

IASC paper: PREPARING FOR WORK

April 2022

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Introduction

In her [Strategic Plan 2019-2021](#), the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC), Dame Sara Thornton, sets out the importance of improving victim care and support, noting that the increase of referrals to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) creates more demand on decision making processes meaning victims are waiting longer for decisions, which impacts their recovery process, and therefore their longer term outcomes.

In March 2020, Dame Sara wrote to the Minister for Safeguarding to suggest an initiative that would permit victims of modern slavery to work whilst awaiting NRM and asylum decisions.¹ Due to the wider Home Office Borders, Immigration and Citizen System review of asylum seeker right to work, the Minister responded to say that she was not able to commit to a specific scheme for survivors of modern slavery.²

Dame Sara therefore sought to focus efforts on building the evidence base on the benefits of work and the harms of not working by commissioning a rapid piece of research from the University of Nottingham Rights Lab to better understand this issue; and in January this year, hosted a roundtable to bring together stakeholders from across the anti-slavery sector and beyond to discuss the implementation of four recommendations made by the research report 'The benefits and barriers to accessing employment: considerations for survivors of modern slavery'.³

Recognising that employment is only part of the equation in supporting survivors to successfully reintegrate into society, one of the recommendations made in this report is set out below:

In collaboration with survivors and the wider UK anti-slavery sector, a standardised suite of modules should be developed to form an accredited work preparation curriculum. The curriculum would facilitate the development of life skills and employability skills, and be available to every survivor in the NRM.

Survivors should be offered the opportunity to develop and hone their skills, gain qualifications, engage in paid work placements, and progress into full-time mainstream employment as and when they are ready and able. Building on the recommendations given in the recent 'Access to Work' report, consideration should be given to how this is facilitated, regardless of the individual's nationality and immigration status.

An accredited curriculum would not only benefit survivors but would also provide employers with reassurances about the skill levels and abilities of those who complete the curriculum.

During the roundtable, Dame Sara sought a delegate to research which materials were available and investigate how such a 'standardized suite' of accredited work preparation might work. Helena Yeaman (Social Impact Manager, Modern Slavery, Ashurst) volunteered to do so and this report sets out to outline her findings. Helena is responsible for the development and co-ordination of Ashurst's social impact work on modern slavery and has spent her career working in

¹ <https://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/media/1402/iasc-letter-to-victoria-atkins-mp-march-2020.pdf>

² <https://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/media/1403/letter-to-the-iasc-from-victoria-atkins-mp-april-2020.pdf>

³ IASC and University of Nottingham Rights Lab (2021), 'The benefits and the barriers to accessing employment: Considerations for survivors of modern slavery': https://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/media/1599/rights_lab_access-to-work-pathways_final.pdf.

responsible business designing and implementing employability and skills programmes to be delivered by volunteers in city firms to support charities addressing homelessness, social mobility, financial literacy, refugees and modern slavery. Helena co-wrote Ashurst's Modern Slavery Action Plan⁴ as part of its commitment to work with organisations in the anti-slavery movement.

Methodology

This report is a rapid piece of qualitative research drawing upon Kate Garber's report and establishes what evaluation had been done on materials accessible to survivors of modern slavery in the UK. This approach was to informally interview specialist partners of the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC), to further understand the support and training they provide in the anti-slavery sector and how it is evaluated. Of the 15 partners approached, 12 responded. These informal interviews were arranged via email and conducted via video or phone call. Conversations focused on what employability training the organisation offered, if training was on offer and what evaluation had taken place.

In addition, informal interviews were held with Kate Garbers, InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), who presented their online training platform to the roundtable and International Organisation for Migration (IOM), who presented their STAR programme to the roundtable. A full list of the organisations contacted can be found in the Appendix.

The below table provides a brief summary of organisations who offered training and any evaluation available.

Findings

Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (BCHA)

BCHA run a number of programmes funded by Skills for Learning.

***Ignite** is an accredited personal development programme which supports people into their first steps of employment. Last August:*

- *97% of participants said this programme had increased their confidence*
- *100% of participants had increased motivation*
- *94% achieved a qualification*

***The Way Forward** is a project funded by JP Morgan which provides training to support people in finding financial health, and regaining financial fitness, re-entering training, education and work. Of their participants:*

- *30% of referrals reported an increase in financial health*
- *49% achieved accredited learning*
- *43% secured work*

It is important to note that clients (not all) who have 'No Recourse to Public Funding' (NRPF) are not eligible to funding for programmes, in such situations BCHA absorb the costs of delivery of these services.

⁴ Ashurst, 'Modern Slavery Action Plan – Ashurst's commitment': <https://www.ashurst.com/en/about-us/responsible-business/modern-slavery/>.

City Hearts

City Hearts launched **Bright Future** employment programme in March 2017 in partnership with the Co-op and their business partners, which offer survivors with a right to work, paid work placements leading to a non-competitive job interview, creating a pathway to permanent employment.

Since 2017, it has supported 66 survivors to complete work placements, 47 of these survivors were offered permanent employment with the business partner.

Furthermore, City Hearts recently piloted **Restoring You**, a programme created to encourage survivors to build confidence and recognise their strengths to support integration. This programme is still in development stage pending evaluation. However, there is currently no funding available to carry out evaluation.

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG)

IHG have an online academy⁵ with free and paid for resources to anyone who signs up to the site. It should be noted that this site is linked to the IHG recruitment site and is aimed at people who are interested in a career in hospitality.

As the site is relatively new, no evaluation has taken place to date.

International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

Skills Training and Reintegration (STAR)⁶ was a pilot programme led by IOM, which aimed to help survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery on their journey towards employment and integration in the UK.

Participants both demonstrated and reported improvements in their soft skills and basic skills for employment and increased confidence in the job search and application process after receiving the training and personalised support.

Participants also demonstrated and reported increased knowledge of work culture and recruitment processes through the programme.

The programme increased feelings of motivation to seek employment, with most participants engaged in some form of activity to find work or improve their knowledge and/or skills.

⁵ IHG Hotels & Resorts, 'Check in to IHG Academy': <https://careers.ihg.com/en/early-careers/ihg-academy/>.

⁶ IOM (2022), 'Skills Training and Reintegration (STAR) Programme: Final report': <https://unitedkingdom.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11381/files/iom-star-final-report.pdf>.

Sophie Hayes Foundation

The Sophie Hayes Foundation deliver three skills based programmes over a 12 month period, designed to support women build confidence and develop essential skills necessary for future employment and education; 'Emotional Growth', 'Coaching' and 'Access to Work Placements and Education'.

Impact measurement includes employability experiences and progression to higher education:

- *82% experienced an increased confidence*
- *80% increased knowledge in CV building and employability*
- *94% of participants would recommend the programme to others*
- *81% of participants highly rated the programme*

Analysis

Survivors have limited access to programmes

All the MSVCC organisations interviewed provide emergency support to adult victims who have left situations of exploitation to help secure safe housing, health needs, legal advice, welfare needs and more. However, this analysis shows that there is no uniform approach to training provision, rather, organisations appear to work in silos. Only two of the 12 MSVCC organisations interviewed provide employability training themselves. Some of the organisations signpost to external providers on an ad hoc basis according to individual needs and availability in their local area.

There is a lack of evaluation

Three of the five examples of training provision who provided evaluation had secured specific funding to do so. IOM's⁷ work and evaluation was excellent, and had helpful insight into recommendations for the continuation of their training provision:

- The need for ancillary support to support the varied and changing needs of survivors
- Working in partnership with a survivor care provider gives a stable foundation for survivors
- Extend personal support sessions beyond the training period to support participant move-on plans
- Suggest running a self-paced E-learning course alongside the trainer-led course to provide flexibility for survivors on their recovery journey
- Structure the training to allow survivors without the right to work to benefit from digital and life skill modules

BCHA and Sophie Hayes also secured financial support from JP Morgan and Hewlett Packard respectively for individual programmes they run. However, private funding can be volatile as priorities change for donors. For example, IOM no longer have funding to continue with the STAR programme and Bright Future had lost their funding to continue the 'Restoring You' initiative, meaning it hasn't been evaluated.

⁷ IOM (2022), 'Skills Training and Reintegration (STAR) Programme: Final report'.

The evaluation that does exist demonstrates that training works. Crucially, this training doesn't need to be purely 'employability' training, particularly as those who are not within the NRM face hurdles to accessing work. Any training benefits softer skills, such as emotional wellbeing, motivation, confidence which are of course the first steps needed before embarking on a journey into employment. This training should therefore be seen in a holistic way, that is providing something meaningful to do that is useful and good for wellbeing.

Recommendation

It is hard to know why organisations which sit under the MSVCC are so siloed, perhaps because the MSVCC lacks specificity itself. Having seen examples of good practice, it would make sense for the MSVCC to take a more consistent approach in how they support people under their care. They could make developing life skills and employability skills a learning requirement. With a clear journey plan in existence, contractors might have a more uniformed approach to collaborate and share best practice with each other. Arguably, with this provision in place, initiatives such as Bright Future would benefit too by employing survivors who are more robust to cope with their pipeline into full time employment.

Where there is good practice outlined in this report, there are clearly opportunities to expand across these providers. We have seen creativity through engaging private support, which is a good model, but as the IOM evaluation rightly asserts, survivors need the wrap around support they get from the MSVCC, which means a more centralised approach might be more effective. If centralised funding was in place, IOM's STAR training would be a good starting point as they have such in-depth knowledge of the sector, have created a solid model and have a rigorous evaluation process in place.

Appendix: Full list of organisations contacted

Black Country Women's Aid

Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (BCHA)

City Hearts

Hestia

InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG)

International Organisation for Migration (IOM)

Jericho

Medaille Trust

Migrant Help

Palm Cove

St John of God Hospitaller Services

Snowdrop

Sophie Hayes Foundation

Unseen

