**Piloting devolved decision making for child victims of modern slavery**

**Additional Information**

Applicants may only submit one bid, as an individual bid or as part of a joint bid. Where a joint bid is submitted it is the responsibility of the lead local authority or lead Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland to ensure its partner local authorities or Health and Social Care Trust have not submitted an individual bid. If more than one bid is submitted by an applicant, the Home Office reserves the right to exclude one or both bids.

**For the purpose of this document, all future reference to local authorities assumes the inclusion of Northern Ireland’s comparable body, The Health and Social Care Trusts.**

**Purpose of Pilots for Devolved Decision-Making Pilots**

The purpose of the pilot is to test different approaches to identifying children as victims of modern slavery, through local multi-agency decision making in various sites across the UK. The funding will be awarded to empower local authorities to integrate decisions about whether children are victims of modern slavery within their existing safeguarding structures.

**Some of key requirements to be followed by the pilot sites are set out below. Full requirements are detailed in the Statement of Outcomes:**

* Both the Reasonable Grounds and Conclusive Grounds decisions **must** be taken by safeguarding partners through a multi-agency structure at one or multiple meetings. In line with the [Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2), this will be with representation from the three safeguarding partners – the local authority/ Health and Social Care Trusts, health and police – as a minimum. Where possible, decisions should be taken through an existing multi-agency structure. Engagement with local authorities and NGOs in the design of these pilots has determined that, to avoid potential conflicts of interest, the chair of the multi-agency structure taking the decision should not be the lead social worker involved in the child’s care where a social worker is allocated to the case.
	+ Pilot sites must make decisions as to whether a child is a victim of modern slavery in accordance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and guidance provided to pilot sites. This requires two decisions to be made:
	+ A **Reasonable Grounds (RG)** decision where there are reasonable grounds to believe that the individual is a victim
	+ A **Conclusive Grounds (CG)** decision as to whether, on the balance of probabilities, a child is a victim of modern slavery

Both decisions should be taken as soon as there is sufficient evidence to do so. An RG decision should be made no later than 45 days from the date the pilot site receives the referral. A positive CG decision can also be made at the same meeting if there is sufficient evidence to do so. If a pilot site deems the evidence gathered for the first multi-agency meeting is insufficient for a positive CG decision to be taken at the same meeting, then a second meeting to make the CG decision should take place no later than 45 days after the first meeting (90 days in total).

* The outcome of a Reasonable Grounds and/or a Conclusive Grounds decision must be reported to the Home Office within one working day using the Reporting Template provided.
* Any meetings where decisions are taken should have minutes taken.
* Once a final Conclusive Grounds decision has been made, and following any quality assurance that is required, the Home Office will issue a decision letter for the case outcome.
* These pilots will not replace any existing devolved legislation.

**Please note:** In all cases children should continue to receive appropriate safeguarding and support in line with current statutory requirements irrespective of the stage they are at in the decision-making process.

**Eligibility**

1. The fund is open to all local authorities within England, Scotland and Wales with responsibility for children’s social care and in Northern Ireland, The Department of Health who hold responsibility for children’s social care.
2. The Home Office welcomes applications for funding from either individual local authorities or local authorities/ Health and Social Care Trusts acting together as a consortium.
3. In the case of a consortium bid, one local authority/ Health and Social Care Trust will be nominated as the lead authority/ Health and Social Care Trust and will need to have agreement from all partner local authorities/ Health and Social Care Trusts before bidding.
4. Bidders must ensure their bid meets the requirements set out in Section 6 of the Statement of outcomes.
5. Applicants will only be eligible for one grant of funding up to a maximum of £50k per year, pro rata as needed if crossing financial years. However, the Home Office will consider higher bids in exceptional circumstances. These exceptional circumstances will require robust, evidence-based justification.