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Saving lives. Breaking  
the grip of slavery.



**Victim Navigator  
Interim Evaluation**



July 2021

# ThirdSector Awards

## Winner - Breakthrough of the Year Award, 2020

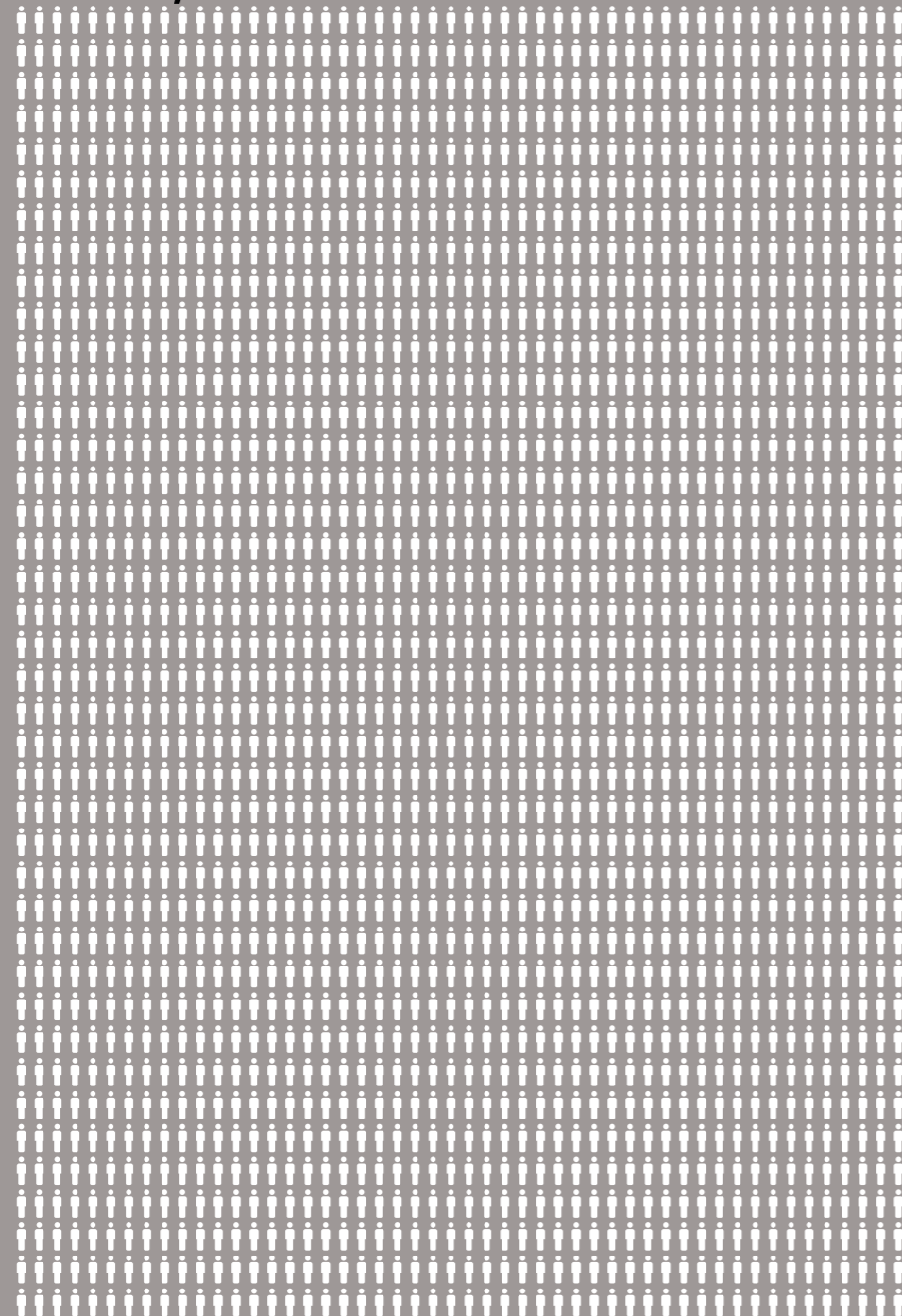
Victim Navigator Project - transforming the identification and care of modern slavery victims in the UK

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## The problem:

**100,000+** Extent of modern slavery in UK - estimated over 100,000



**10,613** NRM referrals 2020



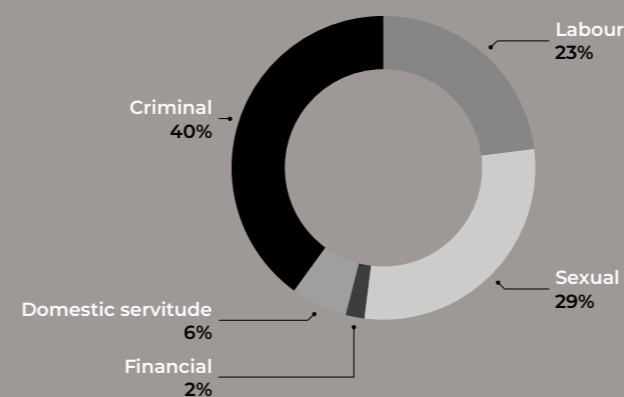
## VN caseload to June 2021:

**8 Victim Navigators**



**392** Strategic advice provided to 392 modern slavery investigations

### Exploitation types



**4,505** potential modern slavery cases analysed

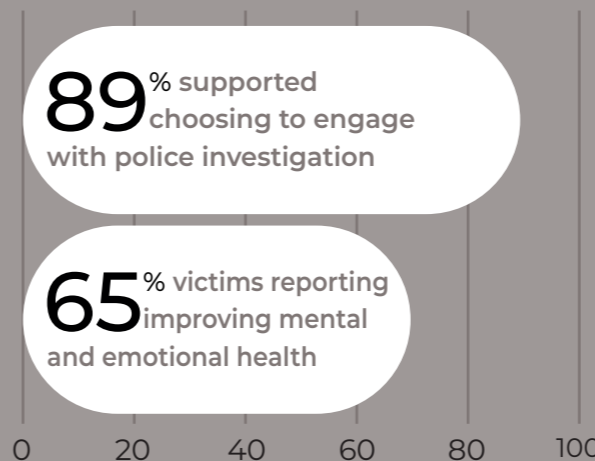
**202** victims cared for with full support plan

**34** Nationalities - 34% British

**32** Mean age of victim (Modal group is 18-25)

## Impact of the pilot to date:

### Victims



**79** victims rescued with VN support

**120** suspected exploiters arrested in cases supported by VNs

**24** prosecution cases supported

**2** convictions

**2,456** front-line professionals trained

# 1. Background and Context

Justice and Care is a British nongovernmental organisation (NGO). It has worked in South Asia for nearly a decade, helping the State and law enforcement agencies rescue women and children from slavery, trafficking and other forms of exploitation. Justice and Care works to prevent human trafficking in the most at-risk communities, to protect victims and help them recover, and, where appropriate, support the State's efforts to bring criminals and their wider networks to justice.

Human trafficking involves children, women and men being recruited, harboured or brought into a situation of exploitation through the use of violence, deception or coercion. They are then exploited and abused as a commodity leaving the victims of these crimes without a voice, very little support and with difficulties navigating what is a complex statutory and voluntary system of welfare and criminal justice. This complex system presented an opportunity for Justice and Care to identify a possible solution.

After extensive discussions with the National Modern Slavery Police Transformation Unit, police forces and leading national stakeholders, Justice and Care designed a pilot project in 2018 involving "Victim Navigators" (VN's). It entailed embedding specialist independent workers into senior policing teams to provide expert input to modern slavery investigations and to directly support victims of modern slavery from the moment of identification.

The Victim Navigator programme was therefore devised to fill a specific and important gap in existing service provision by forming a trusted bridge between the police and

victims of modern slavery; and by flexibly and independently brokering support from external specialist services according to individual victims' needs. The Victim Navigator role was to be embedded within law enforcement, with full access to the details of modern slavery cases, but with independence from the police to enable trust to be built with the victim. This was a unique feature of the role as most support services sit outside the police. The VN would be available to engage victims from the moment of identification by police, providing trauma-informed and specialist support during the crucial post-rescue period and then providing seamless ongoing coordination between the victim and the officers investigating their case. Meanwhile, Victim Navigators would help victims understand their rights and entitlements and co-create with victims an individualised support plan, according to their needs, priorities and aspirations. VNs would act as an advocate and where necessary chaperone, helping victims to 'navigate' the complex landscape of services and entitlements and their journey through the criminal justice process.

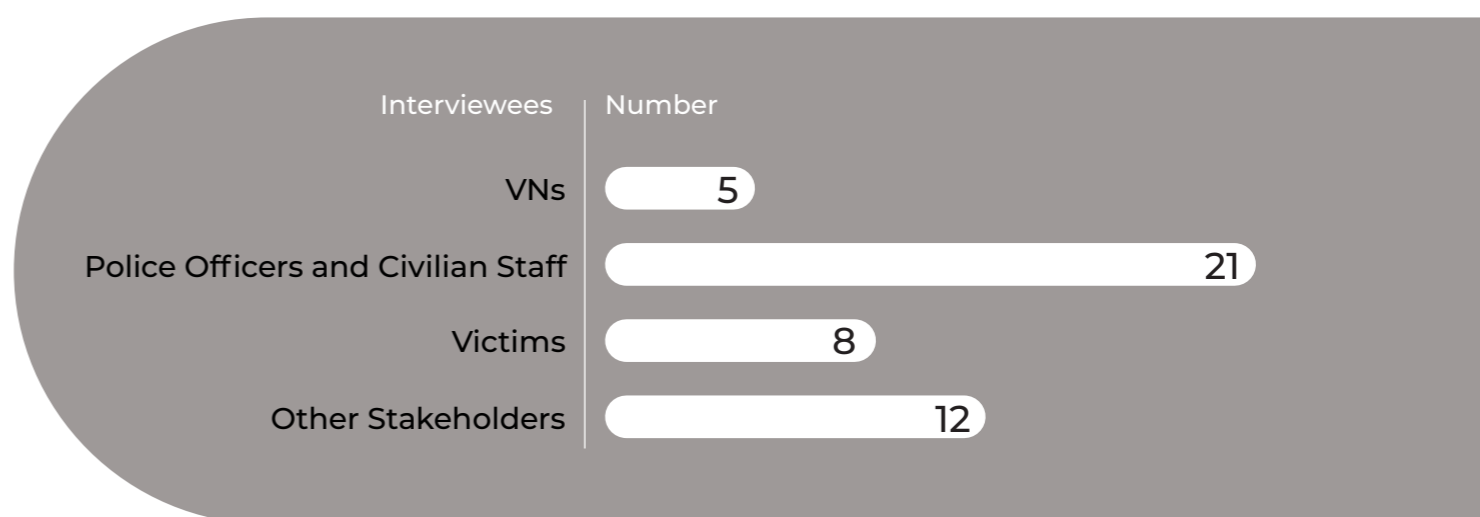
The pilot was initially a partnership between Justice and Care and two police forces, Kent and Surrey. As of June 2021, it is now present in 5 police forces; with 8 Victim Navigators, including a specialist for young people (in recognition of the high numbers coming through of young victims), and one central European coordinator employed.

## 1.1 Evaluation

In order to ascertain the effectiveness of the Victim Navigator role, and the extent to which the original aims were being met, Justice and Care commissioned an evaluation to run concurrently with the pilot. There were two distinct yet complementary strands of this evaluation, one focusing on victim impact and one focusing on police and justice outcomes (including victim engagement with police).

Dr Ruth Van Dyke, from the Bakhita Centre for Research on Slavery, Abuse and Exploitation at St Mary's and Dr Sarah Senker from ATD Research and Consultancy were commissioned to undertake the evaluation. The research adopted a mixed method approach that included: a content analysis of police logs,

questionnaires to be completed by police officers, interviews with police officers, Victim Navigators, victims of modern slavery and with other stakeholders. Data collected in relation to key performance indicators was also collated via a case management system (CMS). As the programme and evaluation unfolded additional sources of research evidence emerged. These included feedback in Monthly Operational Meetings attended by the evaluators, telephone conversations with VNs about the cases referred to in their monthly reports and email correspondence with the VNs or other Justice and Care stakeholders. The table below indicates the interviews conducted at the time of the interim report.



## 1.2 Role of Victim Navigators

The core functions of the Victim Navigators were set out in the initial Pilot documentation but based on interviews with VNs, police officers, victims and other stakeholders, it is evident that their role has also developed to reflect local contexts and in response to changing conditions like the coronavirus pandemic. Based on the evidence collected the role of the VNs can be summarised in terms of the activities they undertake which include:

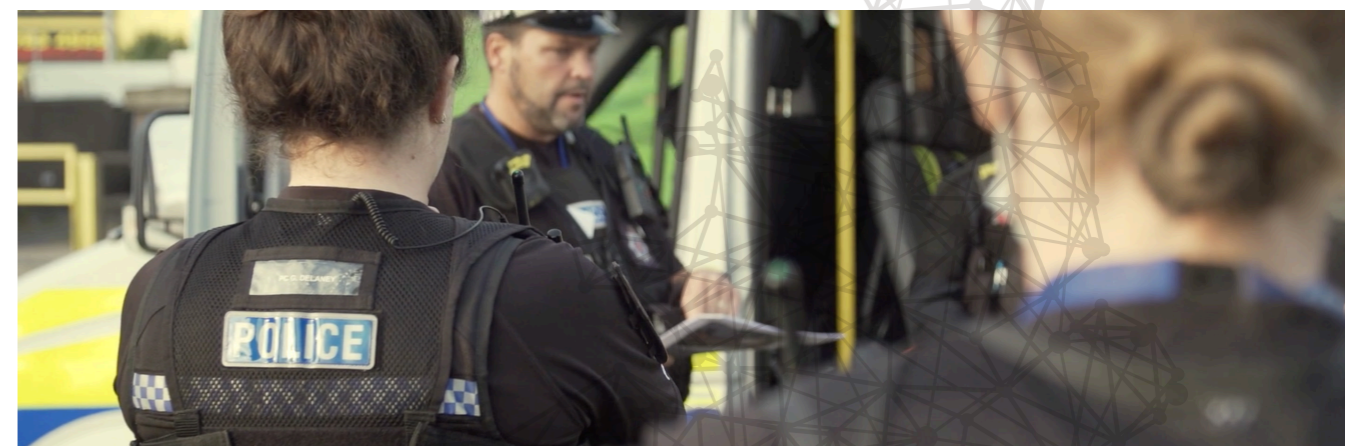
- Identifying modern slavery cases that the VN will pursue.
- Providing strategic advice to Officers in Case (OIC) in order to support potential victims and to aid a criminal investigation.
- Developing a support plan in conjunction with the victim that reflects their needs, on an on-going basis.
- Reviewing modern slavery cases and raising concerns about how investigations have been pursued or closed too soon.
- Providing or helping to organise victim support during police operations on modern slavery cases, e.g. reception centres, provision of toiletries.
- Participating in police operations as a non-police presence in order to engage with and support any potential victims identified.
- Offering advice to potential victims on options to help with safeguarding and recovery.
- Engaging with victims on a long term basis to ensure their needs are met and to act as a bridge with the police and other support agencies.
- Providing training or professional development to police officers.
- Engaging with victims based on National Referral Mechanism forms disseminated to the police force by the Competent Authority that received them.
- Developing resources to help police officers understand and identify modern slavery and its different forms, the context for particular operations, how to engage with different groups of potential victims.
- Identifying gaps in safeguarding and support and seeking solutions.
- Accessing funds and connections to aid a criminal investigation or to support victims.
- Networking with stakeholders who can support victims, brokering support with other agencies

## 1.3 Location of Victim Navigators

In designing the Victim Navigator Pilot, Justice and Care determined that the VNs would sit within the Serious and Organised Crime Directorate or the Public Protection Unit of the participating police forces. The first three VN's demonstrate the different ways police forces are approaching modern slavery, with VN's located in Serious and Organised Crime in Kent and Essex and in Public Protection in Surrey. The fourth VN joined the Modern Slavery Unit in Project Challenger, which was the partnership approach adopted by Greater Manchester Police to tackle serious and organised crime in all its forms. A second difference was that VNs in Kent and Essex joined recently created specialist Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT) Units that expanded over the life of the Project, while the VN in Greater Manchester joined a well-established Modern Slavery Unit. The Surrey VN, on the other hand, sat with Public Protection Officers and worked with a part-time DC who was the force's tactical advisor for modern slavery and human trafficking. Her role was, and until recently, the only role within Surrey Police dedicated to the crime of modern slavery and human trafficking. With the expansion of the Victim Navigator programme, Victim Navigators joining the Metropolitan Police Service, West Yorkshire

and Police Scotland have all been imbedded in specialist units dealing with modern slavery and exploitation.

Seven Victim Navigators are currently in post in five different police forces. The eighth Victim Navigator is embedded in both Border Force Scotland and Police Scotland. A European Operational Coordinator has oversight responsibilities for these eight VNs. There are considerable differences in the length of time that VNs have been in post. The VN in Surrey has been in continuous post since July 2018, while Kent experienced disruption. Its third VN was appointed in late September 2019 but the post was disbanded in December 2020. Essex has had a VN in post since June 2019, although with a change in staffing in January 2021. Essex has also expanded its offer with the appointment of a new Victim Navigator to work with children in September 2020. The VN for Greater Manchester Police (GMP) was appointed in December 2019. VNs joined the MPS in December 2020 and January 2021, while the VN for West Yorkshire was embedded in March 2021. The VN for Border Force has been in post since December 2019 and has been included in Police Scotland as of July 2021.



## 1.4 Victim Navigator Engagement with Victims via their Police Force

### Navigators support police in the following ways:

**Classified Cases:** Victim Navigators work with their local police forces and review cases recorded on police record systems as having potential modern slavery elements. During the triage process VNs select cases that meet their selection criteria. For example 1,244 potential modern slavery cases were reviewed and 'classified' as inappropriate for Victim Navigator engagement between January 2019 and July 2020. Of the cases classified, 539 (43%) were not progressed because the victim was a minor, and therefore should be supported by the local authority. 14.5% were deemed not modern slavery and in 5% of cases the victim would not engage. In 24% cases the reason was recorded as 'other' and was therefore unclear - however amendments to CMS have since resolved this issue. What is evident is that Navigators engage in cases where they feel they can add value to a criminal investigation through strategic advice or in support of a victim.

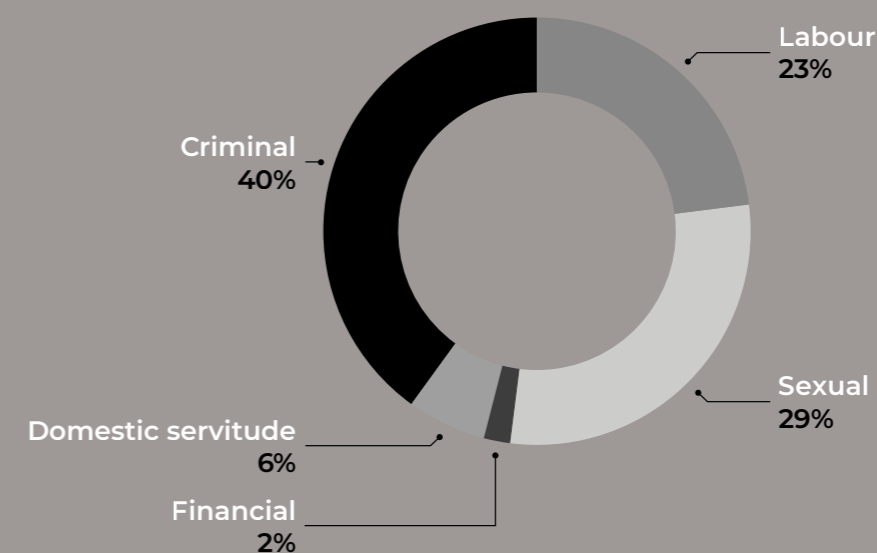
**Strategic Advice:** Having selected a case as relevant, Victim Navigators offer Strategic Advice to the officer working on the case. This might entail the Victim Navigator encouraging the officer to build the evidence base in order to identify someone as a victim of modern slavery or helping the police plan an operation that put the victim's needs at the centre and ensured the National Referral Mechanism process was followed so there was more efficient access to support.

Strategic advice has been provided to 392 modern slavery investigations to date, open for an average of 64 days with case duration ranging from 0-317 days. The lengthy time span of some Strategic Advice cases arises from the

nature of criminal investigations which may take months to gather evidence to identify victims or to engage in planned operations. On average 45 ongoing Strategic Advice cases were open each month across the programme over the last 12 months.

For many strategic advice cases, victims had not yet been individually identified. However, for those where data was available, 49.5% were male and 49.5% female and 1% non-binary. Country of origin data demonstrates that the largest group came from the UK, who were 36% of all victims, followed by 15% from Romania, 12% from Albania, 7% from China, and small numbers from 17 other countries. Data collected also highlights the forms of exploitation victims experienced which is illustrated opposite.

### Strategic Advice primary type of exploitation



It was apparent from interviews with police officers, that they valued the expertise of the Victim Navigators, and the Strategic Advice they offered. It helped them be more effective in their criminal investigations. A number of different outcomes were identified during the course of the evaluation arising from Strategic Advice and they are set out in the diagram below:

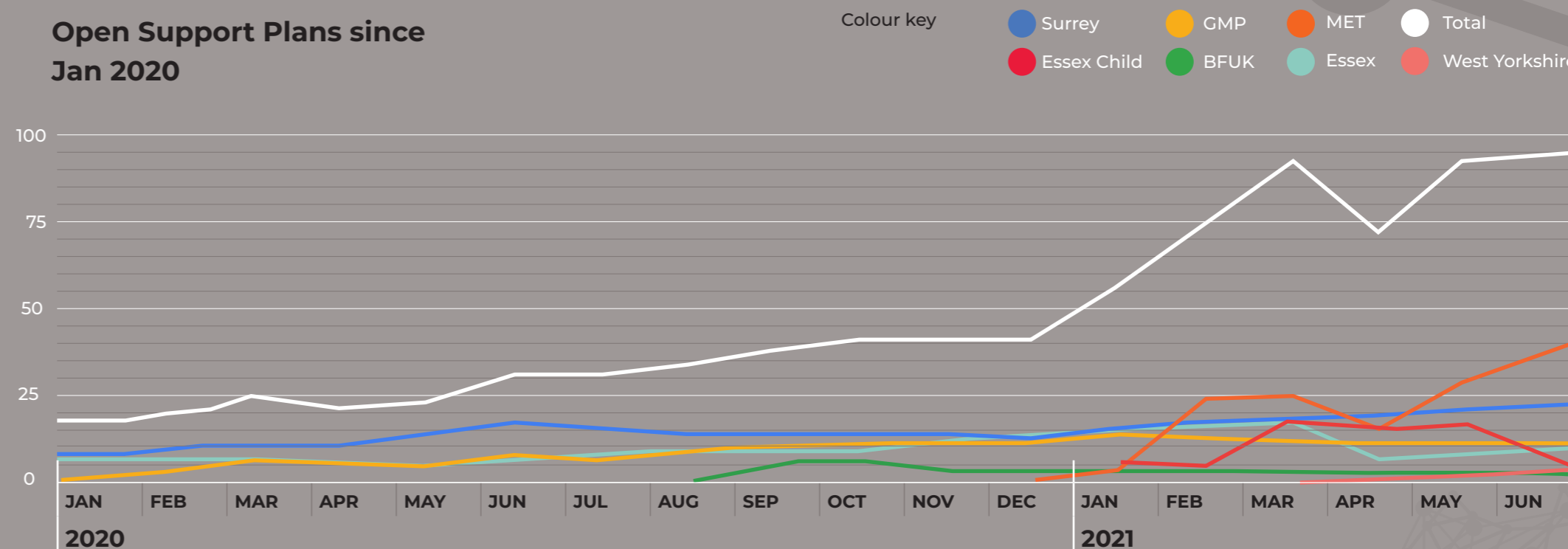


**Support Plans:** Victims who consent to engage with the Victim Navigator and have discussed their specific support needs with them are identified as Support Plan cases. Victim Navigators work intensively with survivors on support plans to help them understand their rights and choices, broker access to services relevant to their needs and aspirations, keep them informed about the progress of the police investigation and assist them in engaging with police. In each force a caseload took time to become established. Over the last 12 months an average of 59 Support Plan cases were open each month across the programme. The longer-established Navigators (Surrey, Essex and GMP) averaged around 13 support plans open per Navigator per month, while the newer Met Navigators averaged 10 per Navigator and the very new role in West Yorkshire 1.5. Total numbers of support plan cases open and new support plans opened are illustrated below.

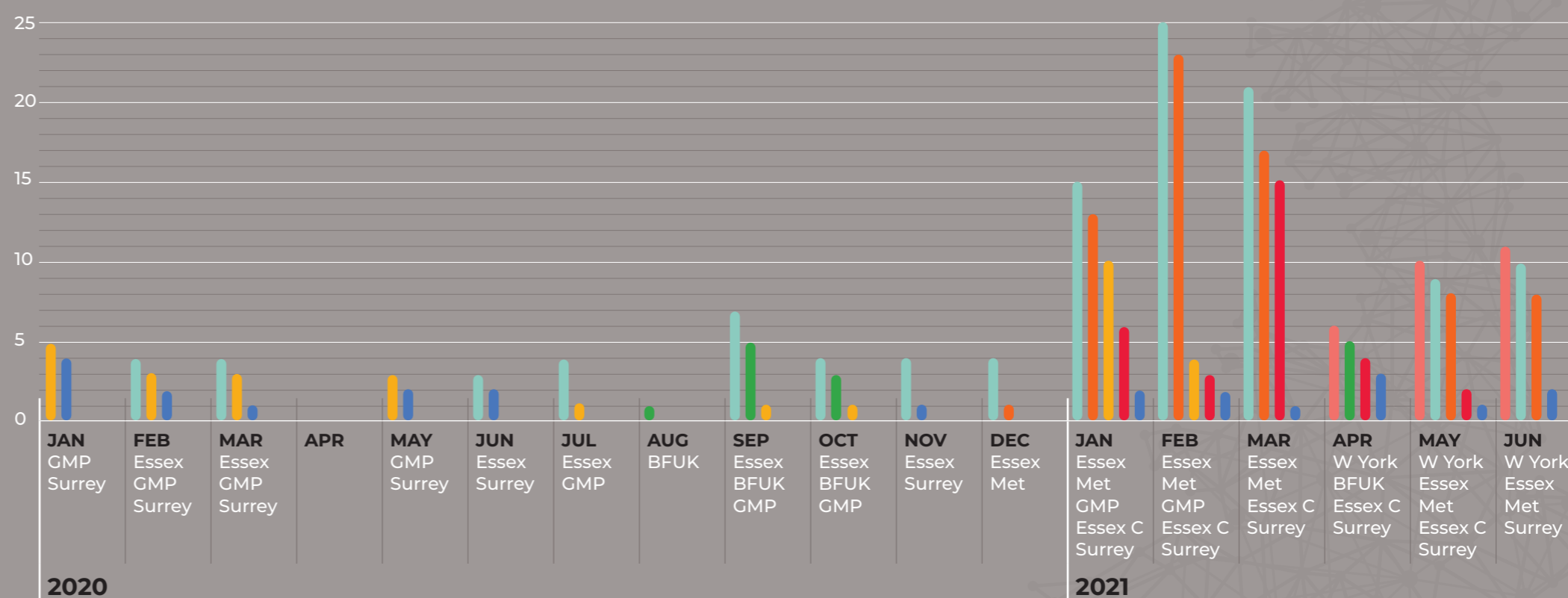
A clear dip in the number of new victims entering support plans occurred in April 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic, as in the early stages of lockdown police had to take on other responsibilities. The lockdown also impacted flights into airports in Scotland, reducing case intake for the Navigator in Border Force, who in response scaled back to part-time work for some of the pandemic. Case numbers have since recovered for all but the Border Force Scotland Navigator, with Brexit and the pandemic causing a sustained reduction in incoming flights. She is now widening her remit to support Police Scotland modern slavery cases going forward.

202 victims had been provided with full support plans by the end of June 2021. Support Plan cases to date (including those not yet closed) were open for an average of 113 days with the duration open ranging from 0-455 days.

### Open Support Plans since Jan 2020



### New Support Plans opened since Jan 2020

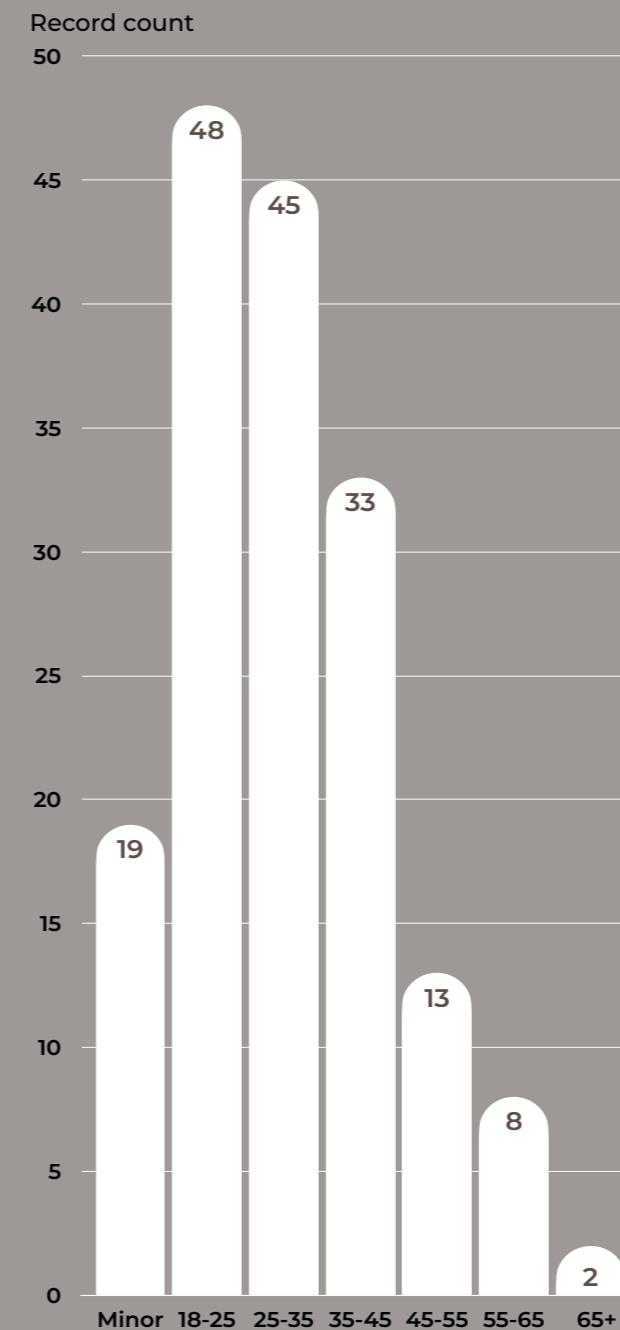


Data collected by the Victim Navigator in relation to victims' engagement with the police and the criminal justice process during their recovery journey, shows evidence that Victim Navigators have an impact. They help ensure victims are safeguarded and are willing to provide valuable information to the police.

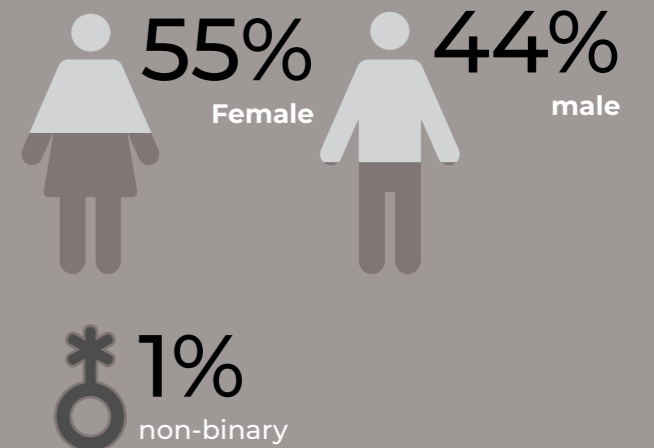
**The demographics of the Support Plan cases are set out below:**

**Age:** Most victims with support plans were 18-25, followed by 25-35, 35-45 and then under 18 (age of victim was known in 83% cases).

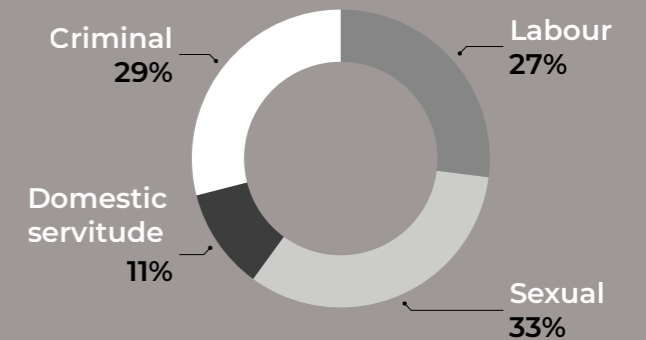
**Age of victims SP cases**



**Gender:**



**Type of exploitation:** VNs supported cases spanning a wide range of exploitation types as illustrated below.





## 2. Findings

For the purposes of this report, we visit each of the original objectives set out at the inception of the Victim Navigator role, drawing on a range of evidence which indicates whether they have been achieved.

### Objective 1: Help victims to navigate and secure more effective victim support post-identification, including access to statutory help, support and provision through effective advocacy

Victims, Victim Navigators, police and non police stakeholders discussed the range of needs victims presented with on rescue. This ranged from physical and mental health needs, practical needs for accommodation, food and finance, as well as legal aid. Victims presented as fearful of police and perpetrators, and had concerns for their own safety as well as the well-being of their family. Interviewees were able to reflect on the fact that no issue was too big or too small to warrant support from the Victim Navigators. Victim Navigators were reported to work tirelessly to solve problems and find solutions, brokering relationships with other agencies. Victim Navigators have smaller case loads than other support agencies, understand the complexities of modern slavery and can stay with a case for the duration of an investigation, including when someone is moved out of area.

*'She never got tired. She never give up. Incredibly she never stopped and she came back to me and said it has been 6 weeks I have been working in the silence to find you somebody.'* (Victim, Surrey)

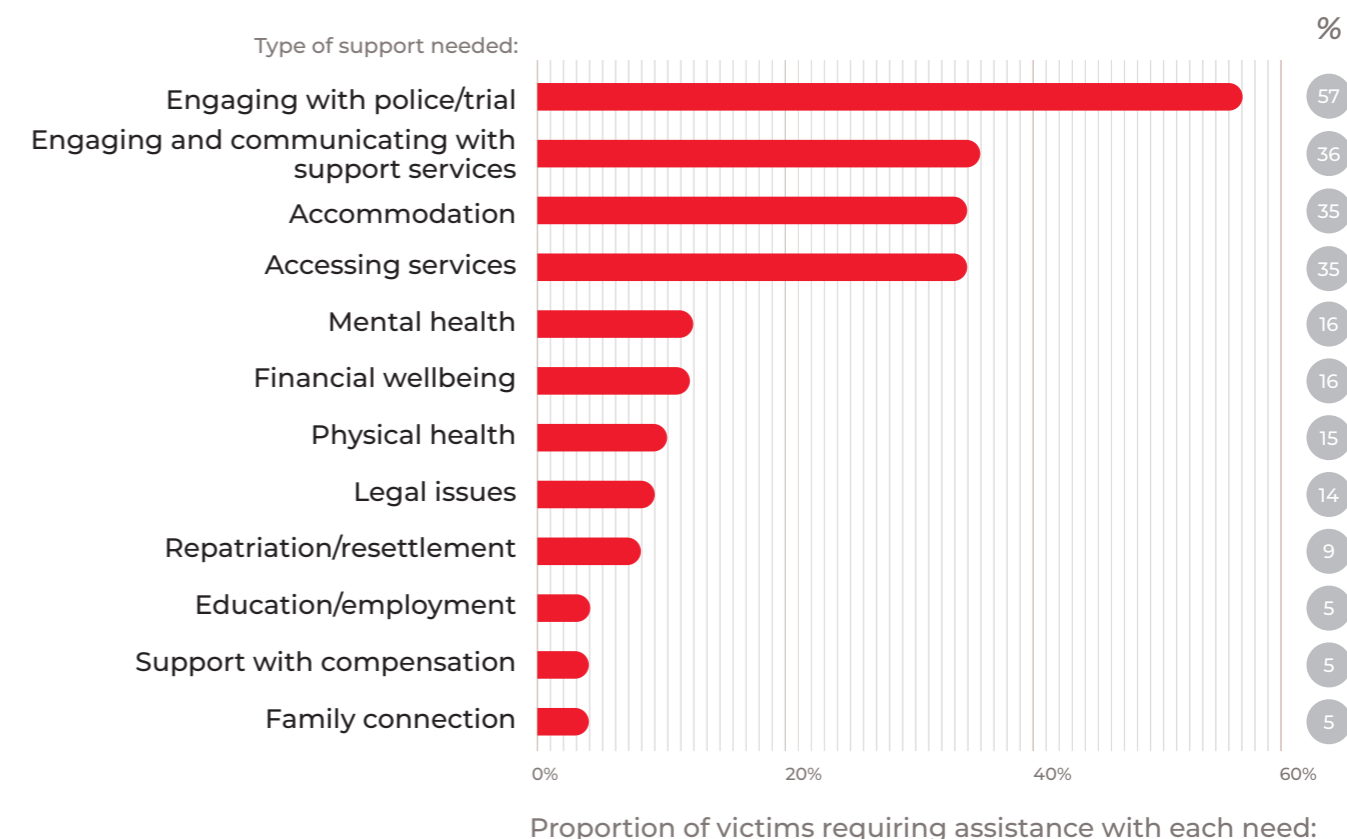
Interviewees also commented that Victim Navigators were able to act fluidly and autonomously, getting access to certain types

of support, quicker than other agencies. This was particularly pronounced with regards to accessing mental health support and therapy (sometimes in the native language of the victim) but also in accommodation applications.

*'I put in four applications for accommodation and subsistence and the only one that got dealt with was the one where two of us were working together, the person, the victim, they've had a bit more like, they felt better as well that oh, I've not just got one person. I've got two people and and having that consistent person was really, really important'* (Stakeholder)

At the start of their journey with the Victim Navigator, victims had, on average, 4.8 identified immediate support needs each. The most common support needs were: support with engaging with police/trial (57%), support with engaging and communicating with support services (36%), support with accommodation (35%), accessing services (35%), support with mental health (16%), support with financial wellbeing (16%), support with physical health (15%), support with legal issues (14%), support with repatriation/resettlement (9%), support with education/employment (5%), support with

### Proportion victims requiring assistance with each type of support need



compensation (5%) and support with family connection (5%). This highlights the complexity and gravity of needs on engagement with the Victim Navigator.

According to CMS data, 79 of 106 (75%) of closed support plan cases had 'safety and support plans' (specific services brokered by the VN to address victims' needs - such as securing safe accommodation, immigration advice, medical treatment or counselling) that have been completed. These safety and support plans are agreed with the victim and are specific to their current needs, vulnerabilities and aspirations. A safety and support plan marked as complete denotes that the need has been or is being met

through the services obtained for the victim.

Timely access to mental health support was extremely significant, given the level of trauma victims had experienced.

Importantly, both stakeholders and victims reported that Victim Navigators worked seamlessly with other agencies, coordinating efforts and avoiding duplication.

*'We're making sure that what she is doing, I'm not doing the same thing or the things that I've done like she is doing, like she is aware the tasks that I'm doing so she's not doing the same and vice versa'* (Stakeholder)

As a result, stakeholders and victims themselves reported positive changes in their well-being.

*'The VN travelled up to Sheffield, it was amazing to see her in person. I think it helped the client as well to know who I was speaking to on her behalf really. She's definitely gaining confidence. When I first spoke to her she would do nothing but cry and she just didn't really give much off but once meeting [VN] and knowing that there are people that want to help her, she's opened up like a flower. It's amazing to see'* (Stakeholder)

Victims are assisted by Navigators to access services relevant to their support needs, with the aim of helping survivors to have their basic needs met, begin to recover from their experiences and begin to make progress towards their goals.

In order to assess victim's recovery and reintegration, Justice and Care developed a 'victim assessment tool' that uses a series of questions and observations to explore a survivor's wellbeing across 6 key domains of recovery: their mental and emotional health; physical health; financial stability; social connection; safety; and legal status.

The victim's needs assessment is in two parts - one which asks for survivors' self-reported feelings and opinions and one which asks their Navigator about their professional observations of the survivor. This is to allow the victim's voice to play a central role in the assessment of their recovery, and the triangulation of this information with the Navigator's own observations. The answers are translated into clearly defined scaled scores to allow direct comparisons over time. Justice and Care found that the majority of survivors made progress over time across the 6 domains of recovery. The strongest progress was seen in mental/emotional health and physical health - with 65% of survivors experiencing

improved mental/emotional health over time and 69% experiencing improved physical health. Similarly, 65% of survivors experienced improved safety (which includes physical safety, sense of safety and ability to identify and minimise risk). The slowest progress was in legal status (which includes satisfaction with immigration status, understanding of rights, access to legal services etc) with just 51% survivors experiencing improvements.

Victims' journeys towards recovery are long and frequently interrupted by crises and challenges - however survivors supported by Victim Navigators are reporting progress and improved wellbeing across key indicators of recovery. This recovery is the result of survivors accessing relevant support services brokered by their Navigators.

Victim Navigators were also instrumental in improving many police officers' understanding of modern slavery, the NRM, and its processes and in encouraging officers to provide the best evidence available as first responders, which includes updating the referral as a criminal investigation progresses. By improving police practice and better identifying victims, this can have a significant impact on decisions made by the Single Competent Authority in terms of victims receiving a positive or negative conclusive grounds decision and therefore accessing support.

## Objective 2: : Establish greater trust between victims, the police and the wider criminal justice process

Victims, police and non-police stakeholders all independently commented on the level of distrust victims have of authority and police. This, in part, was due to perpetrators reinforcing this narrative, but also due to previous experiences with police in home countries. Because of Victim Navigators' relationship and partner arrangements with police, they were able to broker better relationships between police and victims, allaying concerns and often being a friendly face at the point of rescue. Victims described the navigator as someone they could trust at a time of feeling overwhelmed and fearful.

*'She first person because every time many years I was disappointed. It's hard to trust someone. She first person in UK what, you know, what I need, what I think I can trust and I know she's very nice'* (Victim, Surrey)

*'So they need that trust, and to get that you need that time and we just don't have that time. And we will never be able to have the time that's required for them to trust us. So to have someone doing that, who is building that up and who is completely impartial, is I think just brilliant.'* (Police, Surrey4)

Non-police stakeholders reflected on victims' willingness to engage and work with the police as a result of navigator involvement, particularly by consenting to be referred to the NRM or by providing intelligence to the police mostly in the form of an ABE interview. Some remarked that this had not been able to be achieved before (in the absence of Victim Navigator input).

*'...they seem more willing and receptive to the idea of it than anyone else that I've helped. So everybody else that I've helped since I started has pretty much said no straight away, even though I've sort of come back to them about it a couple of times to give them a chance to think about it, offered them the same support, you know, in terms of being there with them. Explained why it might be a good idea. But they've just not been interested at all'* (Stakeholder)

*The Victim Navigator therefore acts as a significant bridge between the victim and the police, which is particularly important given how long criminal investigations last. The Victim Navigator thus acts as 'the glue between support and the investigation'.*



### Objective 3: Foster greater engagement from victims in information sharing, police investigations and, if relevant, prosecutions – strengthening efforts to bring exploiters to justice

There is evidence that victims who have been supported by the Victim Navigator programme, and have built trusting relationships with them, also engage with the police. As a result of Victim Navigators, victims have been seen to be more willing to assist police investigations and prosecutions - with the hope that as a result of the victims' evidence and testimony, more exploiters can be brought to justice.

*'I think the reason we now have his engagement is primarily because of the support [the VN] has given him....we now have an ABE video interview planned at the end of this month. So we have gone from someone who did not necessarily identify themselves as a victim. To someone who now sees he is a victim. He has been reunited with his son... which I think has helped; his son reported him missing six years ago. I think [the VN] has largely been instrumental in making that happen. So hopefully if we can get the evidence from him, we will give [the VN] a lot of credit for that, because he seems to have struck up a good relationship, a professional relationship with her, and he trusts her and you can see that he feels confident in what he has been told' (Police officer)*

To assess the extent to which they are achieving this aim, the Victim Navigators recorded not only whether victims were engaging with police, but also the extent to which they engaged. Together with the evaluators, Justice and Care developed a typology of police engagement and translated these into a scale of 6 levels of victim interaction with police. These levels were still a significant sign of progress and success.

1. no engagement
2. willing to take phone calls with police but not give information on record
3. providing intelligence or information on record
4. making a witness statement
5. providing an 'Achieving Best Evidence' (ABE) interview
6. willing to support a prosecution

It is striking that 89% of the 176 victims supported by Victim Navigators have engaged with police to some extent (level 2 or above)\* - this compares to just 33% of victims nationally engaging in any way with a police investigation (MSPTU data 2020).

Not only did 89% of victims supported by Navigators engage with police, but the majority of these did so at the higher engagement levels: 9% were only willing to take calls with police but not give information on record, 11% were willing to provide intelligence on record only, and 8% made a witness statement only. Yet 22% of victims agreed to participate in an ABE interview and 35% were willing to support a prosecution which includes an ABE interview. Further, engagement levels change over time. 32% of victims changed their engagement level. This data collected by Justice and Care has been tested, and results show that it is a statistically significant increase - for example victims who began as willing only to provide intelligence often eventually progressed to giving an ABE with the support and reassurance of their Navigator. The evidence points to a strong link between Victim Navigators supporting a victim and victims being willing to engage with criminal justice processes, including taking their exploiters to court.

This data is visualised in the bar chart below:

#### Survivor engagement levels with police



\*This excludes the county lines cases supported by the Child VN, due to the different typology of those cases, and 4 cases where police engagement level was not recorded.

As modern slavery criminal investigations are complex, they tend to be protracted. Victim Navigators can play a crucial role in keeping victims engaged, but can also soften the blow if victims' expectations of the justice process are not met, for example if suspects are not identified and charged or a case does not proceed. The Navigator's support may ensure that victims maintain some trust in the police if they find themselves in another situation of exploitation.

Willingness to engage was in part because victims were willing to work with Victim Navigators, but police were also reporting to be better equipped

to engage with victims. This is through training opportunities<sup>1</sup>, Victim Navigators being on site at the point of rescue and being present in police forces and providing strategic advice. Police are being educated to not just catch perpetrators, but operate in a victim-centred way. The majority of victims on support plans were willing to engage in the investigation, and more than half had participated in an Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interview or were supporting a prosecution.

Victims and stakeholders commented on the invaluable nature of having someone to speak to to get updates on the police investigation,

<sup>1</sup>To date 1,310 police officers have been trained and 1,146 other stakeholders

to answer questions and concerns. Victim Navigators made sure engagement was not just initiated but also maintained and interviewees reflected that in the absence of Victim Navigators they felt ill informed and disconnected from the case. This link to police differentiated navigators from other support services in the sector.

*'One Police officer would change department or something and a new person comes and then there is that like we get dropped out, because we wouldn't know that there has been a department change so – and they would not liaise with us, so it helps because if there is that one dedicated person making sure that whatever is changing, actually that one person, there is one person who is not changing obviously they keep things together for this victim'* (Stakeholder)

Victim interaction with police and willingness to support a prosecution are important outcomes of the Victim Navigator programme. This engagement has had other significant investigative consequences. Victim intelligence on 128 cases open in the last year resulted in:

- 98 further victims identified
- 152 suspects identified
- 55 locations of interest identified
- 35 locations checked
- 20 new lines of enquiry or case kept open
- 104 arrests
- 27 charges

A regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between levels of engagement with police and investigative outcomes. This showed that where a survivor was willing to support a prosecution, their engagement with police was strongly and systematically correlated with more victims being identified, more suspects being identified, more locations

being checked and more arrests. Providing an ABE is also significantly correlated with more locations being identified and checked, and marginally correlated with more arrests. By contrast the lowest levels of engagement were not strongly correlated with increased investigative outcomes - with providing intelligence or information only not associated with increased investigative outcomes in any statistically significant way. This helps to illustrate the importance of higher levels of victim engagement in driving outcomes in police modern slavery investigations.

Prosecution data will take time to collate because of the length of criminal investigations. Yet there is some evidence of success in achieving this objective. It is important to note that across interviews, participants raised the fact that 'success' is not just about prosecutions. Rather, as noted earlier, having someone who cares for and supports the victims, removes them from a place of harm to a place of safety and helps them experience a greater sense of well-being is still a significant sign of progress and success.

#### Objective 4: Free up police time and resource to focus on criminal investigations and wider organised crime groups, by managing day-to-day police contact with victims

Evidence from police officers in all four force areas indicates that this was a distinguishing feature of the Pilot. Detectives' large workloads means they cannot provide the level of contact with victims that they want or require. Victim Navigators took on responsibilities related to victim support, ensuring victims' needs were met, and had regular contact with victims in relation to their recovery and to keep them engaged with or updated about the criminal investigation. This meant that police officers were able to focus on the criminal investigation and make best use of their expertise and skill set, whilst knowing the victim was supported.

*'We are dealing with really vulnerable victims here ...I have dealt with vulnerable victims and that distracts you so much, and rightly so, but having [VN's] assistance affords us more time on the investigation side and [the VN] gives them an absolutely sterling service. It is amazing. And she does a better job than we could do or are able to do. She has time so having a dedicated VN frees us up to do suspect [related] things and other enquiries. It really does.'* (Police, Essex8)

In some cases maintaining contact with a victim required VNs to chase NGOs providing the support to the victim, as well as the individual case worker who can change over the life of an investigation. These can be time-consuming activities and if left to police, contact with victims may be lost. This would mean the officer would lose the person who has information that could aid an investigation.

*'The main thing that [the VN] has helped with is the victim side because that is extremely time consuming in our role, in any investigation, but what I am finding with human trafficking and modern slavery they require more time and attention than we can probably give them. ... I don't have time to keep chasing and building up that relationship with their case worker or key worker but [the VN] was able to keep up that correspondence, chase it, and find out her care worker had changed. And to be honest... given other jobs and time constraints that's something I wouldn't have been able to do. So the fact that [the VN] was able to keep [up] that communication massively helped. And she changed her mind [about doing an interview] and unfortunately changed it again, but, for example, we wouldn't have gotten that far without [the VN].'* (Police, Surrey4)

Moreover, police officers welcomed the role Victim Navigators played in explaining to victims the support options available to them (rather than officers), including the NRM, which allowed victims to make a more informed choice, thereby improving the victim's experience. Police often did not have the time nor understanding of the NRM to do it justice. This was another responsibility Victim Navigators could take on for police.

### Objective 5: Build relationships, broker support and maintain contact for victims in source countries, as required

An important aspect of the Navigator role is networking to aid victim support but also to enhance criminal investigations. Many of the victims identified in the UK are foreign nationals, and some cases benefit from cross border partnerships. A case of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Surrey started off with the Victim Navigator supporting one victim and the police force arresting one suspect. However, over time, as the victim developed trust, she was willing to provide additional intelligence on record and to support a prosecution if the police investigation encompassed the transnational organised crime group (OCG). Her evidence led to the identification of another victim who with support provided further intelligence about the OCG. This case was escalated to the National Crime Agency and the Victim Navigator continued to support the investigation through contact with the Polish Embassy and Polish police. As the Polish police were also investigating this OCG, both forces worked through Europol and Eurojust to create a Joint Investigative Team. To date, 5 suspects have been arrested in the UK and 1 in Poland, with another 3 to be arrested in the UK. Modern slavery charges will be brought against some members of the OCG with evidence that there may be up to 120 potential victims. The victim has been clear that without the consistent support of the Victim Navigator she would not have engaged with police, and this international partnership which includes the Navigator would not exist, nor would the criminal justice outcomes have been achieved.

Justice and Care's international scope is also playing an important role in aiding criminal investigations. The Victim Navigator has been able to liaise with Justice and Care staff in

Bangladesh to verify that one member of a family network was exploiting other family members in the UK. In addition the Bangladeshi staff were able to assure the UK based victim that their family was safe and that Justice and Care would continue to provide safeguarding. These cross border connections have enabled the police to continue their investigation with the support of the victim, and to obtain additional evidence from Bangladesh should they need it. Justice and Care in Bangladesh has also helped rescue a young woman from forced marriage, as Surrey police sought the assistance of the Victim Navigator in relation to this case. Through the Navigator's contact with the Bangladeshi branch of Justice and Care, and then contact with the Home Office Forced Marriage Unit and Surrey police, the young woman was rescued and returned to the UK.

One of the key developments within the Victim Navigator programme has been helping victims return home safely and devising appropriate procedures to aid this work across police force areas. Navigators have also been building a portfolio of international partners to facilitate safe returns and continued provision of support, thereby decreasing the opportunities for victims to be re-trafficked. The creation of a Victim Navigator project in Romania is facilitating the return of Romanian victims. Despite the coronavirus pandemic, Navigators have helped repatriate victims who wanted to return home to Mexico, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Ghana and the Czech Republic in the last year. Police officers do not have the time, resources or knowledge to help victims return home quickly and safely. This was particularly the case during the coronavirus pandemic. The police suggest

there is a link between the Navigator's ability to meet victims' needs and their willingness to continue to engage with police and support a prosecution even when they return home.

Justice and Care's upcoming report Safe Returns - Fast Track Voluntary and Assisted Returns aims to share learning on how Victim Navigators and the NGO have facilitated the safe and supported return of victims of MSHT. Based on its pilot, Justice and Care sets out what actions need to be taken if the practice of safe returns was to be adopted more widely. It also provides early evidence of the link between safe and supported

returns and engagement with a UK criminal investigation. The pilot was an additional temporary support function added to the Victim Navigator role. Justice and Care found through a trial of 20 safe returns that 80 per cent of the victims supported through the pilot remain engaged with the criminal justice process and are supporting a prosecution in the UK from their home country. To date the individuals who have been repatriated have provided evidence to facilitate the arrest of 18 offenders and are supporting seven live investigations.

## Objective 6: Learn lessons for UK Government and national police/ NGO strategies, as well as prove a model that could be promoted and spread

To date, the evaluation has demonstrated the effectiveness of the Victim Navigator model. Interest from other forces since its inception has also shown it can be rolled out on a national basis and can benefit a range of parties; victims, police and non-police stakeholders. For example, one senior police officer indicated that word of mouth recommendations about the Victim Navigator programme underpinned his force's interest in it, as forces learn from each other.

*'If we do it on the basis that our colleagues have given it [VN programme] a really good write up and said this is really good, it sells itself.'* (Detective Superintendent)

The evaluation has also afforded consideration to the critical 'success' factors that make the model more likely to be impactful (see section 3).

Victims, police and non-police stakeholders, alongside Victim Navigators themselves have also been able to make strategic recommendations for UK Government, national police and NGO's to consider, such as the need for local housing and the need to improve wait times for victims of modern slavery and human trafficking (documenting the impact this has on victim well-being).

Further, the evaluation has uncovered changes that have already occurred. For example Justice and Care's VN Decision Making Model – Closing Cases protocol, has been used in associated police forces. Victim Navigators have also played a significant role in devising new resources to aid the police response, for example Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking: Identifying a Potential Victim, and Initial Response Modern Slavery/Human Trafficking/Clandestine Entry.

Moreover, in Surrey the Victim Navigator helped push modern slavery up the police force agenda and it has led to additional staffing with a modern slavery remit. Non police stakeholders were able to make strategic recommendations about where gaps remain in supporting victims of modern slavery in the UK. Similarly, this has been explored through interviews and training exercises with police and Victim Navigators. More attention will be paid to evaluating these systemic changes in the evaluation going forward.

## Objective 7: To build the capacity of police and other stakeholders to identify and effectively respond to victims of modern slavery, and to establish effective referral pathways for victims including into the VN programme, through the provision of bespoke training sessions.

Lack of awareness of modern slavery offences, how to identify victims, and forms of support available to victims including the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) have been identified as key weaknesses particularly in relation to police responses to modern slavery. Victim Navigators have sought to fill this gap by providing training to a variety of stakeholders. In addition they have been able to advertise their role and the support they can offer to police and other stakeholders. Formal training during the coronavirus pandemic initially stopped for 2 months before resuming, which included training through on-line platforms. To date 1,310 police officers have been trained and 1,146 other stakeholders.

*"Essentially, the VN's role depends on police correctly identifying victims who we can then support, so training is a fundamental part of that, as a number of police will have never received formal training on this complex topic."*  
Surrey VN

There is some evidence from interviews with police that training improved police officers' knowledge of modern slavery and therefore better equipped them to identify victims, and to provide a more effective response to modern slavery cases. Moreover post-training feedback corroborated this outcome. For example, 100% of officers in the Roads Policing Unit who were trained by the Surrey VN felt they were better able to identify victims and 97% felt they were more aware of the support needs of victims. Some also suggested how the training might change their behaviour. They said: *"Think wider*

*and investigate suspect cases earlier when opportunity arises."* *"Will make me think about jobs as a potential MSHT issue."*

Information provided by the Modern Slavery SPOC for Surrey Road Policing Unit, suggests that the training did affect the behaviour of officers who looked beyond the minor traffic offence to identify modern slavery.

*"The initial stop was for minor traffic related offences however on further investigation the officers found Eastern European females that were being transported to locations for prostitution purposes. The officers by their own admission would not have looked at this had it not been for the input they were given by Justice and Care."*

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a key element of the UK's response to modern slavery and provides a gateway to government funded services to victims of modern slavery, but is not part of officers everyday practice. Officers particularly valued VNs' knowledge of the NRM but also how they helped skill them up so they could do their job better in the future.

*'Like I said, for me the NRM process was unknown, and [the VN] explained that completely and I would not have done as good a service to those victims if [the VN] had not come with me to that meeting we had with them in [location] and explained. But now that I have some understanding of it I can probably explain it a bit better now.... She was actually invaluable'* Police Surrey<sup>3</sup>

It was also acknowledged that VN's knowledge transfer could have an impact on the police force as a whole.

*'Over time, through constant inputs it would be imbedded in people, so dealing with a modern slavery incident would be as common to them as going to a domestic or assault, so those kinds of questions naturally come to them.'*

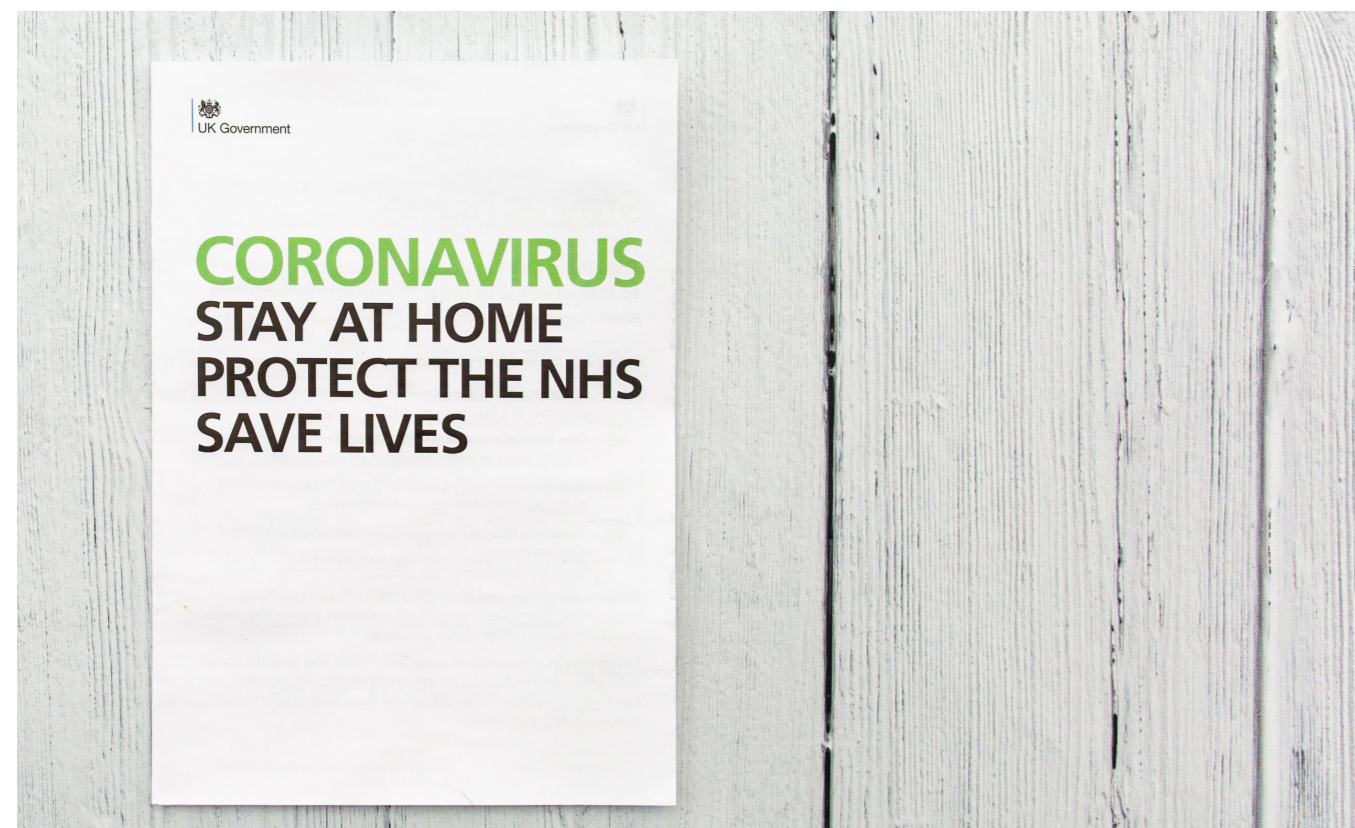
Police Essex<sup>9</sup>

More informal methods of training also occurred during the coronavirus pandemic, with Navigators involved in pre-operational planning and briefings which allowed them to promote a victim-centred approach to operations and to offer cultural contextual information to provide more appropriate and effective interactions with victims.

While the coronavirus pandemic initially presented a major obstacle to providing training

across all force areas, Navigators sought ways to continue to upskill the police through the use of on-line platforms. Obtaining significant volumes of post-training feedback has however remained a challenge.

Training is not the only means of improving police capabilities and enhancing a victim-centred response to modern slavery. Navigators have produced resources to aid criminal investigations. For example they are producing country reports (e.g. Human Trafficking in Eritrea, and Human Trafficking in Poland) with the aim to help Navigators and police partners have a better understanding of the cultural context of victims and offenders. These reports act as an aid in terms of how to support victims and how to build rapport and ask questions for information and evidential purposes.



### 3. Key Findings; what makes the Victim Navigator model a success?

#### The importance of working with but not for the police

The fact that Victim Navigators are distinct and unique from other victim support roles in the area of MSHT in their link to police seems to be one of the most important features of the Pilot. They are associated with police but independent. They are a shining example of how police and non-police can work together in an integrated fashion. This is a careful balance that needs to be maintained and adds value in a number of ways; it enables victims and other support services to be kept in the loop with regards to investigations, a factor that is often reported as missing. It also supports victim engagement because there is a worker who is non-police (affording consideration to some of the victims concerns over police), who can alleviate fears and worries; perhaps preconceived ideas of police. Information can be accessed readily from police as well as given to police about victim welfare. This is especially important given that victims are often moved out of police force areas.

#### The importance of working with but not for the police

There is a better fit for the Victim Navigator programme if it aligns with the strategic priorities for the force areas. This is the case in MPS, GMP, Essex, West Yorkshire, Police Scotland, and Surrey. At the same time having a Victim Navigator can provide an upward pressure on the force to keep all aspects of modern slavery as a priority.

*'If you go into a force where modern slavery is not a priority and is not about to be a priority and never will be a priority, how do they expect*

*a navigator to succeed. Because when a navigator says 'we have this problem' the force might say 'that's very nice but our priorities are [something else]'* Police Interview

Vital to this successful partnership arrangement, is 'force readiness', the police's willingness to utilise the resource of the Victim Navigator and permit them access to information and intelligence. The best outcomes were seen in forces where Victim Navigators were seen and used as credible resources who can add value to investigations. Police providing immediate referrals to Navigators or VNs being able to access police records in a timely fashion, without relying on police resources, is a fundamental success principle, as these processes have an impact on VN's early engagement with a case.

#### The breadth of support from Victim Navigators; Agility and Flexibility

It is clear from the evaluation that victims have a breadth of needs; both practical and emotional. Victims report that Victim Navigators are able to be responsive, flexible and creative in resolving their support needs, and no issue is too great or too small for them to attend to. They are solution focused and problem solving. Victims report that both their practical and emotional needs are covered and considered by Victim Navigators, filling gaps or sourcing support where other services do not meet these needs. This is particularly important given the length of time that investigations take and the state of 'limbo' victims are often left in during this time. To this end, the fact that support from the Victim Navigator is open-ended and can follow the victim wherever they go (even if this is

international) is incredibly important for continuity of care. The police re-affirmed the value of the Victim Navigators in offering a holistic response to victims' needs, over an extended period of time, and to providing a much better service than they have the time or expertise to provide. Acting as a care coordinator AND care provider, and ensuring victim needs are met is advantageous to police investigations too. Victims are better equipped to engage in police interviews but also engaging in therapeutic support can provide medical and psychological evidence of the impact of modern slavery on a victim that can be used in a prosecution..

### A caring but tenacious nature

Several victims described the Victim Navigators as their friend, which speaks to the level of trust they have in the Victim Navigator, the rapport that has been built. This is extremely important given the level of trauma victims will have experienced alongside being let down. It is clear that Victim Navigators are passionate and dedicated to their role which contributes to its success. Victim Navigators were described as compassionate and friendly, genuinely caring about their work and the welfare of victims.

Further, Victim Navigators are successful in their roles, in part because they have the confidence and tenacity to challenge decisions (e.g. from police) and keep the victim at the focus of investigations. They have cast a critical eye over existing, historic or new cases. There were examples noted where Victim Navigators had successfully managed to have cases re-examined under the lens of modern slavery, or support the discovery of further victims in open cases. Moreover, there is evidence that senior officers re-affirmed that investigatory strategies need to be improved or that the force needs to learn from poor practice based on Victim Navigators' concerns.

### Solution-Focused Approach

Another key finding arising from the evaluation was the way in which Victim Navigators responded to problems they encountered in relation to supporting victims or work with police. All adopted a solutions-focused response. This is exemplified in how they sought to address obstacles to consent, lack of cultural understanding around engaging with particular groups of victims, lack of understanding of particular forms of modern slavery like domestic servitude, pre-NRM accommodation, long waiting times for counselling services, provision of culturally appropriate services, language barriers, concerns about use of the Section 45 defence, and ensuring police captured evidence to enable CPS to charge suspects with modern slavery offences.

### Meeting Victims at the Earliest Opportunity

A defining feature of the success of victim and navigator relationships was how early on in the proceedings they had met. Opportunities for Victim Navigators to attend warrants and operations, meeting victims as early as possible, should be encouraged. This is a practice police officers welcomed because they could focus on the criminal investigation knowing that the Victim Navigators were safeguarding and supporting victims at the earliest opportunity.

It is therefore key to ensure wherever possible VNs meet victims at the earliest stage as the first 48 hours are likely to be crucial for VNs to reach out to potential victims of modern slavery and to offer support. There is considerable evidence that victims are distrustful of the police, and thus VNs, as independent support workers from a charity, have the possibility of building a bridge with victims. This view was endorsed by police interviewees.

### Importance Attached to Vetting of Victim Navigators and Data Sharing Agreements with Police Forces

Another fundamental principle for the success of the Victim Navigator programme is the attention paid to the legal process required to embed a Navigator within a police force and to have access to information deemed highly sensitive. Justice and Care created the necessary protocols to ensure that access and security infrastructures are effective and lawfully integrated. The high level of vetting that Victim Navigators have to undergo is crucial to their being fully embedded within their force team, and able to access data, engage in planning operations and in discussions of cases

*'The reason for that [high level vetting] is it stops us from having to hide things from them. ....It allows them to be involved and that's fundamental because the way the victim is then dealt with, and they [VN] then understand why we're doing certain things with the victim. And they understand what we need to get from the victim from a policing point but we understand what they need to get to help maintain that relationship with them [the victim] moving forward.'* Police Officer



## 4. 2020 Interim Evaluation Recommendations and Responses to Them

### Future Recruitment; breadth of role and hours

It was evident in evaluating the work of the Victim Navigators that they have an expansive remit which includes training of police staff and other stakeholders, provision of strategic advice to police officers, development of resources to aid police responses, suggesting changes in procedures to improve the Victim Navigator Pilot or to enhance police responses, supporting victims over long periods of time and often in distant locations, liaising with support workers and stakeholders to enhance service provision, and problem-solving. Moreover, Victim Navigators reported that the vulnerability of victims meant that they often had to be able and willing to respond 24/7 if victims were newly identified and needed support or where victims on Support Plans faced some crisis situation. Victim Navigators have been responsive to the demands of the post but these come at a cost as they work beyond their current contractual hours. Following recognition of this issue, Justice and Care is now seeking to make the breadth and hours of the role clear in future recruitment and to monitor the pressures on Navigators' time - this should continue ongoing.

### Training

#### Internal training

There were several recommendations that emerged that centred around training. Firstly, the Victim Navigators agreed they would have benefitted from a training package like the one currently being developed for new recruits. There was a further suggestion to include opportunities to shadow current Victim Navigators as part of the induction process.

Training for Victim Navigators and external groups (e.g. the police) should also draw on learning around cultural differences in victim cohorts. Specialist training on cultural competency for certain victim cohorts has now begun and is recommended to be extended as capacity allows.

#### Police Training

Going forward, as more face to face training resumes within police forces, there is an opportunity for Victim Navigators to suggest a more strategic approach to ensure training about their role, a victim-centred response, the NRM, cultural context and risk ensure maximum coverage for the most relevant roles. In addition the Navigator needs to work with senior staff about how they can assist in encouraging staff to complete a survey to capture behaviour change linked to the training they received.

#### Interpreter Service

At present Justice and Care do not have their own interpreter service (e.g. a specific code with Big Word or Language Line). Instead they utilise police codes to access this resource, or have tried to use other options such as translate devices and google translate. Feedback from navigators suggests that also having the option to use an interpreter service (if the other options are not available or viable) would be beneficial, acting as an additional resource they can draw on given the high number of non-English speaking cases.

#### Understanding Classified Cases

Many cases did not fulfil the selection criteria for engagement because the modern slavery offence took place outside of the UK and thus there would

be no criminal investigation, further information indicated it wasn't modern slavery or the victim disappeared or was unwilling to engage with the police or Victim Navigator. However Justice and Care initially lacked specific information about why many triaged adult cases were 'classified' and considered inappropriate for Victim Navigators' attention. As a result of the triage process, Victim Navigators were therefore found to deal with a minority of modern slavery cases; only 40% of adult cases. This finding suggests that the focus of attention on the number of modern slavery cases and the small number of prosecutions is problematic, given the difficulties police encounter with cases involving adult victims.

As a result of identifying that 24% of triaged cases were closed without a specific rationale, CMS was amended and Navigators were trained to record specific reasons. With more complete data Justice and Care can obtain a better understanding of why many modern slavery cases may have limited police engagement, and what can be learned from this data going forwards.

#### Promote the need for local safe housing options

Several parties (across a range of interviews) highlighted frustration around the lack of local, immediate, safe housing, pre NRM, which often means victims are moved out of area on rescue. This does have some impact on the VN's ability to support them and support becomes remote early on.

To address this, over the last year the problem of local safe housing options has received attention from VNs. A safe house is now available in Essex and has also been used by the MPS, as a result of a collaboration with a local housing provider. The new Navigator in West Yorkshire is seeking to develop local safe housing drawing on the model developed in GMP. The Programme Coordinator has also started a pilot with Hope at Home with a view to getting national coverage. The Surrey navigator is also working with others to obtain

pre-NRM accommodation. Thus the gaps in provision for local accommodation and pre-NRM accommodation are being tackled across the different VN locations.

#### Delays in cases being referred to Victim Navigators

To date, the pilot has enabled the Victim Navigator role to be promoted within police forces. Last year it was noted that there were some delays in the speed and efficiency in how and when victims were referred to Victim Navigators. No concerns have been raised in 2020-21 about delays. Within new Victim Navigator locations the specialist modern slavery teams are making referrals to Navigators and seeking to ensure they are not overwhelmed with cases. The scale of work, whether it is strategic advice or supporting victims suggests that police forces are making effective use of them.

#### Criminal Justice Process

It is recognised that Victim Navigators monitor closely the development of investigations, and often ask for second and third reviews, including requests to re-open a case file if actions have not been completed or considered. They also continue to work hard to keep up the momentum of live cases and keep the victim engaged. However, there remain systemic barriers such as thresholds set by CPS not being met, court rooms not being available which cause considerable delays to criminal investigations and victims waiting a long time for cases to be heard.

Victim Navigators, or Justice and Care more generally, should continue to work with partners to overcome some of these systemic barriers that still exist, as the evaluation has explored the negative impacts this can have on victims and the ability to develop adequate evidence for a prosecution.

## 5. Summary

Victim Navigators are able to work at a strategic and operational level; they have become 'go to' partners in tackling modern slavery and considering how to approach cases. Police interviewed identified a number of different ways in which they valued the expertise of the Victim Navigators and the ways in which they benefited. For example they referred to suggested approaches to engaging with victims, hence ensuring a victim-centred response as well as improved understanding of indicators of modern slavery or of specific types of modern slavery like domestic servitude. The willingness of police officers to seek their assistance on new cases is a testament to the way Victim Navigators add value to a criminal investigation as well as to supporting victims. As most detectives who work outside of specialist Modern Slavery Units have little experience of working on modern slavery cases, Victim Navigators have been shown to benefit the police force in terms of their Strategic Advice and other resources they have provided. They have impacted on police attitudes and behaviour.

Similarly, victims also reported positive experiences having received input from Victim Navigators, describing them as a trusted 'friend' - able to keep them informed in the police investigation, whilst providing emotional and practical support and connecting them to other relevant support agencies. They are a care coordinator and care provider.

Stakeholders from these agencies, also delighted in having a modern slavery expert to support them in managing cases and an ally to work with to ensure all victim needs are being met. They too highlighted the connection to police was invaluable.

Looking forward to the final year of the evaluation, we hope to gain evidence around prosecutions

and attend to some of the data collation recommendations noted above. We will also be looking more closely at the systemic changes the Victim Navigators are helping to develop. New Victim Navigators will be coming into post, permitting further analysis of how other forces respond and react to this role



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