccompanied or separated child should also automatically be included in this category because of the associated risk with trafficking in particular.
2. **The safeguarding concern**, whether from the public, an NGO or a statutory agency, is immediately passed on to the local multi-agency safeguarding hub or body.
3. **This referral should trigger the immediate appointment** of an independent legal guardian to all children where there is suspicion of trafficking, and all children who are separated or unaccompanied.
4. **Child trafficking is child abuse** so the required statutory child protection procedures should occur concurrently with the child's referral into the local multi-agency safeguarding hub or body and continue regardless of the outcome of the hub or body, ensuring the child's best interests and safety are paramount.
5. **The multi-agency safeguarding hub or body** is based on the existing Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) model that exists in many local authority areas currently. Where there is no such model in existence, a similarly functioning local multi-agency body, featuring core members of police, social services, health, specialist NGOs and others, should be created under the auspice of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSBC). The MASH or its equivalent multi-agency body builds on local expertise and works to quickly and effectively identify and assess quickly in a multi-agency setting. Such a model should be employed to make both the initial and conclusive decision about the status of a child as a victim of trafficking, exploitation or modern slavery.
6. **The MASH or equivalent should make a reasonable grounds decision** using the existing low threshold of 'I suspect but cannot prove'. If a referral has been made in which a child meets the indicators of trafficking and exploitation, this should be an automatic positive decision within 24 hours.
7. **The MASH or equivalent should seek external expertise** and intelligence where required, such as expert country reports, or intelligence from the UK Human Trafficking Centre or Europol. Equally, information and intelligence from the hub should feed into the national intelligence system. Protocols on how this should be shared securely without breaching a child's right to privacy should be determined.
8. **Following a positive reasonable grounds decision**, a child's Recovery & Reflection period shall begin in which no asylum or humanitarian protection claim shall be sought until final determination of his or her victim status. This period should incorporate specialist support and specialist safe accommodation for the child tailored to their needs in line and must be in accordance with obligations under the Children Act 1989 (note the child may need specialist support/accommodation longer than the 90 day period and this should be judged on a case by case basis depending on the child's needs).
9. **A conclusive grounds decision should take no more than 90 days**. In the period from the reasonable grounds decision to this point, the MASH or equivalent should seek out multi-

agency input, as well as the above external expertise and intelligence, but giving due weight to the child's account and not basing its decision on the child's credibility, in order to reach its conclusion.

- 10. Negative reasonable and conclusive grounds decisions** should be able to be appealed by the child, with assistance from the independent legal guardian, and reviewed by an independent body within a reasonable timescale.
- 11. The identification of any child as a potential victim or victim of trafficking,** or victim of trafficking, exploitation or modern slavery should feed into the wider need for the creation of a durable solution.

APPENDIX C: IASC RAPID EVIDENCE ASSESSMENT

IASC Rapid Evidence Assessment: Multi-agency decision making

The Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner has launched a rapid evidence assessment to identify models of good practice for multi-agency decision making. This is not limited to modern slavery - we are looking for the widest range of examples across existing frameworks for safeguarding adults and children.

This can be a model that you are involved with or one that you have identified as an example of good practice.

This information will be used to inform a piece of work being undertaken by the Office of the IASC and ECPAT UK to draw knowledge about what works in existing multi-agency decision making frameworks.

This survey is running from Tuesday 14 April 2020 until Friday 8 May 2020 at 17.00

1. What is the name of the model that you are submitting as evidence and which region does it cover? (e.g. Modern Slavery Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference in Wales)

Enter your answer

2. Does this model discuss and make decisions on cases relating to?:

- Adults
- Children
- Both adults and children

3. Please outline the purpose of the decision making model and the types of decisions that are made.

If you have any supporting policy documents that provide further information on this model, please forward these to IASC@iasc.independent.gov.uk.

Enter your answer

4. Which organisations are involved in this decision making model and what are their roles and responsibilities?

Enter your answer

5. Please could you confirm if the decision making model is:

Voluntary

Statutory

Other

6. Please could you outline the interaction between this decision making model and the safeguarding processes around the individual?

Enter your answer

7. How frequently does the group meet?

Re-actively in response to individual cases

Daily

Weekly

Fortnightly

Monthly

Other

8. In your view, what are the strengths of this model?

Enter your answer

9. Are there any limitations to this model or areas where it could be improved?

Enter your answer

10. Please provide a key contact who can provide further information about this model if required (including an email address and telephone number if possible).

Enter your answer

Submit

Never give out your password. [Report abuse](#)

Figure 6: IASC rapid evidence assessment questionnaire

APPENDIX D: STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS TEMPLATE

Stakeholder consultations with a small number of practitioners and policy makers were carried out in order to further inform understanding of the models and how they operate in practice.

The following template was used:

- An outline of the model and the type of decisions that it makes.
- How long has the model been operating for?
- Does the model make decisions on cases for adults, children or both?
- Does the model operate at a regional/local level? Is the model replicated nationally or is it a localised example?
- Is the model a statutory provision or has it been established on a voluntary basis?
- Who is involved in the model:
 - Do members change between meetings or is there a core membership?
 - Are members involved in the specific case or are they representatives from their organisation?
 - Are certain members required by legislation to attend?
- What is the threshold/rationale for decisions being made using this model?
- How is information shared between members?
- How is the model funded?
- How frequently does the group meet? Are decisions made on one or multiple cases during a meeting?
- What are the strengths of the model?
- What are the limitations of the model? Have any adaptations already been made in relation to this?
- Are there any existing evaluations based on this model?
- Does the group solely make decisions, or are they also involved in safeguarding actions?
- Are the group involved in any follow up/monitoring on the case?

APPENDIX E: WALES MODERN SLAVERY SAFEGUARDING PATHWAY (INCLUDING MODERN SLAVERY MARAC)

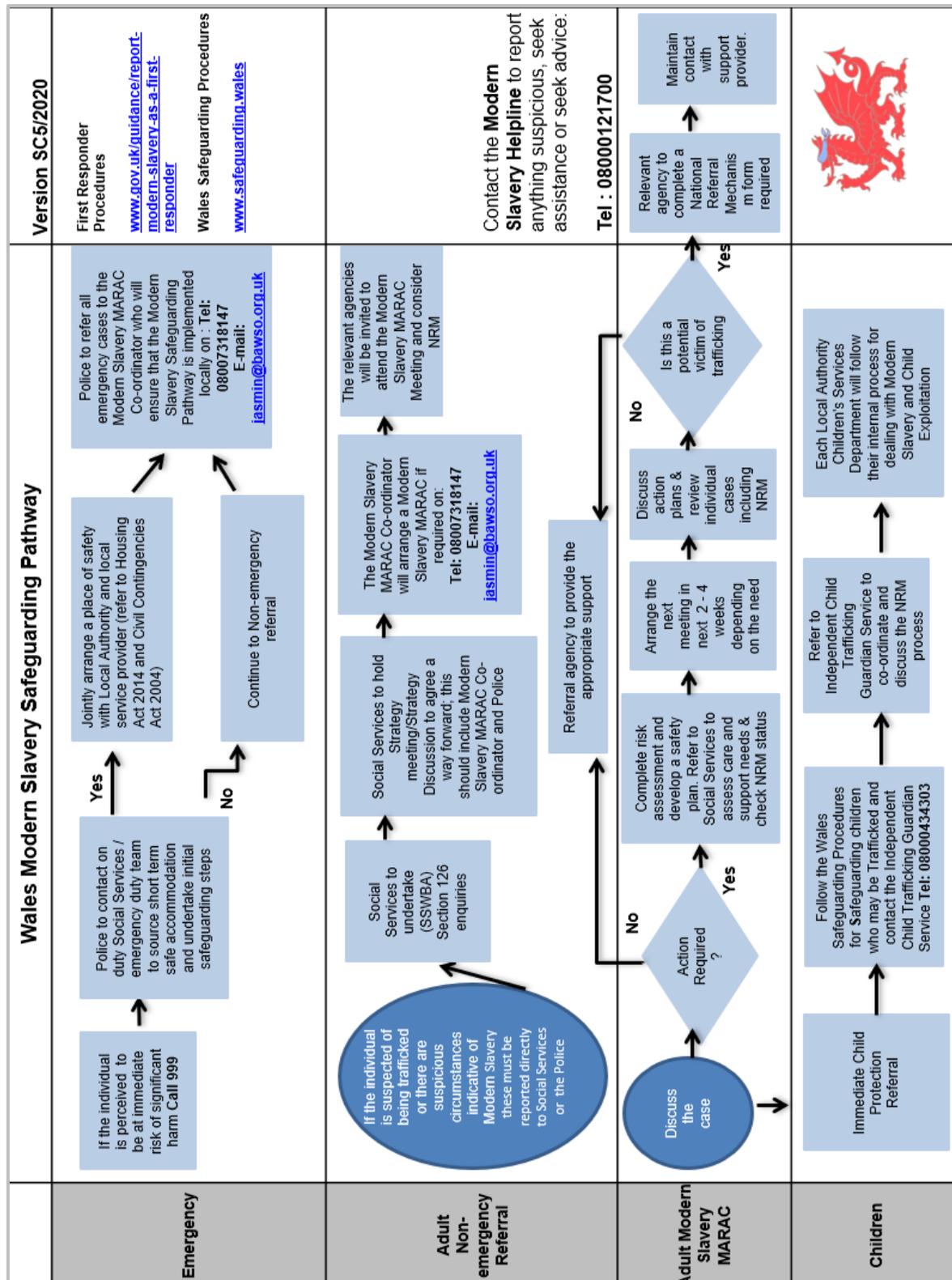


Figure 7: Wales Modern Slavery Safeguarding Pathway (including Modern Slavery MARAC)

