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**Collaborating to Identify,
Recover and Support Victims
of Modern Slavery**

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Abstract

This article presents findings from a series of case studies into the impact of multi-agency anti-slavery partnerships in the UK. The research draws upon empirical evidence from a number of geographic regions as the basis of a comparative analysis involving the full spectrum of statutory and non-statutory organisations that undertake anti-slavery work. The article focuses, in particular, on the role of partnerships in victim identification and support, while simultaneously discussing issues and drawing upon existing discourse associated with policy, legislation and the macro conditions that impose barriers on such efforts.

Key words: Human trafficking; modern slavery; victim identification; victim support; multi-agency partnerships.

Collaborating to Identify, Recover and Support Victims of Modern Slavery

Introduction

Human trafficking, and now modern slavery have, in recent years, been pushed up the UK's national agenda.¹ Alongside the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act in 2015, multi-agency anti-slavery partnerships are increasingly being advocated for nationally as a means to ensure a more consistent and effective response to modern slavery. The UK Government, Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and a host of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) have all called for a more collaborative and joined-up multi-agency approach.² The Modern Slavery Act targeted measures aimed at improving efforts to identify, recover and support victims. Alongside these provisions, the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner has signposted anti-slavery partnerships as a vital element of effective victim support and has established the development of best practice for them as a strategic priority. Despite the fact there is currently no statutory obligation mandating the formation of regional anti-slavery partnerships, there is some consensus that partnerships have a vital role to play in the identification and plugging of training and awareness gaps. As a result, partnerships are increasingly seen as a key aspect of a more coordinated and collective response to modern slavery.³

In this paper, evidence surrounding the successes and failures of the UK's efforts to combat trafficking and modern slavery, since the Modern Slavery Act's introduction in 2015, is reviewed. In particular, focus is placed on the role of anti-slavery partnerships in the identification, recovery and support of victims; drawing upon empirical data gleaned through a collection of interviews, focus-groups and other evidence acquired from four UK police regions. The paper centres on a

¹ Baroness Butler-Sloss, Frank Field, and John Randall, "Establishing Britain as a World Leader in the Fight against Modern Slavery," *Modern Slavery Bill Evidence Review* (Kent: Langford, 2013), <https://www.bl.uk/britishlibrary/~media/bl/global/social-welfare/pdfs/non-secure/e/s/t/establishing-britain-as-a-world-leader-in-the-fight-against-modern-slavery-report-of-the-modern-slavery-bill-evidence-review.pdf>.

² HM Government, "Modern Slavery Strategy," 2014, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-slavery-strategy>; Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, "Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner: Annual Report 2016," 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-anti-slavery-commissioner-annual-report-2016>

³ Home Office, "Modern Slavery: How the UK Is Leading the Fight," 2014, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/328096/Modern_slavery_booklet_v12_WEB_2_.pdf; Alison Gardner, Claire Brickell, and Tatiana Gren-Jardan, "Collaborating for Freedom: Anti-Slavery Partnerships in the UK," *University of Nottingham / Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner*, 2018, https://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/media/1186/collaborating-for-freedom_anti-slavery-partnerships-in-the-uk.pdf

number of themes associated with the role of, and issues associated with; immigration enforcement, education and training, and the current role of NGOs in filling gaps in some of the provisions established as part of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. Namely, the accommodation of victims outside of the National Referral Mechanism's (NRM's) requirements.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015

Despite being consistently heralded as “world leading” by the UK government, the Modern Slavery Act 2015 has received widespread criticism for not going far enough in many of its provisions.⁴ NGOs and interest groups have heavily criticized the Act for underpinning systematic failures in the government's duty to protect and support victims once they have been identified.⁵ While the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee have also cited failings in the Act's ability to provide a pathway for victim recovery.⁶ In response, a new private members bill, currently being discussed in the House of Commons, seeks to extend the period of victim care to twelve months after a successful referral.⁷ NGOs have also called for additional provisions that would see victims given a full year's leave to remain in the UK. However, this proposal has been received with scepticism by the government who cite concerns over immigration, and the potential for such a measure to be abused. The result of which would create an incentive for individuals to pose as slavery victims in order to gain legal status in the UK.⁸ However, without legal residence in the UK, and the necessary support needed to access justice, compensation, healthcare, welfare and education services, victims remain at significant risk of re-trafficking and further exploitation post referral.⁹

⁴ Theresa May, “My Government Will Lead the Way in Defeating Modern Slavery,” *The Sunday Telegraph*, June 30, 2016, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/07/30/we-will-lead-the-way-in-defeating-modern-slavery/>; Home Office, “2017 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery,” no. October (2017), https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652366/2017_uk_annual_report_on_modern_slavery.pdf

⁵ House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee, “Victims of Modern Slavery: Twelfth Report of Session 2016-2017,” 2017, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmworpen/803/803.pdf>

⁶ Samantha Ferrell-Schweppenstedde, “Day 46,” *Human Trafficking Foundation*, 2016, <https://snowdropproject.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Day-46.pdf>

⁷ Lord McColl of Dulwich, “Modern Slavery (Victim Support) Bill,” *House of Lords*, 2017, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/lbill/2017-2019/0004/18004.pdf>

⁸ Frank Field, “Protection for Victims of Modern Slavery,” *Letter from Frank Field MP, Chair of the Work and Pensions Select Committee to Theresa May, UK Prime Minister*, 2017, <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/work-and-pensions/Correspondence/Letter-from-the-Chair-to-the-Prime-Minister-relating-to-modern-slavery-13-December-2017.pdf>

⁹ Kate Roberts, “Life after Trafficking: A Gap in the UK's Modern Slavery Efforts,” *Anti-Trafficking Review*, no. 10 (2018): 164–68, doi:10.14197.

Currently, within the NRM, individuals who are identified as potential victims of modern slavery are entitled to a minimum of forty-five days of support and accommodation while their victim status is assessed. If successful, victims are then entitled to a further fourteen days of support, including accommodation, counselling, and advocacy.¹⁰ This brevity poses a significant problem. Many victims, particularly those who are not British nationals, likely have limited knowledge of state welfare systems and have little in the way of personal support structures. With no family or support, victims are often left destitute, putting them at risk of poverty, and making them vulnerable to re-trafficking and further exploitation.¹¹ This period is scheduled for extension to a further forty-five days following the revisions announced by the Home Office at the end of 2017.¹²

Multi-Agency Partnerships

Multi-agency partnerships are not an especially new concept when it comes to providing safeguarding and support for vulnerable individuals in the UK. In fact, the statutory requirement for the formation of multi-agency partnerships was implemented as far back as 1989 with the introduction of the Children Act. The Children Act 1989, as the title suggests, stipulated the need for inter-agency collaboration between public organisations in relation to issues concerning the safeguarding of children and young people.¹³ Since then, multilateral cooperation between the public, private and third sectors has been increasingly advocated in connection with a number of social issues. These include, community safety, social inclusion, neighbourhood regeneration, and, more recently, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), as well as in response to major incidents and disasters.¹⁴ Despite successes in some areas, multi-agency partnerships have suffered endemic issues with information sharing; fragmented and duplicated needs assessment processes, poor levels of coordination and service integration, absences in

¹⁰ Home Office, “National Referral Mechanism Guidance: Adult (England and Wales),” n.d., <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-trafficking-victims-referral-and-assessment-forms/guidance-on-the-national-referral-mechanism-for-potential-adult-victims-of-modern-slavery-england-and-wales#access-to-support>

¹¹ Gary Craig, “The UK’s Modern Slavery Legislation: An Early Assessment of Progress,” *Social Inclusion* 5, no. 2 (2017): 16, doi:10.17645/si.v5i2.833.

¹² Sarah Newton, “Modern Slavery Victims to Receive Longer Period of Support,” 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/modern-slavery-victims-to-receive-longer-period-of-support>

¹³ Legislation.gov.uk, “Children Act 1989,” 1989, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>. REF

¹⁴ Rita Cheminais, *Effective Multi-Agency Partnerships: Putting Every Child Matters into Practice* (London: Sage, 2009), doi:10.4135/9781446288269; Home Office, “National Referral Mechanism Pilots: Slavery Safeguarding Lead Guidance,” 2015, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/475716/2015-10-30_SSL_guidance_v1_0.pdf; Jyoti Laxmi Mishra, David K. Allen, and Alan D. Pearman, “Information Sharing during Multi-Agency Major Incidents,” *Proceedings of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 48, no. 1 (2011): 1–10, doi:10.1002/meet.2011.14504801039.

responsibility among participating agencies, and unclear channels of accountability.¹⁵

Perhaps one of the highest profile applications of multi-agency working comes from the field of child protection, and the use of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) and Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs). Unlike anti-slavery partnerships, LSCBs do have a number of statutory objectives, set by the Children Act 2004. These include coordinating the activity of all bodies represented on the LCSB related to the protection and welfare of children, and to ensure the effectiveness of these bodies for those purposes.¹⁶ The remit of anti-slavery partnerships has gone far beyond safeguarding functions in many areas of the UK however. In fact, recent findings by Gardner, Brickell and Gren-Jardan have identified the most common activities that these partnerships engaged in were not related to safeguarding activities at all.¹⁷ Instead, intelligence acquisition, training and awareness raising feature as the most common activities. Survivor support and victim identification/referral place sixth and seventh on the list respectively. There are a number of common themes between both LCSBs and anti-slavery partnerships. Both establish the importance and role of agencies such as housing, health, the social care services and immigration enforcement, the voluntary and private sectors, and, of course, the police, in the protection of those individuals who are considered at risk.¹⁸ Moreover, across all their applications, multi-agency partnerships seek to combine the skills, responsibilities and expertise of practitioners from a number of different agencies. The partnerships bring these individuals, and the agencies they represent, together to share aims, information, tasks and responsibilities to tackle problems.¹⁹

Anti-slavery partnerships

Increasingly, multi-agency partnerships have been signposted as vital components of the UK's response to modern slavery. The Home Office Modern Slavery Strategy cites partnerships as essential in increasing frontline

¹⁵ Cheminais, *Effective Multi-Agency Partnerships: Putting Every Child Matters into Practice*.

¹⁶ Legislation.gov.uk, "Children Act 2004," 2004, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>

¹⁷ Gardner, Brickell, and Gren-Jardan, "Collaborating for Freedom: Anti-Slavery Partnerships in the UK."

¹⁸ HM Government, "Working Together to Safeguard Children," 2015, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/592101/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children_20170213.pdf; The UK Border Agency was superseded by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), UK Immigration Enforcement and UK Border Force in 2013. For the purposes of this article they are discussed collectively under the moniker of "UK Immigration Enforcement" unless a specific agency is being referenced.

¹⁹ Cheminais, *Effective Multi-Agency Partnerships: Putting Every Child Matters into Practice*.

professionals' awareness of indicators and warning signs, improving the coordination of international activity, and enhancing working relationships with the private sector.²⁰ Furthermore, the UK's former Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Kevin Hyland, who resigned in 2018, set the development of a strategic plan for partnerships as a top priority, targeting five key areas including:

- the development of regional partnership models to promote best practice,
- the development of partnerships with groups representing 'vulnerable' or hard-to-reach communities (such as homeless charities and diaspora community organisations),
- improving data collection and information sharing with international partners,
- raising awareness among the public,
- the development of academic partnerships to promote the use of research to plug key policy and evidence gaps.²¹

A year after the implementation of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 the government commissioned an independent review into its effectiveness, in terms of criminal justice, by barrister Caroline Haughey. The resulting report, as well as citing the potential significance of partnerships' contribution at a local level, provided a number of associated recommendations. First, the report advocated for the collection and synthesis of data and intelligence from different partners, building on pre-existing relationships that exist in some regions between police, local authorities and other partners, including the voluntary sector, in relation to CSE.²² Building on this, the report also cited the specific need for enhanced cooperation between police and other statutory agencies, as well improved levels of NGO coordination in order to increase the quantity and quality of victim referrals.

Since 2014, modern slavery has been identified nationally as a significant adult social care risk, placing the issue firmly within the remit of Safeguarding Adult Boards.²³ The active participation of Local Adult Safeguarding Boards

²⁰ HM Government, "Modern Slavery Strategy."

²¹ Kevin Hyland, "Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner: Letter of Resignation," 2018, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-anti-slavery-commissioner-letter-of-resignation>; Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, "Strategic Plan 2015-2017," 2015, https://www.antislaverycommissioner.co.uk/media/1075/iasc_strategicplan_2015.pdf

²² Caroline Haughey, "The Modern Slavery Act Review: One Year On," 2016, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/542047/2016_07_31_Haughey_Review_of_Modern_Slavery_Act_-_final_1.0.pdf

²³ Legislation.gov.uk, *Care Act 2014*, 2014, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted>.

(LSABs) in anti-slavery partnerships has been cited as a key vector through which these agencies can work alongside others, such as the police. Partnerships have been used to put in place local processes and action plans, and roll-out training and awareness campaigns, ensuring that frontline professionals are sufficiently aware of the indicators of issues such as forced and child labour, and domestic servitude.²⁴ The need for collaboration between partners is further necessitated by the role played by organisations such as the Salvation Army, the NGO organisation that holds the central UK government contract for housing modern slavery victims within the NRM. In social care settings, partnerships have been cited as beneficial in helping to identify improvements in joint-working, practice and in the development of local policy, procedure, guidance and training. This reinforces the notion that safeguarding is “everyone’s business” and highlights a number of benefits potentially attributable to anti-slavery partnerships.²⁵

Despite the positives attributed to partnership working, existing work has identified serious deficiencies in the evidence and tools being used to monitor their effectiveness.²⁶ Many of the means currently used to evaluate partnerships are, in many cases, anecdotal and in some cases non-existent. Consequently, the requirement for significant improvements to data collection and analysis has been identified in order to ensure there is a more complete, evidence-based picture to attribute, tangibly, the successes and impacts of partnership working in response to modern slavery.

Methodology

This study, relating to the role and activities of multi-agency anti-slavery partnerships, was conducted using four UK police force areas, herein referred to as regions, as case studies. This was done under the premise that police were one of the key primary drivers of modern slavery partnership work across the UK. Existing work by Gardner, Brickell and Gren-Jardan has highlighted that an overwhelming majority of existing partnerships are both chaired and coordinated by police.²⁷ The research draws upon interviews with members of the police

²⁴ Gary Craig et al., “Contemporary Slavery in the UK,” *Joseph Rowntree Foundation* (York, 2007), <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/2016-contemporary-slavery-uk.pdf>

²⁵ Department of Health and Social Care, “Statutory Guidance to Support Local Authorities Implement the Care Act 2014,” 2016, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>; Adi Cooper and Claire Bruin, “Adult Safeguarding and the Care Act (2014) – the Impacts on Partnerships and Practice,” *The Journal of Adult Protection* 19, no. 4 (2017): 209–19, doi:10.1108/JAP-03-2017-0009.

²⁶ Ruth van Dyke, “Monitoring and Evaluation of Partnerships in England and Wales,” *Anti-Trafficking Review*, no. 8 (2017): 131–46, doi:10.14197/atr.20121788.

²⁷ Gardner, Brickell, and Gren-Jardan, “Collaborating for Freedom: Anti-Slavery Partnerships in the UK.”

conducted in each of the four regions; sixteen of which were completed in total. This data is supported by that from a focus group conducted with members of a regional multi-agency partnership in region one. A number of NGOs, local authority safeguarding teams, and UK Immigration Enforcement were all represented in the focus group. All data was collected between 2015 and 2018. For the purposes of this paper, regions have been pseudonymised to ‘region one, two, three and four’, and individual participants anonymised so that the information provided could be presented candidly. Additional context and exposition that could be used to identify specific regions or individuals has also been removed. The empirical evidence is supplemented by the analysis of more than one hundred documents and other artefacts, including intelligence products, terms of reference reports, meeting minutes and action plans. All information was collected and used with the permission of the participating agencies.²⁸

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with officers of various ranks, from Detective Chief Inspectors (DCIs) through to Detective Constables (DCs). Semi-structured interviews were used in order to provide a consistent set of topics for each interview, while still allowing for emerging topical issues to be followed with each participant. Participants were selected on the basis that they work directly on modern slavery and were engaged in some capacity with partnership work, at the time of the study. As an exploratory study, the interviews were designed to elicit the personal viewpoints and experiences of the participants working in response to modern slavery. Additional emphasis was placed on their role and the challenges and successes they encountered as part of working in partnership and its impact upon the identification, recovery and ongoing support of modern slavery victims. A narrative approach was taken in the data collection and analysis.²⁹

Results & Discussion

The case studies indicated that the form, structure and maturity of the partnerships analysed were distinctly different from region to region. For instance, regions one and two were recognised as early adopters of partnership working. Region one had formal partnership action plans and terms of reference in place at a regional level, as well as among individual policing districts. In regions two and four, two groups met regularly; an operational group and a strategic group. While all four areas cited buy-in from other partners as ‘excellent’, region four’s

²⁸ All research was carried out in line with university research ethics guidelines and has full approval from the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Committee (UREC).

²⁹ David M Boje, *Narrative Methods for Organizational & Communication Research* (London: Sage, 2001), doi: 10.4135/9781849209496.

partnership structure was not police-led, and this was cited as a key benefit in attracting participation from other agencies.

Where it is police chaired, it's police-led, all the comments tend to be kept from the police and actually it's quite a struggle to get buy-in from the, often, very strapped organisations. So, in our county the anti-slavery partnership is chaired by the county council chief exec, which is good [...] He doesn't necessarily drive that work, the fact he chairs it causes people to turn up, so I've got an audience to get the work to be done.³⁰

In this instance, the role of the Council chief executive as meeting chair was seen as an important factor in bringing organisations to the table, and an effective measure in preventing the meetings from becoming police centric. In region four specifically, the lack of formality of the meeting was also cited as a distinct positive, giving the group flexibility to discuss individual issues on an ad-hoc basis.³¹ Meanwhile a strategic group, consisting of higher-level statutory organisation representatives, maintained a more formal remit and structure.³² In regions one and three, partnerships were both chaired and steered by police. In Region four, partnership work was recognised as being primarily police driven, but meetings were not chaired or steered by police. Across all regions there was a perception that the models they had adopted, or were in the process of adopting, were regionally appropriate, and gave police, and wider partners, the required flexibility needed to manage local issues effectively.³³ The results of the empirical study revealed a number of core and omnipresent themes associated with victim identification, referral and support which are explored in the following subsections.

Training and Awareness

Wider research into anti-slavery partnerships in the UK has established that training and awareness related activities were the second and third most common activities undertaken by partnerships nationwide. Conversely, the same research identified 'learning' and 'awareness' as the two most common self-identified areas of good practice.³⁴ In the regions consulted as part of *this* study, training was an equally prominent priority across the partnerships. Training generally focused on

³⁰ Interview with a police Detective Chief Inspector, Region 4, 9th March 2018.

³¹ Interview with a police Detective Chief Inspector, Region 4, 9th March 2018.

³² Interview with a police Detective Inspector, Region 3, 7th March 2018.

³³ Interview with a police Detective Sergeant, Region 1, 7th September 2015.

³⁴ Gardner, Brickell, and Gren-Jardan, "Collaborating for Freedom: Anti-Slavery Partnerships in the UK."

police and frontline staff from other public bodies such as healthcare, the fire service and local authorities. This training had two main intentions; improving individuals' ability to identify indicators of modern slavery, as well as educating them about the formal processes for reporting, and where appropriate, preparing initial NRM referrals with victims.³⁵ Moreover, in one of the four regions, specific emphasis was also placed on increasing intelligence throughput from partners. The potential impact of training on these two areas; victim identification and intelligence throughput, are discussed in subsequent sections. In regions three and four, training and awareness raising activity was primarily facilitated by the police, while in regions one and two it was partly facilitated or led by another statutory organisation.³⁶ In region one an NGO was contracted to provide training across the region to both the police and partners.³⁷ All four areas also cited general awareness-raising activity, around modern slavery within local communities, as a key activity where positive steps had been taken.

A number of positives were cited that built on the work of charities, particularly those working in specialist areas, such as sexworker support. These included further developing existing trust relationships within the community to raise awareness of modern slavery, promoting reporting, and encouraging potential victims to come forward.³⁸ Training and awareness raising work frequently aimed to improve frontline workers' abilities to recognise and identify victims, an issue that was cited as a continued challenge.³⁹ Generally however, it was believed that more could be done with the general public, to encourage and raise awareness of issues particularly within potentially vulnerable communities. Due in part to resourcing, and as a result of fractured, or a complete lack of, existing relationships with certain communities, these initiatives were either not in place, or were unsuccessful:

Do you think we delve deep enough into the communities we're involved in, to be able to get that intelligence in... from a law enforcement point of view? I sort of say that it's the victims, witnesses, suspects, it's members

³⁵ Region 1 modern slavery partnership yearly review for 2015; Interview with a statutory organisation representative, Region 2, 19th February 2018; Interview with a police Detective Inspector, Region 3, 4th January 2017; Interview with a police Detective Chief Inspector, Region 4, 9th March, 2018.

³⁶ Interview with a police Detective Inspector, Region 3, 4th January 2017; Interview with a police Detective Chief Inspector, Region 4, 9th March, 2018.

³⁷ Interview with a Police Detective Sergeant, Region 1, 18th June, 2015.

³⁸ Comments from a sexworker support NGO representative, focus group, Region 1, 24th January 2017.

³⁹ Region 1 modern slavery partnership yearly review for 2015.

of the public that will provide us with the information about the people that are committing these offences.⁴⁰

Bringing them [communities] all together for greater understanding. Because I think, I think probably they are sort of at the end of the queue when it comes to training aren't they, but they're the people that are actually out in those communities seeing things that perhaps we're not seeing, so I think we need to be out there pushing them up the queue. And to make sure that they are highlighting it.⁴¹

Another issue surrounded the questions as to whether possible connections between other safeguarding issues, such as child neglect, were in the consciousness of safeguarding leads in local authorities:

So when you're looking at early help for children and neglect, whether or not the links are being made within social care to actually consider that the parent or the carer within that family unit might be a victim of trafficking. And I don't think that's even on the radar.⁴²

This on one hand emphasises the disparate nature and potential reach, in terms of impact, that modern slavery has on its victims. On the other, it also highlights the challenge of delivering training to frontline professionals on the multitude of possible situations and potential indicators that they may encounter. This raises a linked issue. Are training and awareness campaigns currently too focused on issues that are considered 'low hanging fruit'? These issues include widely recognised problems such as labour exploitation in nail-bars and hand-car washes, pop-up brothels where forced prostitution is believed to be commonplace, and forced criminality through cannabis cultivation.⁴³ Can training and awareness schemes evolve to be more effective in unpicking the true nature and scope of the exploitative behaviour that effectively allows victims to be controlled by their employer or trafficker? Those provisioning training should seek to raise awareness of how these issues manifest as visible victim indicators, so that connections can be made between modern slavery, and emergent issues such as county lines.

⁴⁰ Comments from UK Immigration Enforcement, focus group, Region 1, 24th January 2017.

⁴¹ Comments from a local authority safeguarding lead, focus group, Region 1, 24th January 2017.

⁴² Comments from a local authority safeguarding lead, focus group, Region 1, 24th January 2017.

⁴³ Interview with a police Detective Inspector, Region 3, 7th March 2018.

Information and intelligence sharing

Information and intelligence sharing were also highlighted as core issues across participating regions, and also as an area where anti-slavery partnerships were seen, in some areas, to be having a distinctly positive impact. Region one had implemented regionwide initiatives to encourage and facilitate the sharing of what became referenced as ‘soft intelligence’. This intelligence, primarily from frontline workers, including representatives from local authorities and NGO’s, contained information concerning potential instances of modern slavery.⁴⁴ Issues around potential residential over-occupancy were specifically cited as one area where soft-intelligence submissions had helped to successfully identify a number of modern slavery victims.⁴⁵

Such provisions included local email inboxes and a dedicated phone line with answering machine that was monitored daily, alongside increased promotion of the national modern slavery helpline. Separate provisions were also being made to work alongside banks to flag fraudulent financial activity that may be occurring as a result of slavery.⁴⁶ These efforts contributed to a rise in intelligence throughput within region one between 2014 and 2015 of more than 55% in the first year of the partnership’s implementation.⁴⁷ Naturally, such initiatives were seen to follow the positive work taking place in terms of training, and increasing frontline staff’s awareness of modern slavery; informing them of the indicators and instilling the confidence needed to support any suspicions. In region four, a pro forma was created to allow partners to submit information directly to the Force Intelligence Bureau, however little increase in throughput was noted.⁴⁸ These measures were implemented over and above initiatives taking place across the UK in support of the Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN) which is being used to promote the sharing of intelligence, where possible, across government agencies by police Regional Organised Crime Unit’s (ROCU’s).⁴⁹

Intelligence was not necessarily considered to be a ‘one-way-street’ in this context however. Police were observed to be actively making efforts to share localised intelligence profiles with organisations attending local forums. This was

⁴⁴ Region 1 modern slavery partnership yearly review for 2015.

⁴⁵ Interview with a Police Detective Sergeant, Region 1, 7th September 2015.

⁴⁶ Interview with a police Detective Sergeant, Region 1, 7th September 2015.

⁴⁷ Figures held for 2015 only take into account the period ending 31st October 2015 so the true percentage increase will be larger than stated here; Region 1 modern slavery partnership yearly review for 2015.

⁴⁸ Interview with a police Detective Chief Inspector. Region 4, 9th March 2018.

⁴⁹ Open Rights Group, “ROCU’s and GAIN,” *Open Rights Group Wiki*, accessed May 24, 2018, https://wiki.openrightsgroup.org/wiki/ROCU_s_and_GAIN

in addition to helping raise awareness of local issues and improving the appreciation of modern slavery indicators by the agencies participating in the partnerships. Further driving intelligence throughput.⁵⁰ As an additional benefit this was observed to provide a tangible sense of inclusion and sense of collaboration, rather than the partnerships acting purely as an additional intelligence resource, or police informants.⁵¹

Victim referral and immigration enforcement

Human trafficking, people smuggling, and illegal immigration have long been entangled, and in many cases confused as synonymous.⁵² While all three are clearly distinct, and an individual's legal status, or lack thereof, is by no means a prerequisite for exploitation, there is no doubt that the precarious situations of those living in the UK without legal status, and thus access to state health, welfare and support services, makes them a severely at-risk group when it comes to modern slavery.⁵³ In fact, the status of those seeking asylum in the UK has been framed by Lewis et al. under the heading of 'hyperprecarity', with the UK's immigration policy considered to be a structuring and sustaining factor that contributes to the country's forced and exploitative labour issues.⁵⁴ Though the issues discussed in this paper focus more human behaviour and organisational process, the challenges faced by modern slavery victims are inextricably intertwined with those relating to immigration and labour policy. The UK's current drive against modern slavery is set against a legislative backdrop that includes a largely exclusionary immigration policy and an environment of labour market deregulation that exacerbate the precarity of refugees and asylum seekers, making them vulnerable to exploitation at the hands of traffickers and slave masters.⁵⁵

This conflicting landscape provides fertile ground for a number of challenges linked to the successful identification, support and recovery of victims.

⁵⁰ Comments from a local authority safeguarding lead, focus group, Region 1, 24th January 2017.

⁵¹ Comments from a local authority safeguarding lead, focus group, Region 1, 24th January 2017.

⁵² Andrew Geddes, "Chronicle of a Crisis Foretold: The Politics of Irregular Migration, Human Trafficking and People Smuggling in the UK," *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 7, no. 3 (2005): 324–39, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-856X.2005.00192.x.

⁵³ Peter Dwyer et al., "Forced Labour and UK Immigration Policy: Status Matters," *Joseph Rowntree Foundation* (York, 2011), <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/forced-labour-and-uk-immigration-policy-status-matters>

⁵⁴ Hannah Lewis et al., *Precarious Lives: Forced Labour, Exploitation and Asylum* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2015), <https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/precarious-lives-1>; Hannah Lewis and Louise Waite, "Asylum, Immigration Restrictions and Exploitation: Hyper-Precarity as a Lens for Understanding and Tackling Forced Labour," *Anti-Trafficking Review*, no. 5 (2015): 49–67, doi:10.14197/atr.20121554.

⁵⁵ Lewis et al., *Precarious Lives: Forced Labour, Exploitation and Asylum*.

From the primary evidence elicited in this study, it is impossible to make any estimations as to the extent of the scale and proliferation of the following problems. Instead, the viewpoints presented should be viewed, anecdotally, as possible challenges that arose across three of the four regions studied. For as long as the NRM fails to offer long-term leave to remain as a standard support provision, there remains a vector through which there is potential for victims to be wrongfully deported from the UK when they do not have legal status.

Earlier reviews of the NRM which took place in 2014 found that Home Office Visas and Immigration (UKVI) returned around twenty percent less successful NRM decisions than the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC). While UKHTC primarily dealt with referrals from police, and commonly featured EU-nationals as victims, non-European Union/ European Economic Area (EU/ EEA) victims were more likely to be referred through UKVI. This indicates a worrying trend that may be preventing non-EU/EEA victims from being successfully identified and referred.⁵⁶

Exacerbating this problem further, individuals from outside the EU who present to immigration authorities may potentially claim to be victims of trafficking in order to try and claim asylum. This self-identification should result in an initial referral through the NRM by immigration authorities so that a more thorough assessment can be made. However, there was anecdotal information received from regions one and four that illustrated how these individuals had, in some instances, been dealt with as any other person seeking asylum, raising concerns that adequate measures were not in place to identify them as potential victims. Thus, if no other legal basis for their residence in the UK was identified, they were eventually processed as illegal immigrants.

Every time that we bring somebody in, in this force area, we might have some concerns that they've been trafficked but if they're illegally here and they go in the direction of immigration enforcement I've got to have some confidence that throughout that process they are given a genuine opportunity to disclose [as a victim] throughout. So, am I absolutely confident that they do that? ... Not yet, no I'm not and that worries me a little bit.⁵⁷

In region two, there was a genuine belief that if gaps in the process involving Immigration Enforcement were rectified, it would result in the numbers of non-

⁵⁶ Christine Beddoe, "The National Referral Mechanism: A Five-Year Review," *The Anti Trafficking Monitoring Group*, 2014, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20141202113524/https://nrm.homeoffice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/ATMG.pdf>

⁵⁷ Interview with a police Detective Chief Inspector, Region 4, 9th March 2018.

EU/EEA victims identified and referred being “sky high.”⁵⁸ It was also identified as a known issue that was being worked on by the police in collaboration with Immigration Enforcement in that area. Moreover, in a recent case covered in the media, a Ghanaian victim was successfully and rightfully accepted as a victim of trafficking, but subsequently deported by the Home Office anyway.⁵⁹ A court eventually found the decision not to grant leave to remain to be in breach of the UK’s commitment to the 2005 Council of Europe Convention on Human Trafficking.⁶⁰ Thus illustrating a level of discriminative bias in the actions of immigration enforcement towards some modern slavery victims; specifically, those without legal status in the UK.

These factors present a number of issues. Not least of them is that a potentially vulnerable individual is plunged back into precarity in their home countries, where they become prime targets for re-trafficking, further exploitation or worse.⁶¹ Further, from a policing viewpoint, it was noted in an interview with a police officer from region one that without an initial referral through the NRM, an identified individual is never actually captured as a potential victim. The intelligence picture therefore remains incomplete and any trends involving trafficked or enslaved individuals from outside the EU potentially goes unreported.⁶² Moreover, in many cases no crime is ever recorded in instances where no victim has been referred, despite Home Office counting rules requiring crime to be regarded as independent to victim referral.⁶³ However, NRM figures from 2016 do rank victims from Vietnam (519), China (241) and Nigeria (243) amongst some of the highest numbers of referrals for that year, though these could be skewed given the level national attention towards Vietnamese owned nail-bars as a possible venue of exploitation.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Interview with a police Detective Chief Inspector, Region 2, 8th February 2018.

⁵⁹ Anna Sereni, “A Legal Win That’s Left Victims in Limbo,” *Anti-Slavery*, 2018.

⁶⁰ Council of Europe, “Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings,” *Council of Europe Treaty Series* 197 (2005), <https://rm.coe.int/168008371d>.

⁶¹ Lewis et al., *Precarious Lives: Forced Labour, Exploitation and Asylum*.

⁶² Interview with a police Detective Sergeant, Region 1, May 5th 2016.

⁶³ UK Home Office, “Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime,” 2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721595/count-general-jul-2018.pdf; Gary Craig, “Modern Slavery in the United Kingdom: An Incoherent Response,” in *Social Policy Review 30: Analysis and Debate in Social Policy*, ed. Catherine Needham, Elke Heins, and James Rees (Bristol: Policy Press, 2018), 27–46, <https://policypress.co.uk/resources/kara-creative/social-policy-review-30#book-detail-tabs-stison-block-content-1-1-tab2>

⁶⁴ National Crime Agency, “National Referral Mechanism Statistics - End of Year Summary 2017”; See for example Gentleman, “Slavery Report Sounds Alarm over Vietnamese Nail Bar Workers.”

This issue is further compounded by the fact that victims are often reluctant to come forward in the first instance. The reasons for these absences in self-referral are often contextual in relation to the circumstances of the individual, and the conditions under which they are enslaved and exploited.⁶⁵ These issues include things such as endemic problems with the UK's tier-5 visa system which effectively binds foreign domestic workers to their employers, preventing them from leaving exploitative employment.⁶⁶ Furthermore, victims are often unwilling to come forward due to culturally ingrained mistrust of the authorities and statutory organisations. This is particularly true of migrant communities. Victims also fear what might happen should their exploiters find them trying to escape enslavement.⁶⁷ Moreover, in some cases, victims are not aware that they are victims of specific crimes at all; again providing a significant barrier to self-referral. This was noted especially in interviews relating to labour exploitation cases with Eastern European victims, and in cases of exploitative and forced sex-work.⁶⁸ It should be noted, however, that steps have been taken to providing training for immigration enforcement on modern slavery across the regions studied.⁶⁹ This was one of the many positives taken from the integration of immigration enforcement into partnership arrangements across all four regions. Despite this, concerns were still present that their primary function remains immigration enforcement. Thus, concerns still remain that victims are not being identified by enforcement officers, and therefore there is still a significant risk of wrongful deportation. There was also explicit reference made in regions two, three and four to suggest that operations with immigration enforcement were now increasingly collaborative.⁷⁰ Police, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), the fire service and other statutory organisations were stated as all being regularly present when visits and inspections were made to business premises believed to be harbouring victims.

⁶⁵ Anette Brunovskis and Rebecca Surtees, "Out of Sight? Approaches and Challenges in the Identification of Trafficked Persons," *The Fafo/NEXUS Institute Project: Improving Services to Trafficked Persons* (Oslo: Allkopi AS, 2012), https://nexushumantrafficking.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/out-of-sight_identification_nexus.pdf

⁶⁶ Thanos Maroukis, "Keeping Up Appearances: The British Public Policy Response to the Trafficking of Domestic Workers in a Changing Regime of Social Protection," *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies* 15, no. 2 (April 3, 2017): 155–70, doi:10.1080/15562948.2017.1304602.

⁶⁷ Interview with a police Detective Inspector, Region 4, 9th March 2018.

⁶⁸ Interview with a police Detective Chief Inspector, Region 4, 9th March 2018; Comments from a sexworker support NGO representative, focus group, Region 1, 24th January 2017.

⁶⁹ Comments from UK Immigration Enforcement, focus group, Region 1, 24th January 2017; Interview with a police Detective Inspector, Region 3, 7th March 2018; Interview with a police Detective Chief Inspector, Region 2, 8th February 2018; Interview with a police Detective Inspector, Region 4, 9th March 2018.

⁷⁰ Interview with a police Detective Chief Inspector, Region 2, 8th February 2018; Interview with a police Detective Chief Inspector, Region 4, 9th March 2018; Interview with a police Detective Inspector, Region 3, 7th March 2018

Police in regions one and four also recounted that the aforementioned challenges associated with immigration enforcement were damaging the police's reputation among migrant communities.⁷¹ With the agencies that we engage with in particularly with District X, and the drop-in to District X day shelter and agencies like that who see destitute people, they've seen a quite a robust increase in incidents of immigration and they seem to be concerned about the people who access their services, about immigration and the impact its having on in terms of victims coming forward, its instilling that fear.⁷²

They [victims] don't see the police or immigration enforcement as anything other than 'an authority', they don't differentiate [...] So that's part of the trafficking... the traffickers control and that is to say, 'actually law enforcement are going to go and arrest you and put you in prison so I wouldn't tell them or talk to them at all [...] all they [victims] see is a uniform, and unfortunately sometimes behind that uniform is somebody that does genuinely take them away.'⁷³

In region one, it was directly cited that in past interactions with victims, they largely did not distinguish between police and immigration enforcement. It was discussed that perceptions of immigration enforcement create issues for police as they try to build a profile as a 'supportive' victim-focused agency that is there, first and foremost, to assist and protect victims.⁷⁴ Terminology indicating 'victim-centred' or 'victim-focused' was used extensively by police across all four areas studied.⁷⁵

These issues serve to further illustrate the importance of collaborative multi-agency work. Tacit factors, including the perceptions held by those that are considered vulnerable; such as migrant communities, are vital in building trust between statutory organisations and those they serve. If individuals are not making a discretion between different statutory bodies, it is the responsibility of those bodies to ensure a coordinated approach is taken to build trust with those communities and to implement a truly victim-focused strategy.

⁷¹ Comments from a sexworker support NGO representative, focus group, Region 1, 24th January 2017; Interview with a police Detective Chief Inspector, Region 4, 9th March 2018.

⁷² Comments from an NGO representative, focus group, Region 1, 24th January 2017

⁷³ Interview with a police Detective Chief Inspector, Region 4, 9th March 2018.

⁷⁴ Comments from a sexworker support NGO representative, focus group, Region 1, 24th January 2017.

⁷⁵ Region 1 Police Human Trafficking Action Plan 2015; Region 2 Modern Slavery Strategy 2017; Interview with a Police Detective Inspector, Region 3, 4th January 2017; Interview with a Police Detective Chief Inspector, Region 4, 9th March 2018.

Victim accommodation

Another aspect of the positive work being done across the partnerships studied relates to the gaps within the support provisions offered through the NRM. Currently, many victims, in areas where there are active NGOs with capacity, actually remain in accommodation much longer than they are legally entitled to under the NRM. This is due to the work of charities who, in Haughey's words, are "picking up the slack" to ensure victims are provided with additional support and accommodation outside of the NRM. More often than not, these are not government funded.⁷⁶ Unfortunately, although a positive, this also serves to further highlight deficiencies in statutory support to re-integrate and support victims. This was noted specifically in region one, where provision was being made by multiple charities to ensure the availability of additional accommodation post NRM, and in some cases prior to victims submitting an initial referral.⁷⁷ However, this is purely dependant on the availability of NGOs, and the capacity of those NGOs. In region three and four, there were few NGOs operating in this space, and thus the only provision for support and accommodation was through the Salvation Army, the NGO which holds the government contract for victim accommodation. These regions were more rural than others included in the study.

One of my problems is, who do I go to? ...because I can't go to charity X [they do not operate in the region]. So... So, who do I turn to? I don't know. Region X have got charity Y, you got the charity Z in region Y [...] In region Z you've got a number of charities you can refer to. We don't have that. [...] So, I struggle personally, if I come across a victim or a potential victim, where do I refer that person to. You know it's... it's easier if they go into the NRM, because obviously then I can look after the five-day period through the council support and then when the decision comes in the Salvation Army steps in. But if I've got a victim or a potential victim that doesn't want to engage what do I give them or where do I refer them to, and I haven't got the answer to that.⁷⁸

Though, as was cited earlier in this article, positive work is in progress to extend the post referral accommodation period in the NRM, the work being done in the meantime by NGOs should not go unrecognised. This also connects back to

⁷⁶ Haughey, "The Modern Slavery Act Review: One Year On."; Interview with a statutory organisation representative, Region 2, 19th February 2018.

⁷⁷ Haughey, 26.; Minutes of a local modern-slavery partnership meeting, Region 1, 1st February 2016; Region 1 modern slavery partnership internal yearly review 2015, 16th February 2016.

⁷⁸ Interview with a police Detective Inspector, 7th March 2018.

other issues associated with the NRM and the UK's exclusionary immigration policy. The positive work of the partnerships is helping to mitigate against gaps in the support and victim identification infrastructure; namely the lack of victim assistance and ongoing support. However, it is clear that wider reform is still needed to reduce the current reliance on the exceptional work and goodwill of non-statutory organisations and NGOs.

Conclusions / Recommendations

In this paper, a number of positives and challenges with regards to victim identification, recovery and support have been established that are, in some way, driven or at least supported by collaboration through multi-agency anti-slavery partnerships. The paper draws upon information gleaned from case studies conducted across four regions in the UK. This is supported by insights from existing and other ongoing work as well as additional information from media coverage, police and government strategy documents and other works. A number of issues have been established related to the investigation and prevention of modern slavery, and in particular, identification, referral and safeguarding. A number of benefits of multi-agency partnerships have been established and presented. In particular, awareness raising and training among frontline workers, and within the police forces themselves, have been noted as key positives. While the NRM itself continues to be scrutinised for not offering long term support for victims, NGOs have proven invaluable in some regions in providing extended victim support services, including accommodation, above and beyond the requirements of the NRM.

These impacts are by no means exhaustive. Subsequent work is required to supplement that being conducted in collaboration with the Independent Anti-slavery Commissioner and Home Office modern slavery police transformation programme. Work should continue to refine guidance provided by existing toolkits advising on effective partnership working practices, building the evidence-base and taking lessons-learned from partnerships operating across the country.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ In 2018 the University of Nottingham, in collaboration with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, launched an online resource providing guidance for anti-slavery partnerships; University of Nottingham, "Anti-Slavery Partnerships Toolkit," 2018, <https://iasctoolkit.nottingham.ac.uk>

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