



# A Problem Profile for Modern Slavery in Nottinghamshire

## A collaborative approach to improve local understanding of Modern Slavery<sup>1</sup>

*This briefing, based on ongoing engagement with the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Modern Slavery Partnership (NNMSP), discusses the key findings from efforts to co-create a multi-agency 'problem profile' for modern slavery within Nottinghamshire.*

### Key research findings

Between April 2018 and October 2019 there were 151 crime occurrences in Nottinghamshire linked to modern slavery, identifying 153 potential victims and 86 potential offenders. Overall, labour exploitation was most commonly identified form of exploitation (35%), followed by criminal exploitation (31%). Sexual exploitation (20%) and domestic servitude (6%) were also recorded.

### Outcomes

Our analysis informed the development of an action-plan for the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Modern Slavery Partnership, focussing on four key points:

- **Assets, Accommodation and Survivor Support**

The partnership highlighted a need for iterative review of survivor care practices in line with the Survivor Care Standards, development of a unified referral pathway within the County, and further engagement with organisations whose operations intersect with anti-slavery work - but are not yet directly engaged.

- **Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines**

Rising child referrals meant that partners highlighted a desire to identify and implement means of educating young people on grooming and CCE, engage more effectively with parents, and to involve additional

partners linked to youth justice and gang intervention services in responses.

- **Communicating with Communities**

A need for targeted engagement with specific communities where there is considered to be a high-risk of exploitation, but currently low levels of referrals was identified. Young people, people with learning disabilities and those who are homeless were examples of groups that could be targeted more effectively.

- **Other Emerging Threats and Trends**

Emerging concerns were identified related to the exploitation of young people as money mules, and communities that have little engagement with statutory organisations. The limited availability of intelligence from neighbouring counties on cross border issues was further identified as a gap.

### Recommendations for Partners

1. Key stakeholders must **continue to encourage engagement from additional partner organisations**, particularly businesses to improve the flow of intelligence in response to local labour exploitation issues.
2. Information sharing should target efforts to **enhance understanding of victim care requirements and journey**, and the evolving nature of exploitation across the county.
3. Membership of the modern slavery partnership should be continually reviewed, and **additional organisations should be approached** related to specific initiatives or interventions, and to include survivor-leaders.
4. **Cooperation with overseas authorities should be broadened** to tackle offending at source, delivering preventative interventions and providing adequate safeguarding for victims.
5. **Targeted action on the areas identified as key issues in the problem profile.**

<sup>1</sup> This briefing was prepared by Dr. Ben Brewster, Dr. Phil Northall and Dr. Alison Gardner, from the University of Nottingham's Rights Lab. The project, 'Profiling the problem – facilitating a localised

*multi-agency understanding of modern slavery risk in Nottinghamshire* was funded by the University of Nottingham's ESRC Impact Accelerator Account.

## Why is this important?

Local communities around the world are critical 'first responders' to modern slavery, and crucial to the long-term support and recovery of survivors, as well as the facilitation of sustainable prevention initiatives.

Although exploitation is a phenomenon that crosses administrative boundaries, the specific ways in which modern slavery manifests can vary considerably from region to region, according to a range of determinants. Therefore, it is vital that crime prevention work be based on a locally formulated and accurately articulated 'problem profile'. The availability of different local 'assets' to address modern slavery also varies. The resources and capacity of services or regulation in regions containing dense populations and large cities is often very different from those made up of smaller towns or largely rural areas, requiring that interventions be shaped accordingly.

Our work takes a co-creation approach in order to develop a 'problem profile' of modern slavery within a given locality (city, county, police force area, etc.). The development and utilisation of a problem profile can demonstrate the collaborative advantage of multi-agency working, bringing together the skills and expertise of multi-sectoral partners as a means of further developing the county's multi-agency anti-slavery response.

## Research overview

The research involved an initial analysis of Police Crime Occurrence data and National Referral Mechanism Data for Nottinghamshire. This data was then combined with insights and case studies from partners to develop a report. Workshops were held in August and September 2020 with a diverse range of stakeholders from local statutory and non-statutory agencies to discuss the findings and implications for future actions. A more detailed protocol for compiling the problem profile can be found in our accompanying working paper, 'Developing a modern slavery problem profile: why and how?'

The problem profile sought to inform police and partner decision-making and action planning by:

- **Providing contextual insights into the specific nature and scale of modern slavery** offending in Nottinghamshire, alluding to current and emerging criminal trends and threats.
- **Identifying potential intelligence gaps and highlighting opportunities for collaboration** with partner organisations to contribute additional details that may illuminate previously unknown or misunderstood issues.
- **Highlighting key regional vulnerabilities** along with the local assets currently available to help address these vulnerabilities and to build community resilience to modern slavery.
- **Providing recommendations and mitigation actions** that highlight opportunities for police and partners to undertake activities aligned to the national Modern Slavery strategy (Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare).
- **Assisting in the prioritisation of risk** to enable informed operational resourcing from the police, and to

inform future actions from the modern slavery partnership.

## Modern Slavery in Nottinghamshire

Police crime data from between April 2017 and October 2019 indicated labour exploitation to be the most pervasive form of exploitation in Nottinghamshire, accounting for 35% of recorded occurrences. Criminal exploitation (31%) closely followed labour exploitation as a prevalent issue. Sexual exploitation (20%) and domestic servitude (6%) were also recorded.

However, data from Nottinghamshire reflected overall national trends, including the increasing prominence of Child Criminal Exploitation, and the persistence of labour exploitation cases involving victims from Eastern Europe. They also show an ever-evolving picture of offending, including changes in the demographics of suspected criminal exploitation offenders involved in cultivating cannabis.

## Labour Exploitation

87% of all recorded Labour exploitation victims were Adult. 79% were Male. It was not possible to discern the venue of exploitation for most of the cases recorded. However, specific instances of exploitation in builders' merchants, food processing and packaging businesses, and in 'trades' such as plastering and interior decoration were all recorded. Males from Eastern Europe, aged between 20 and 50 were the dominant victim demographic.

Pervasive trends within recorded instances of labour exploitation included victims paid below minimum wage, or not at all. In some cases, victims were also identified as being forced to work excessive hours. In cases where victims were paid, all or part of wages were regularly withheld by the exploiter as a form of control. This was often in return for subsistence, rent, and utilities costs. In a number of instances, victims were shown to be overcharged for these services as a means of maintaining or increasing their debt. In extreme cases, living costs and the cost of arranging travel (for overseas victims) were used as a form of debt bondage, meaning the victims were beholden to their exploiters financially, and working to pay off escalating debts. This was sometimes used in tandem with the techniques mentioned in the previous point. Victims were regularly subject to substandard living conditions and had restrictions placed upon their movement when not working. Accommodation was often in multiple-occupancy dwellings.

## Criminal Exploitation

Occurrence related to criminal exploitation broadly fell into two categories drug distribution (50%, county lines) and cannabis cultivation (35%). Additional cases were identified related to forced begging, theft and financial crime.

Victims of exploitation through cannabis cultivation were primarily from overseas, smuggled or trafficked into the UK and forced to work in residential or industrial properties, specifically to cultivate cannabis for sale. All victims connected with cannabis cultivation were male. Most were identified as Vietnamese. Cases of Albanian and British victims were also recorded.

All but two of the identified drug distribution cases were linked to the use of minors to distribute illegal narcotics, following the national 'county lines' trend. In cases involving adults, properties had been 'cuckooed' (taken over in order to distribute drugs) taking advantage of existing vulnerabilities, such as addiction or disability. 80% recorded victims were UK nationals. The majority of victims had been identified elsewhere in the East Midlands or the North of England, while others had been identified in Cambridgeshire and London, reinforcing the connection to county lines networks.

## Sexual Exploitation

96% of recorded victims were female. 8% of recorded victims were minors. The nationality of victims varied greatly, however UK nationals (81%) were the most prevalent. Overall, the data mainly represented instances of females being forced into prostitution. Data indicated a trend towards indoor sex work, rather than outdoor or 'street' work. However, it was not possible to discern the venue or nature of the sex work for a significant number of the records. Exploiters can more readily control and restrict freedoms by confining work to a designated property, rather than through work oriented towards street-based solicitation.

Sexual exploitation was also recorded as a secondary form of exploitation in a number of criminal and labour exploitation occurrences. However, it was not possible to discern whether this was as a form of exploitation for-profit, or whether it was part of the measures used in the exertion of control or coercion of victims.

Overall, while the data around sexual exploitation cases made it difficult to establish the full pathways experienced by individuals, it was possible to establish some contextual information, and some trends. International trafficking was more clearly evident in the descriptive data accompanying records of sexual exploitation than other forms of exploitation, and it was not uncommon for the location of exploitation to be outside the UK. Venues of exploitation included a mix of residential properties and commercial venues, including massage parlours.

Recorded victims reported being raped by their exploiter, as well as being sexually exploited in a commercial capacity. Where sexual exploitation occurred alongside other forms, the use of sexual violence and rape by the exploiters appeared to be pervasive form of exerting control, rather than being directly of financial motivation. Exploiters themselves, where identified, included a mix of intimate partners, smugglers, and often strangers of the same nationality as the victim. Some cases indicated that victims were involved in prostitution prior to their eventual exploitation.

## Domestic Servitude

Of the recorded cases of domestic servitude, 36% involved exploitation at the hands of family members or intimate

partners. Of the remaining 64%, victims were commonly trafficked or transported for employment as nannies or cleaners and then subsequently exploited for little or no pay, in the process having their freedoms reduced, and being unable to leave their respective venues of exploitation.

## Who are the offenders?

The majority of offenders identified were over the age of 30, with just over 69% falling between the ages of 30 and 56. In contrast to this overall trend, offenders and suspects linked to criminal exploitation were younger – showing a mean average age of 29. Offenders and suspects linked to CCE county lines drug distribution, as a sub-class of criminal exploitation, were younger still, with ages ranging between 18 and 24 years old, with a mean age of 20. There was also a comparatively low number of suspects and offenders identified related to criminal exploitation, when compared to the number of potential victims identified. This would be consistent with the expected approach of offenders using a network of criminally exploited victims to shield their involvement in the drug supply from law enforcement.

Overall, offenders and potential victims were commonly identified as being the same nationality.

## NRM Referrals

NRM data covering the same period was also available for the analysis, and reinforced trends derived from the crime occurrence data. The number of referrals continues to increase year on year, following national trends. The types of exploitation linked to referrals also followed national trends, with labour, sexual and criminal exploitation most prevalent.

The status of referrals provided an interesting point of analysis, as the majority of referrals (for which the status was known) received a Positive Reasonable Grounds (PRG) decision. The status of a large proportion of referrals was currently classified as unknown or unstated in the data, as many cases were still awaiting decision. However, this is perhaps reflective that the decision-making process for Conclusive Grounds (CG) decisions takes far longer.

A majority of referrals that are associated with offences committed outside of the UK also involve asylum claims – 69%, as opposed to 8% of those committed within the UK. There was little difference in the success rate of reasonable grounds decisions based on whether they involved an asylum claim or not.

Police, as opposed to the other first responder organisations, were responsible for the overwhelming majority of referrals within the region during this period.