



Risks, Impacts and Mitigating Responses of Covid-19 for Modern Slavery Survivors in the UK and the USA

A rapid evidence review of 'grey literature' sources in the public domain between
1 March – 31 October 2020

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Further written materials stemming from this research will be published in due course here:

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Abbreviations

ATEST	Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking
ATLEU	Anti Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit
AZ	Arizona
BAME	Black, Asian and minority ethnic
CA	California
CARES Act	The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act
CAST	Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking
CIW	Coalition of Immokalee workers
COSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CSEM	Child Sexual Exploitation Material
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECAT	Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
ECM	Enhanced Collaborative Model
ECPAT	End Child Prostitution and Trafficking
EFFAT	European Federation of Food Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions
FBI	The Federal Bureau of Investigation
FLEX	Focus on Labour Exploitation
GBV	Gender-based violence
GEMS	Girls Educational and Mentoring Services
GLAA	Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority
GRETA	Group of Experts on Action on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
HEAL	Health, Education, Advocacy, Linkage (HEAL Trafficking)
HEAT	Human Exploitation and Trafficking
HM	Her Majesty's (Government)
HO	Home Office
HTF	Human Trafficking Foundation
ICTG	Independent Child Trafficking Guardians
LGBT	Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender
MHCLG	Ministry for Housing and Communities and Local Government
NASS	National Asylum Support Service
NCA	National Crime Agency

NCMEC	National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHS	National Health Service
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
NRPF	No Recourse to Public Funds
NSPCC	National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
NY	New York
PCC	Police Crime Commissioner
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RPC	Regional Practice Co-ordinators
RRT	The Responsible Recruitment Toolkit
SPACE	Stop & Prevent Adolescent Criminal Exploitation
TARA	Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance
TX	Texas
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VCC	Victim Care Contract
WHO	World Health Organisation

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1. Background

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed people at the margins of society to additional harms and risks. Not only has the pandemic brought about direct health harms, it has also brought about rapid social and economic change that has created additional risks and challenges to victims and survivors of modern slavery and has exacerbated existing ones (United Nations (UN), 2020). Some of these risks and impacts are related to exposure to the virus itself whereas many risks emerge or are exacerbated as a consequence of wider measures to contain the spread of the virus, for instance, border closures, social distancing, and lockdowns. Initial policy and research efforts were devoted to containing the spread of the virus (World Health Organization (WHO), 2020) or arguably in the UK and USA, *delaying* it (Department of Health and Social Care, 2020; Jernigan, 2020). Across the anti-slavery sector, the potential and actual impacts that the pandemic is having, and will continue to have, on victims and survivors of modern slavery have been voiced. Concerns have also been raised that many more individuals around the globe will be made more vulnerable to forms of exploitation. However, these actual impacts and potential risks are not being gathered and documented in a robust and coherent way. This rapid evidence review aims to address this lack of documentation by undertaking a search and overview of publicly available 'grey literature' from the first seven months (1 March - 31 October 2020) of the Covid-19 pandemic with a particular focus on Non-governmental organisation (NGO) sources, government and policy documents predominantly in the UK and USA (US hereafter) jurisdictions. It also focuses on the initial seven months of the pandemic in response to the sheer volume of concerns being raised at the very start of the Covid-19 outbreak. This evidence review is an attempt to record some of the challenges and issues raised by the anti-slavery sector during the early phase of the pandemic.

An aim of the research team was to develop an initial mapping and synthesis of sources from a range of viewpoints, at the initial phase of the pandemic, on the actual impacts (between 1 March - 31 October 2020) and the potential risks of Covid-19 to victims and survivors of modern slavery. It also sought to ascertain insight into the risks facing those who at a heightened risk of entering slavery due to the pandemic. This rapid evidence review considered the following research questions:

- 1. What are the potential risks and the known impacts (to date) that Covid-19 poses for victims and survivors of modern slavery?**
- 2. What are the mitigation strategies that have been put in place for victims and survivors of modern slavery. Taking into consideration:**
 - a. who has put these in place and;**
 - b. when were they implemented?**

2. Methods

This paper discusses an analysis of a range of relevant 'grey literature' in the public domain through a rapid qualitative synthesis approach. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends rapid reviews as a suitable means by which to acquire timely evidence in situations which are rapidly evolving and as an approach which can help guide health systems' responses in emergencies (Tricco et al., 2017). The following describes the methods adopted in this rapid evidence review, including the search strategy, the identification of relevant sources (in this case, grey literature), screening (inclusion and exclusion) criteria, data extraction methods, and the approach to evidence synthesis.

Grey literature includes publications such as reports, government documents, policy documents, blogs and technical notes that have not been published in academic journals, books or other peer reviewed sources (Godin et al., 2015). Non-government organisations (NGOs), governmental departments and UN agencies are among those who publish sources

of grey literature via online platforms (Benzies et al., 2006). These publications are therefore, often considered authoritative, accessible, and up-to-date especially in regard to policy and research (Godin et al., 2015). Grey literature was given preference in this review, for three key reasons. First, the pandemic was a rapidly evolving situation. Second, the research team sought to capture the Covid-19 impacts victims and survivors of modern slavery were experiencing as the pandemic unfolded, as well as the potential risks identified in relation to those vulnerable to exploitation. Third, there was not a strong scientific evidence base available on the topic of Covid-19 at the point this review was being completed. This was to be expected given the time-lag usually involved in the academic publishing process (Pappas and Williams, 2011).

2.1 Data sources and search strategies

A grey literature search plan was developed which involved undertaking the following searches: (1) a customised Google search (2) relevant NGO, Government and other agency websites and (3) consultation with recognised subject experts for recommendations of sources that (1) and (2) may not have identified. Decisions and obstacles throughout the process of the rapid review were noted and discussed with the wider research team to ensure transparency and comprehensiveness. Three groups of terms were included in the search strategy: (1) Covid-19 (e.g. coronavirus, pandemic) (2) modern slavery (e.g. human trafficking, re-trafficking, exploitation, survivors, victims) (3) risks (physical health, mental health, economic harm, victim rights).

The first search strategy required undertaking Google searches for sources published on the internet that were relevant to the focus of the review. Google searches can present various challenges due to the scores of content available and the need to navigate the different ways it is organised. Screening all results generated by Google is not possible, therefore, it is necessary to rely on Google's relevancy ranking and to outline the number of first pages to be searched (Godin et al., 2015).

When searching US Government documents on interventions, the custom search engine of MADGIC, Carleton University and hosted by the University of Waterloo was used.¹ Canada, US, Middle East, Asia Pacific, Africa, Caribbean and Latin America Government documents can be searched within this search engine. However, for the purposes of this study, searches were filtered to fetch only US Government documents at federal and state levels. The title and the segment of text below the first ten pages (representing 100 results) were reviewed and titles with potentially relevant sources were recorded and screened further.

Targeted websites of UN and government agencies as well as anti-slavery NGOs were searched as part of the second search strategy. Recommendations were sought from experts on the research team and our project partners in order to identify and select relevant NGOs in both the UK and the US. Mailing lists such as the UK Home Office's Modern Slavery Unit's newsletters and the Human Trafficking Foundation's Advisory Forum newsletters were drawn upon. These relevant NGO websites were 'hand-searched' for documents such as blogs, reports or newsletters on the relevant subject area. For every item identified and included, the URL and date were recorded into an Excel spreadsheet.

As part of the third search strategy, subject experts in the anti-slavery sector were asked to identify other potential sources for screening. This included researchers from the research team (n=9) who are experts in the field of modern slavery across various disciplines. Our project partners Survivor Alliance, Human Trafficking Foundation, Focus on Labour

¹ MADGIC CU (2021).

Exploitation (FLEX), International Anti Human Trafficking Network, and Anti-Slavery International supported the research team by signposting relevant sources (their own and others) in relation to Covid-19 and modern slavery. Due to the vastness of the NGO sector in the US, Survivor Alliance helped identify potential US sources for inclusion in the rapid review.

2.2 Eligibility criteria

This review explores the reported impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on victims/survivors of modern slavery, with a particular focus on victims/survivors residing in the USA and UK. It also examines the anticipated risks of physical, mental and personal harms (e.g. re-trafficking) to victims/survivors. The actual and anticipated harms are those detailed in grey literature by governmental bodies and NGOs working in the anti-trafficking sector. Given the number of organisations working in the anti-slavery sector, and the time available for this rapid evidence review, it was not possible to capture all of the responses and actions taken by governmental and non-governmental actors to these realised and feared risks. The rapid review's eligibility criteria are set out in *Table 1* below.

Table 1 Eligibility criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Available in English	Unavailable in English
Published between 1 March 2020 - 31 October 2020.	Published before 1 March 2020 or after 31 October 2020.
Actual impacts to date and potential risks of Covid-19 pandemic for victims and survivors of modern slavery and those at risk of entering slavery.	Risks pertaining prior to or unrelated to the Covid-19 pandemic.
Intervention strategies in the UK and US.	Intervention strategies outside of UK and US.
Included targeted intervention strategies relating to victims and survivors of modern slavery and those at risk of entering slavery living in the UK and US.	Universal interventions intended for the general population e.g. UK furlough scheme ² or CARES Act The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act) in the US. ³
Published by NGOs or governments in the UK (including devolved governments) and the US (federal and state) or by the UN and pertains to the US or UK.	Academic literature, media reports, government and NGO publications outside of UK/US or UN and unrelated to these two countries.

2.3 Extracting Data

For the identified and included sources the document type, geographical focus, dimensions of modern slavery, overall focus of the source, a summary of the potential risks and actual

² Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (2020) see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-you-could-be-covered-by-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae>

³ *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act)* (2020) see <https://www.congress.gov/bills/116/congress/senate/bills/3548/text?q=product+actualizaci%C3%B3n>

impacts identified (between 1 March - 31 October 2020), a summary of the mitigating factors that have been implemented and dates were extracted and recorded in an Excel spreadsheet.

The data was collated and summarised into narrative and tabular summaries. This was then colour coded and initially organised under the following themes:

Table 2 Initial colour coding

Risks to/of:
Physical health/safety
Mental health
Family instability/harm to children
Victim rights
Education
Economic harm
Re-trafficking and exploitation

After a deeper engagement with the data and the adoption of a more inductive approach, the actual impacts (between 1 March - 31 October 2020) and potential risks identified were then organised around the following themes which emerged from the data itself:

Table 3 Themes which emerged from data

Themes:
Barriers to accessing basic amenities and financial assistance
Risk of exposure to and transmission of Covid-19
Actual impacts and potential risks to mental health
Heightened risk of exploitation
Heightened risk of being re-trafficked

These actual impacts and potential risks have stimulated various responses both at policy level and from Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). The intervention strategies that have been put in place were therefore mapped to some of the relevant risks that were identified (see *Appendix 1* and *Appendix 2* by way of illustration).

2.4 Results

105 relevant sources were identified. 19 have a global geographical focus; three of which have a particular mention the UK, 1 EU, and 1 US. There are 40 that have a UK-only focus, and 46 a US- only focus.

Table 4 Source types

Source type	Number
NGO	67
UN	10
UK Government (including local government)	9
US Government (federal, state, local government)	15
Law enforcement (UK)	2
Combination (multi-agency)	3

Notably, 7 sources drew insights from empirical research conducted at the onset of the pandemic. This includes Sisters Not Strangers⁴ coalition who ascertained the views of refugee and asylum seeking women (some of whom were survivor of modern slavery) in England and Wales from 31 countries through 115 surveys. Alliance 8.7 Secretariat global UN report⁵ drew on surveys conducted globally with 95 respondents most of which were largely made up of CSOs, international and regional organisations and survivor networks represented 1% of the respondents. The Global initiatives' policy brief⁶ was informed by initial findings of Tech Against Trafficking's Covid-19 Impact Survey. It does not give information about how many respondents were involved. A UN Women policy brief⁷ was informed by survey results conducted by Safe Lives. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and UN Women report⁸ drew upon a survey they conducted which included responses of survivors from over 40 countries and NGO anti-trafficking stakeholders from over 100 countries. FLEX also drew upon interviews conducted between 18 and 31 March 2020 with nine workers, two migrant community organisations and one grassroots union.⁹ Additionally, Survivor Alliance members who took part in 'social calls' inspired the report thus providing representation of the survivor community.¹⁰ Some sources drew on the work of other partner NGOs or government agencies such as in the Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force report.¹¹ This rapid review has also captured interventions which have been put in place at various levels by governments (UK and US in particular) and CSOs in these jurisdictions.

2.5 Limitations

Whilst this search captured a range of perspectives from different source types of grey literature, countries, states and over a range of seven months, it will not have been able to include everything available. Although sources have been examined from different global perspectives, our search only included those written in English and thus, it is inevitable that insights communicated in other languages will not have been captured. Furthermore, the

⁴ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020).

⁵ Alliance 8.7 Secretariat (01 July 2020).

⁶ Wagner and Huang (01 May 2020).

⁷ UN Women (April 2020).

⁸ Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and UN Women (30 July 2020).

⁹ FLEX (01 April 2020).

¹⁰ Esiowwa and Lozano (Survivor Alliance) (01 May 2020).

¹¹ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

search strategy for UK and US sources was more extensive due to the research questions guiding this study. Whilst efforts were made to identify sources from the four nations of the UK, a majority of the UK sources likely have an exclusive focus on England (even if it is not clearly stated) and therefore arguably do not strictly represent the *whole* of the UK.

A rapid qualitative approach to coding and summarising the data was adopted. If inconsistencies arose or further details were required, sources were re-examined; however, it is possible that themes may not have been fully captured. Apart from seven notable exceptions, sources drawing on empirical data were few. Sources from NGOs, UN agencies, and government departments were grouped together on the premise that the perspectives of those who are the intended beneficiaries of policies are no less informative than the views of those who make policies or fund them.

This following section will focus on addressing the first research question which was concerned with the potential risks that Covid-19 poses for victims and survivors of modern slavery and the actual impacts that had been experienced by survivors (between 1 March - 31 October 2020) and the themes which emerged from the data.

3. Findings: actual impacts (between 1 March – 31 October 2020) and potential risks

It is important to acknowledge that at times the themes discussed below can overlap. For instance, survivors' immigration status could be discussed in relation to legal needs but according to the data, it was discussed in association with mental health because it was a key source of anxiety for many survivors during the start of the pandemic. Similarly, insecure living conditions may be directly linked to a survivor's economic circumstances but can also be a factor which places them at a greater risk of contracting Covid-19 or of being exploited. Many of the risks outlined, when realised, can place survivors in vulnerable situations where the threat of re-trafficking and exploitation increase significantly.

According to this rapid evidence review, the actual impacts and key risks that victims and survivors of modern slavery face include: barriers accessing basic amenities and financial assistance, a heightened risk of exposure and transmission of Covid-19, heightened risks to their mental health, and a heightened risk of being exploited and re-exploited. These key themes will be explored in turn below.

3.1 Barriers accessing basic amenities and financial assistance

First, victims and survivors encountered significant barriers when it came to accessing basic amenities and financial assistance during the first seven months of the pandemic. This included food, hygiene products and mobile credit/data, safe and timely housing, weekly financial assistance and legal advice and support.

3.1.1 Food, hygiene products and mobile credit and data

A number of UK sources¹² found that survivors had struggled to access food during the first few months of the pandemic. Four UK NGOs¹³ noted that food bank closures had contributed to this. Another UK NGO report¹⁴ highlighted the multiple barriers (financial constraints, language barriers, and digital poverty) which survivors faced when it concerned accessing

¹² Hestia (30 April 2020); Sisters not Strangers (July 2020); Hope for Justice (30 April 2020); Justice and Care (30 April 2020).

¹³ Hestia (30 April 2020); Human Trafficking Foundation (01 June 2020); Justice and Care (30 April 2020); Hampshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) (30 April 2020).

¹⁴ Hope for Justice (30 April 2020).

food via online shopping in the event that they had to self-isolate. A UN report¹⁵ described food shortages as a reason why people are forced to turn to moneylenders. The likely risks of food shortages to survivors due to the Covid-19 pandemic were outlined in a number of sources.¹⁶ Two reports¹⁷ claimed that lack of access to nutritional food would negatively impact the physical health of survivors and their children. This report claimed that after surveying 115 women refugees and asylum seekers in the UK (some of whom were survivors of modern slavery¹⁸) that three quarters went hungry during the pandemic and had found it difficult to provide food for their children. Issues around accessing hygiene products and masks were also discussed in the report. It found that 28% of the women surveyed said they had had no access to soap or hand sanitiser and that due to poverty they were often forced to choose between food or soap. The Anti Trafficking Monitoring Group referred to reports from The Snowdrop Project that people had had to choose whether to buy food or data so as to avail of online support services.¹⁹ Parents of those entitled to free school meals experienced delays obtaining vouchers because they did not have email access and therefore, encountered challenges navigating the system.

A US NGO report²⁰ voiced concerns at the very start of the pandemic about school closures and the impact this would have on children's access to meals. A global report²¹ also discussed school closures and the potential impact that this would have on vulnerable children's ability to acquire nutritional food and remain healthy during the pandemic. In the US, an NGO²² discussed how due to their offices including their food pantry being closed that their clients had been unable to access food. In a US source²³ which offered guidance for teachers in Texas in relation to spotting the signs of child trafficking listed food shortages as one of the factors which may make children more vulnerable to being trafficked. A US NGO²⁴ claimed that one of their service users' urgent needs (after food, toiletries and nappies) was phones and phone cards so as to ensure the girls they work with could remain connected. The need for access to phone credit and data was also voiced in a UK source²⁵ as a vital means of ensuring those who had left their situations of slavery could remain safe and connected to their support providers.

3.1.2 Safe and timely housing

A reoccurring theme across the sources was that survivors (in the US, UK and other global contexts) were at an increased risk of homelessness as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. This community encountered numerous barriers during the first seven months of the pandemic when it concerned accessing safe and timely housing.

In the US, Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) (an alliance of non-profit service providers, activists and advocacy groups) raised concerns around meeting the increased demand for emergency housing witnessed at the start of the pandemic whilst funds had

¹⁵ Alliance 8.7 Secretariat (01 July 2020).

¹⁶ Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) (22 September 2020); Alliance 8.7 Secretariat (01 July 2020); Anti-slavery International (15 July 2020); Helen Bamber Foundation (30 April 2020); Verité (24 April 2020); National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 2020).

¹⁷ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020); UNDP (April 2020).

¹⁸ Though it is not indicated how many of these participants were victims/survivors, the report included two narratives of women who had been trafficked.

¹⁹ The Anti Trafficking Monitoring Group (30 April 2020).

²⁰ Polaris (24 March 2020).

²¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (April 2020).

²² Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

²³ Texas Education Agency (9 May 2020).

²⁴ Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS) (n.d.).

²⁵ Anti-Slavery International (30 April 2020).

simultaneously been diverted away from anti-slavery efforts.²⁶ Between March and June 2020, CAST saw a 165% increase in basic need expenditure on items such as food, housing and rental assistance, transportation and medical expenses compared to March–June 2019.²⁷ According to this source, this increase in expenditure was also witnessed by the International Rescue Committee Sacramento (California) who gave over \$28,000 in direct assistance to survivors from March to July 2020 which was more than the spending in the entire year of 2019. In their letter to policy makers,²⁸ Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST US) reported in July that one of their members, CAST, was providing emergency shelter for 50% more survivors as a result of Covid-19 including the use of hotel rooms. CAST reported that according to Journey Out (a NGO based in California) that, alongside this spike in demand for emergency accommodation and rental assistance, there had also been a 44.5% increase in cost incurred to secure this assistance.²⁹ They also reported that organisations offering emergency accommodation also had to pay for 14-day quarantine costs for hotel stays before clients were able to enter shelters. According to this same report, in the US, some shelters were forced to close due to government regulations, lack of funding but also due to outbreaks of Covid-19. A more recent CAST source,³⁰ discussed the limited capacity of shelters, long waiting times of referrals made via the US (federal) Department of Public and Social Services, and reported that accommodation was not being accessed because clients had fears about contracting the virus in shared accommodation. Restrictions on movement was an extra barrier facing out-of-state victims who were seeking accommodation.³¹ According to research conducted by Tech Against Trafficking,³² the reduction in funding (from corporate funding, grants and donations) aimed at anti-trafficking efforts led to bed shortages but also is expected to lead to the closure of agencies who provide essential services to survivors. They suggested that it was too soon to tell whether this decrease in funding would prove to be a long term response or whether it had been only a short-term reaction to the climate of uncertainty. Another source speculated that the demand for accommodation may hinder access to specialised outreach aimed at victims of human trafficking.³³

In the UK, concerns were raised that survivors could be left to experience homelessness in the wake of the pandemic once government support ends.³⁴ The Human Trafficking Foundation³⁵ highlighted in their report that:

While many victims of trafficking are not currently being exited from victim care contract accommodation due to movement restrictions, when restrictions are lifted, there will very likely be a surge in the number of victims of modern slavery at risk of homelessness – whether exiting victim care contract or asylum accommodation - and requiring urgent legal representation from experts in both trafficking and homelessness.

²⁶ Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Human Trafficking is a non-profit organisation based in LOS Angeles which is aiming to end modern slavery and human trafficking through its services to survivors and advocacy work.

²⁷ CAST (22 September 2020).

²⁸ Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST US) (16 July 2020).

²⁹ CAST (August 2020).

³⁰ CAST (22 September 2020).

³¹ Health, Education, Advocacy, Linkage (HEAL) (29 May 20).

³² Tech Against Trafficking (16 April 2020).

³³ HEAL (29 May 20).

³⁴ Human Trafficking Foundation (01 June 2020).

³⁵ The foundation brings together anti-slavery NGOs, parliamentarians and statutory services to facilitate policy changes and support survivors.

They also had been informed by another NGO that a survivor of domestic servitude in outreach support had been made destitute following the Home Office's decision to end her support following a negative conclusive grounds decision, it stated that:

Voice of Domestic Workers disclosed one of its members had been issued with a Home Office letter advising support would stop 9 days after receiving a negative conclusive grounds decision. If this person had been in victim care contract accommodation, she would have been guaranteed support until the end of June. Whereas she was abandoned and left destitute.³⁶

Provision of *timely* accommodation was an issue also raised in the Sisters not Stranger's survey³⁷ which found that a fifth of respondents were homeless and sleeping outside, on buses or reliant upon temporary arrangements for accommodation through acquaintances during the pandemic. Out of 111 of these women, 14% said they were forced into exploitative (illegal) work as a means to ensure they had shelter and basic needs met. Although the government had issued policies to house those at risk of homelessness (see section 4.1.2 on page 32), this survey found that some women with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) were not given emergency housing but were directed to the Home Office instead due to confusion around local councils' ability to legally house those with NRPF along with financial constraints as to how to do this. Other women had been expected to fill in applications for accommodation to the local authority online without access to the internet. An example is given of a survivor of trafficking having to spend two nights sleeping on the streets while awaiting emergency housing. There were reports of women being allocated housing far away from any existing support networks which was particularly distressing for victims of gender-based violence (GBV) and members of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community. In another source,³⁸ fears around transmission of the virus (for example those who work in healthcare) as well as financial hardship were listed as other reasons which had increased vulnerability to homelessness among survivors. Hestia (a service providing NGO that works with adults and children) shared a narrative about a survivor of sexual exploitation who had been living with a family of friends who then forced her to leave without being able to take her belongings during the pandemic when she began to display Covid-19 symptoms.³⁹ According to the source, an advocate had to quickly find emergency accommodation and in the end she was placed in a hotel room.

There were reports that people living in slavery had been made homeless by traffickers. This was discussed in a statement by End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT) USA who reported that due to decrease in work for sex workers, they had been forced out of their accommodation. In the UK, Humber Modern Slavery Partnership reported that because Covid-19 had hindered the work of organised crime groups, victims of trafficking had been made homeless but that when they had accessed support they had not necessarily been identified as victims of modern slavery.⁴⁰

Finally, sources⁴¹ (exploring UK, global, and US contexts) also discussed that those who experience homelessness were at a heightened risk of being trafficked, additionally, that survivors who have left their situations of slavery who do not have access to safe housing or

³⁶ Human Trafficking Foundation (01 June 2020).

³⁷ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020).

³⁸ Hope for Justice (April 2020).

³⁹ Hestia (30 April 2020).

⁴⁰ Humber Modern Slavery Partnership (30 April 2020).

⁴¹ Safe Horizon (21 May 2020); ATEST 15 May 2020; Hope for Justice (April 2020); United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (29 April 2020).

are evicted from housing would become at risk of re-exploitation. Other sources⁴² stated that homelessness could also increase the risks of transmitting Covid-19. The heightened risks of exploitation and re-trafficking will be explored later (See sections 3.4 on page 25 and 3.5 on page 30).

3.1.3 Basic needs and financial assistance

In the UK, the reduced capacity of services such as food banks and baby banks due to partial closures and a greater demand due to economic hardships placed an increased financial pressure on victims and survivors who would ordinarily rely upon these services to supplement any financial assistance they receive.⁴³ According to one source,⁴⁴ panic buying meant that their clients were unable to source cheaper brands that they would normally buy. Also that due to the rise in costs of essential items, this had meant they were unable to top-up credit on their phones which had then placed them at risk of being unable to call advocates. Some of those in Home Office National Asylum Support (NASS) accommodation did not have TVs, digital devices, or even a sofa to sit on and their children did not have access to books or craft resources.⁴⁵ Another UK-based NGO⁴⁶ discussed how survivors had faced challenges accessing universal credit during the lockdown and delayed payments.

US sources⁴⁷ frequently made reference to Congress' Covid-19 response legislation such as Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act but then went on to highlight how this funding was often insufficient and left marginalised groups such as victims and survivors of modern slavery behind, especially, those paid less than the legal wage such as nannies, cleaners, undocumented workers and domestic workers. The Governor of California, Newsom and his allocation of emergency funding in California which focused on those experiencing homelessness, at-risk youth, and foster children was criticised by CAST for side-lining other groups at risk of trafficking such as undocumented workers, unaccompanied asylum seeker children and those fleeing domestic violence.⁴⁸ For instance, an NGO⁴⁹ claimed that despite the CARES Act⁵⁰ agreed by Congress (27 March 2020), survivors themselves were unsure of how to access essential services. Domestic workers were highlighted⁵¹ as a population who would be excluded from accessing this financial assistance especially those who lacked 'proof' of employment (less than 8 % had a contract according to a survey conducted by the National Domestic Workers Alliance in 2012⁵²), are paid cash-in-hand, and those who are undocumented. Domestic workers would also struggle to access tax credits provided by this legislation because a Social Security number is needed whereas most domestic workers use a taxpayer identification number to file taxes.⁵³ These reports suggested that domestic workers would be at risk of not being paid by employers during this time and in the event that they were laid-off by employers then they would also not be eligible for unemployment insurance. One

⁴² CAST (22 September 2020); CAST (August 2020); CAST (April 2020); Hope for Justice (30 April 2020); UNODC (29 April 2020); ATTS and Freedom Network USA (24 April 2020); Polaris (24 March 2020).

⁴³ Hestia (30 April 2020); Justice and Care (30 April 2020); The Anti Trafficking Monitoring Group (30 April 2020).

⁴⁴ Hestia (30 April 2020).

⁴⁵ Hestia (30 April 2020).

⁴⁶ Hope for Justice (30 April 2020).

⁴⁷ Polaris (29 July 2020); ATEST and Freedom Network USA (24 April 2020); Polaris (14 April 2020); CAST (April 2020); Polaris (30 March 20).

⁴⁸ CAST (April 2020).

⁴⁹ Polaris (30 March 20).

⁵⁰ <https://www.congress.gov/bills/116/congress/senate-bill/3548/text?q=product+actualizaci%C3%B3n>

⁵¹ Polaris (29 July 2020); Polaris (14 April 2020).

⁵² National Domestic Workers Alliance (2012) Available at: <https://domesticworkers.org/sites/default/files/HomeEconomicsReport.pdf> referred to in Polaris' (14 April 2020) blog.

⁵³ Polaris (14 April 2020).

source⁵⁴ which outlined the intersectionality of human trafficking with race, ethnicity, culture, language, faith, family, gender and sexual identity, suggested that immigrants may encounter discrimination when seeking assistance alongside facing other legal and language barriers.

The US-based organisation, Safe Horizon, noted in April 2020 in a Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force report that survivors (that were previous clients) who had become financially stable previously were returning to access support as a result of losing employment or a reduction to their work hours.⁵⁵ This observation was echoed elsewhere in this Task Force report by another NGO working in Brooklyn. They also highlighted that survivors seeking work faced an additional stumbling block with regard to obtaining official identification such as a driving license required to secure work due to closures of the Department of Motor Vehicles.⁵⁶ One report⁵⁷ also discussed the impact Covid-19 has had on the availability of resources for survivors such as access to healthcare, social support services, safehouses and childcare stating that donations had decreased with fundraising events being unable to take place.

3.1.4 Legal advice and support

Prior to the pandemic, those seeking asylum in the UK faced numerous barriers including long delays and challenges accessing legal support from a fragmented legal aid system.⁵⁸ These issues have been further exacerbated as a result of Covid-19. A Human Trafficking Foundation report⁵⁹ discussed that a shortage of legal aid providers who have expertise in the area of trafficking in the UK meant that many would be denied access to quality legal representation. A UK source⁶⁰ described how Covid-19 caused disruption to organisations which offer legal support to victims of modern slavery and help bring exploiters to justice. A UK Government report⁶¹ expressed concerns that the delays caused by the pandemic would hinder the determination of survivors to take cases to court and give evidence. This issue was also raised in two US reports⁶² that discussed how those who distrust the legal system would be further deterred from testifying against their traffickers and claiming their legal rights due to closures and delays caused by the pandemic. Another UK source⁶³ described survivors as being unable to access their Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (ECAT) entitlements in entirety including information about their legal rights in their own language due to the challenges raised by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Concerns were raised in a number of sources⁶⁴ that survivors in the UK were not able to have in-person legal support due to social distancing measures and that this had left survivors in limbo as their cases had been put on hold. In relation to this, another source⁶⁵ claimed that survivors were being put at a potential risk of being wrongfully arrested for immigration offences as a result of not being able to secure necessary documents from embassies or immigration advice due to the pandemic. Hope for Justice (a service providing NGO) referred to a case study in which a survivor had been cautioned by police three times for breaching

⁵⁴ HEAL (29 May 20).

⁵⁵ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

⁵⁶ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

⁵⁷ ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 20).

⁵⁸ Anti Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit (ATLEU) (30 April 2020).

⁵⁹ Human Trafficking Foundation (01 June 2020).

⁶⁰ Hestia (01 July 2020).

⁶¹ HM Government (26 June 2020).

⁶² ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 20); National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 20).

⁶³ The Anti Trafficking Monitoring Group (30 April 2020).

⁶⁴ Human Trafficking Foundation (01 June 2020); Wagner and Huang (01 May 2020); ATLEU (30 April 2020); Hope for Justice (30 April 2020); The Anti Trafficking Monitoring Group (30 April 2020).

⁶⁵ Justice and Care (30 April 2020).

lockdown measures when he was trying to access Wi-Fi. This was also compounded by language barriers.⁶⁶

Delays with receiving Conclusive Grounds decisions in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) was described as a hindrance to victims of child criminal exploitation by another UK report.⁶⁷ Survivors of sexual exploitation and forced marriage were identified by a global NGO report⁶⁸ as those who had experienced delays in accessing legal support in the criminal justice process. According to one charity that works with child survivors in the UK, some of the young people were preoccupied that they had been misrepresented or misunderstood because their witness statements were compiled by immigration solicitors without their in-person involvement.⁶⁹ They raised concerns that this may undermine the credibility of their stories by the Home Office. Another source⁷⁰ said that when caseworkers were able to carry out in-person support that many showed mental health symptoms and had a lot to share but were unable to do so without interpreters.

It was also indicated that survivors faced barriers accessing *remote* legal support due to lack of technology and internet access (see section 5.1.5 on page 47 for further analysis of digital exclusion) but also that some service users needed support using digital resources including those with learning disabilities.⁷¹ Young adults (aged 18-25) living in adult asylum or NRM accommodation whose parents are victims of modern slavery were not eligible for the Department of Education's allocation of technology and internet access in response to the pandemic, and therefore, this hindered their ability to access and continue their remote learning.⁷²

A UK report⁷³ identified a lack of privacy along with digital exclusion as barriers to survivors engaging in remote meetings with legal representatives, statutory interviews or other support services. Many survivors require an interpreter with cases in the NRM and asylum systems and yet they may encounter barriers to communication when this is done remotely especially when these issues are in tandem with factors such as disabilities. Survivors may not have childcare provision and therefore feel unable to share their narratives when meeting with services such as legal representatives or the Home Office. Or if they do speak with legal representatives, would be put in the challenging position of trying to share details whilst simultaneously caring for and protecting their children who may be present. This source claimed that this would also pose difficulties for service providers when it comes to building rapport with clients and ascertaining their narratives. Not being able to avail of legal support services, along with issues with accessing services and support such as safe accommodation and healthcare, places survivors at a greater risk of being re-trafficked - a risk which is discussed in section 3.5 on page 30.

In the US, three sources⁷⁴ indicated that there had been a significant increase in demand for legal services since March. CAST reported an 84% increase in demand for legal aid by survivors but that actually accessing these services had been difficult with new clients being

⁶⁶ Hope for Justice (30 April 2020).

⁶⁷ Stop & Prevent Adolescent Criminal Exploitation (SPACE) (30 April 2020).

⁶⁸ Wagner and Huang (01 May 2020).

⁶⁹ The Baca Charity (30 April 2020).

⁷⁰ Ella's (30 April 2020).

⁷¹ Freedom from Torture and Helen Bamber Foundation (May 2020); ATLEU (30 April 2020); Hope for Justice (30 April 2020); The Baca Charity (30 April 2020).

⁷² The Anti Trafficking Monitoring Group (30 April 2020).

⁷³ Freedom from Torture and Helen Bamber Foundation (May 2020).

⁷⁴ CAST (August 2020); ATEST (16 July 2020); National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 20).

turned away.⁷⁵ According to ALIGHT (a US-based service provider which connects survivors to free legal services), in March 2020, there had been three times more requests for legal assistance from survivors than in March 2019.⁷⁶ Another source⁷⁷ reported that immigration cases were continuing but that issues had surfaced around obtaining signatures and paperwork. Concerns around securing child custody for parent survivors of modern slavery, who had not secured this prior to the pandemic due to nationwide court closures, were also raised in another report.⁷⁸

3.2 Risk of exposure and transmission of Covid-19

No UK sources gave any indication of infection rates of Covid-19 among victims and survivors of modern slavery or if rates of infection were higher among this population or whether complications from the virus were more prominent in this group. Neither did any sources include narratives of survivors who had contracted Covid-19. However, one source⁷⁹ did describe incidents where their clients were hospitalised during the pandemic, including for Covid-19, but that their advocates were not recognised by hospital staff as emergency contacts and therefore, information about the health of the survivor patients was not disclosed. In the US, Covenant House (a service provider that works with homeless and trafficked youth in New York) had reported that there had been outbreaks of Covid-19 living in shelters that accommodate young people.⁸⁰

Many sources⁸¹ highlighted that survivors of modern slavery are a population that are disproportionately at risk of contracting and transmitting the virus due to interconnected issues such as poverty, over-crowded accommodation, lack of ability or choice to adopt preventative measures, pre-existing health conditions, workplaces that are unregulated, and issues accessing healthcare. Despite evidence that indicates that Covid-19 disproportionately affects people of colour both in the US⁸² and the UK,⁸³ the risks facing Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) survivors was only discussed in one UK source⁸⁴ which referred to a Public Health England report into the impact of Covid-19 on BAME communities.⁸⁵ Notably, however, in US sources, racial disparities, in relation to both the risks of being trafficked and the risks of contracting Covid-19, were discussed more frequently.⁸⁶ One blog stated:

Poverty, and the unequal protection of people of color under the law, are key risk factors in determining who gets trafficked and who gets COVID-19.⁸⁷

⁷⁵ CAST (August 2020).

⁷⁶ National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 20).

⁷⁷ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

⁷⁸ National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 20).

⁷⁹ Hestia (30 April 2020).

⁸⁰ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

⁸¹ Polaris (29 July 2020); Anti-slavery International (1 April 2020); Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (May 2020); Hope for Justice (April 2020); SPACE (30 April 2020); The Baca Charity (30 April 2020).

⁸² See Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2021) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html>

⁸³ See Public Health England (2020b)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908434/Disparities_in_the_risk_and_outcomes_of_COVID_August_2020_update.pdf

⁸⁴ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020).

⁸⁵ Public Health England (2020a)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/892376/COVID_stakeholder_engagement_synthesis_beyond_the_data.pdf

⁸⁶ ECPAT USA (19 September 2020); Polaris (29 July 2020); Polaris (7 April 2020).

⁸⁷ Polaris (29 July 2020).

3.2.1 For those in over-crowded accommodation

A report by Verité discussed over-crowded housing (and working conditions) that migrant workers are often subjected to and how this increases their risk of being exposed to Covid-19.⁸⁸ Furthermore, they suggested that migrant farmworkers faced a particularly high risk of contracting the virus and of being trafficked. This report also suggested that migrant agricultural workers are also less inclined to avail of medical assistance or to report trafficking because of fears of being deported. UK sources⁸⁹ referred to over-crowded Home Office or NASS accommodation and how this placed survivors at a higher risk of contracting the virus since it was difficult to practice social distancing or self-isolation. One source⁹⁰ stated that clients who had Covid symptoms were informed that self-isolation would be impossible by some UK NASS accommodation providers. An NGO report⁹¹ stated that if required to self-isolate, many survivors may not have the support networks to do shopping on their behalf due to services being closed or service providers being unable to provide in-person support like before the pandemic. Furthermore, many did not have access to devices and Wi-Fi or the language and/or technical skills to order online shopping, as Justice and Care (an NGO that works with the police to disrupt criminal networks and support victims/survivors) reported:

Covid-19 is challenging for clients who are unable to leave the house as many local services who previously may have assisted are also working remotely and cannot necessarily assist. Survivors face significant barriers in obtaining basic food supplies, as they do not necessarily have the financial means, technology, language skills and or resources to conduct online shopping without extra outside support.⁹²

Another source⁹³ remarked that they had received reports of inadequate cleaning equipment from those who provide accommodation to trafficked people, asylum seekers and refugees.

3.2.2 For those in exploitation

The challenges of containing the virus in trafficking situations was a focus of some of the global sources.⁹⁴ One source⁹⁵ stated that conspiracies can pose a risk for children, especially those which belittle the risks of the virus and that cast doubt on whether children contract it. Risks to migrant workers of contracting the virus whilst traveling in crowded modes of transport or in border queues were also highlighted.⁹⁶ Another source⁹⁷ suggested that preventing asylum seekers from entering a country may lead them to travel to seek asylum elsewhere and therefore, they may contribute to spreading Covid-19. There were also accounts in this source that survivors were being placed in detention at borders for quarantining purposes. In a letter⁹⁸ written at the start of the pandemic by the European Federation of Food Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT), concerns were raised about the increased vulnerability of migrant workers of contracting Covid-19 due to their inability to observe social distancing and that the 'informal settlements' where they temporarily live could become 'hotspots' for the pandemic.

⁸⁸ Verité (24 April 2020).

⁸⁹ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020); Hestia (01 July 2020); Helen Bamber Foundation (30 April 2020); Anti-Slavery International (1 April 2020).

⁹⁰ Hestia (30 April 2020).

⁹¹ Justice and Care (30 April 2020).

⁹² Justice and Care (30 April 2020).

⁹³ Anti-Slavery International (1 April 2020).

⁹⁴ Anti-slavery.org (June 2020); UNDP (April 2020).

⁹⁵ The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (May 2020).

⁹⁶ Anti-slavery.org (June 2020).

⁹⁷ United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) (16 March 2020).

⁹⁸ European Federation of Food Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT) (24 March 2020).

3.2.3 For those who lack choice when it comes to adopting protective measures

A source⁹⁹ discussed the unlikelihood that traffickers would consider the wellbeing or health and safety of those they exploit. Risks to victims of child labour of contracting the virus due to lack of hygiene practices or protective equipment were highlighted.¹⁰⁰ A report¹⁰¹ claimed that migrant women, especially domestic workers, were more likely to be exposed to the virus. According to one source,¹⁰² those subjected to forced labour may be more at risk to Covid-19 due to increased hours of work and unsafe work environments. Survivors who are essential workers are at a heightened risk since they are unable to work from home and may also have underlying health conditions (to be discussed below in section 3.2.4 on page 20).

The lack of *choice* afforded to victims of forced labour and those in commercial sex settings when it comes to mask wearing and social distancing was discussed. Three other US sources¹⁰³ stated that victims of sex trafficking were unable to practice recommended safety measures and that despite the stay at home orders, sex workers were still seeing clients.

Some workers may not have the financial stability or government assistance to be able to afford to self-isolate if presented with Covid-19 symptoms.¹⁰⁴ FLEX recounted the situation of a domestic worker in the UK who had stated:

I don't have the luxury to not go to work because I need to work to save up for my visa to be in this country.¹⁰⁵

This once again highlights the lack of choice victims and survivors have when it comes to taking protective measures in relation to Covid-19.

3.2.4 For those with pre-existing health conditions

Three UK reports¹⁰⁶ focused on underlying health issues faced by survivors (such as HIV, tuberculosis and hepatitis) related to their history of exploitation and how these pre-existing health conditions could place survivors at a higher risk of developing complications from Covid-19. Another report¹⁰⁷ from a UK charity that works with young people raised concerns about initial health assessments of newcomers to the service (and the country) that were postponed and how without these checks it made the young people in care more vulnerable to the virus and also posed a risk to the wider public.

Survivors with a history of addiction or ongoing addiction issues were also highlighted in a number of sources. One NGO report¹⁰⁸ stated that people in the UK with drug addictions were at a heightened risk of being exploited to sustain their addictions stating that methadone was no longer being prescribed. Cancellations of procedures for pre-existing health issues had caused anxiety for survivors according to another report.¹⁰⁹

Pre-existing medical issues and '*weak immune systems*' due to a lack of adequate sleep and nutritious food, drug and alcohol abuse, and trauma related to exploitation and trafficking were

⁹⁹ Verité (24 April 2020).

¹⁰⁰ The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (May 2020).

¹⁰¹ UNDP (April 2020).

¹⁰² ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 20).

¹⁰³ HEAL (29 May 2020); ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 20); Journey Out (April 2020).

¹⁰⁴ Ryna Sherazi of Anti-Slavery International (n.d.).

¹⁰⁵ FLEX (01 April 2020).

¹⁰⁶ Hope for Justice (30 April 2020); SPACE (30 April 2020); The Baca Charity (30 April 2020).

¹⁰⁷ The Baca Charity (30 April 2020).

¹⁰⁸ Hampshire PCC (30 April 2020).

¹⁰⁹ Victim Care Contract subcontractor caseworker (30 April 2020).

also highlighted in three US sources¹¹⁰ as a factor which increases this population's risk of contracting Covid-19. One source¹¹¹ stated that developing the virus for some survivors could be 'a death sentence' due to their underlying health issues. Potential risks of contracting the virus facing survivors inside prisons were raised by one of these sources, as well.¹¹²

3.2.5 For those who face issues accessing healthcare

A key theme that emerged from a number of sources (UK, US and global) related to issues around accessing healthcare: some survivors faced barriers in accessing healthcare services, and others were reluctant to access the healthcare services available to them.

In relation to the former, US sources¹¹³ focused on how survivors' access to healthcare is hindered by not being able to afford healthcare or insurance and how this has been exacerbated during the pandemic. Victims of sex trafficking were reported to have not been accessing healthcare, in particular sexual health services, as frequently as before the pandemic, according to a Human Trafficking Task Force in Arizona.¹¹⁴ A blog, published by Polaris,¹¹⁵ discussed the higher number of deaths among people of colour in the US and how this is related to poverty and lack of access to healthcare experienced by this population. In the UK, one source¹¹⁶ noted how survivors' lack of internet access and limited use of digital devices had made healthcare access even more difficult during the pandemic.

Regarding survivors' own reluctance to access healthcare services, a number of sources discussed how survivors often did not avail of healthcare due to fears around deportation, language barriers, unaffordable costs, and being controlled by traffickers.¹¹⁷ One report¹¹⁸ claimed that medical assistance was not sought by survivors in the UK when they displayed symptoms of the virus because of concerns around their immigration status. They suggested that this put not only survivors at risk but the general public as well. Due to the barriers survivors face in accessing healthcare in the UK, one source¹¹⁹ commented that they were more likely to seek late treatment for conditions such as Covid-19 which may become more serious by the time treatment is sought. According to the Sisters not Stranger's survey (conducted with 115 women), 21 stated that they felt unable to avail of the National Health Service (NHS) services when they or family members presented Covid-19 symptoms. The main reason listed was over concerns of being charged by the NHS but other reasons included 'experiences of racism in healthcare'. Many respondents who presented Covid-19 symptoms did not get tested but those who did were often turned away because they were told they needed a car for drive-through testing.¹²⁰

¹¹⁰ Lipenga (The Human Trafficking Legal Center) (16 July 2020); ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 20); National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 2020).

¹¹¹ Lipenga (The Human Trafficking Legal Center) (16 July 2020).

¹¹² National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 2020).

¹¹³ Coalition of Immokalee workers (22 September 2020); Polaris (29 July 2020); Polaris (7 April 2020).

¹¹⁴ Mayor's Human Trafficking Task Force- Arizona (July 2020).

¹¹⁵ Polaris (7 April 2020).

¹¹⁶ Hampshire PCC (30 April 2020).

¹¹⁷ Rachel Searle of Safe Horizon (21 May 2020); Human Rights Initiative (30 April 2020); Hampshire PCC (30 April 2020); Verité (24 April 2020).

¹¹⁸ Hampshire PCC (30 April 2020).

¹¹⁹ Helen Bamber Foundation (30 April 2020).

¹²⁰ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020).

3.3 Actual impacts and potential risks to mental health

Many sources¹²¹ discussed the impact that the pandemic has had on the mental health and wellbeing of survivors.

3.3.1 *Issues accessing mental health services*

Four reports¹²² from UK-based NGOs had found that there had been issues accessing mental health services such as counselling, despite the rise in demand for such support. Access had been hindered by the inability of survivors to avail of remote services due to not having digital devices, the skills to use them, or internet access¹²³ as well as services being reduced. One source¹²⁴ drew attention to how the reduction in the provision of specialist trauma-focused therapy in the UK would pose challenges for survivors who are distressed after sharing experiences remotely in interviews.

In the US, a briefing¹²⁵ issued by the Ambassador-at-large office to monitor and combat trafficking in persons expressed concerns that survivors, who have left their situations of slavery, may have had reduced access to counselling services and support groups. Another US source¹²⁶ noted that victims and survivors may face barriers accessing remote mental health support due to likely digital poverty as a result of financial and housing instability which hinders access to technology and Wi-Fi.

3.3.2 *In-person support missed by survivors and the potential for safeguarding issues to be missed*

In the UK, the shift from in-person support to remote support has also negatively impacted the mental health of survivors in other ways. Survivor Alliance's report¹²⁷ which was inspired by 'social calls'¹²⁸ with members of a survivor network stated that regular contact with caseworkers can provide a sense of stability as well as resources, advice, information, and also companionship at times. Another connected theme which emerged was how the lack of participation in different support groups and education had also negatively impacted their mental health. This had led to feelings of depression and anxiety since these groups provide community and routine, as articulated in the Survivor Alliance report:

The regular contact with case workers gives survivors a sense of stability and security. Caseworkers provide resources, advice, information and sometimes companionship. Now, these relationships have been reduced to phone calls that do not provide the same relief for their difficulties. The isolation conditions that survivors live in are usually relieved by their participation among different support community groups or going to college. These groups are not gathering anymore, so survivors become more vulnerable to a situation of anxiety and depression.¹²⁹

¹²¹ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020); Hestia (01 July 2020); Human Trafficking Foundation (01 June 2020); Esiovwa and Lozano (Survivor Alliance) (01 May 2020); ADAVU (30 April 2020); The Baca Charity (30 April 2020); ATLEU (30 April 2020); Ella's (30 April 2020); Justice and Care (30 April 2020); Victim Care Contract subcontractor caseworker (30 April 2020).

¹²² Hestia (01 July 2020); Freedom from Torture and Helen Bamber Foundation (May 2020); Esiovwa and Lozano (01 May 2020); Justice and Care (30 April 2020).

¹²³ Hestia (01 July 2020).

¹²⁴ Freedom from Torture and Helen Bamber Foundation (May 2020).

¹²⁵ John Cootn Richmond, Ambassador-at-large office to monitor and combat trafficking in persons (25 June 2020).

¹²⁶ National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 2020).

¹²⁷ Esiovwa and Lozano (Survivor Alliance) (01 May 2020).

¹²⁸ Social calls take place fortnightly and provide an opportunity for (worldwide) members of Survivor Alliance to socialise with one another.

¹²⁹ Esiovwa and Lozano (Survivor Alliance) (01 May 2020).

The important role education (at various levels) and voluntary work plays in the recovery of survivors was also discussed in another report¹³⁰ and how closures of learning institutes and workplaces is expected to have a negative impact on their recovery journeys.

Two UK reports¹³¹ highlighted how a lack of in-person legal support may lead to safeguarding issues being missed. One of these reports¹³² also discussed how victims found the thought of sharing their experiences of trafficking, remotely, too distressing and they called the lack of follow-up in-person support concerning. A US source¹³³ stated that survivors' inability to access public spaces would hinder their ability to build or rebuild supportive and healthy social networks.

3.3.3 Pre-existing mental health conditions worsened and past traumas triggered

Many survivors have pre-existing mental health issues which have been negatively affected by the lack of in-person support, lockdown measures, isolation, lack of routine, reduced participation in education, uncertainty regarding their asylum status, issues accessing mental health services and accommodation, lack of childcare, fear of the future and digital poverty. For instance, the survey¹³⁴ conducted by Sisters not Strangers reported that 82% of the respondents stated that their mental health had been negatively impacted during the pandemic due to isolation and disruption to support services. A report¹³⁵ from a UK-based NGO found that the pre-existing mental health issues of the women they work with had deteriorated due to limitations on social interactions and there had been an increase in safeguarding concerns. They reported that these women had felt 'trapped' as a result of lockdown measures which had triggered trauma from their past experiences of exploitation. This was also reiterated in other reports¹³⁶ including one compiled by an NGO which works with child survivors in the UK in which it was reported that a young person had said something along the lines of, 'I might as well been in the camp' – referring to when they were in a slave labour camp in Libya. A UK report¹³⁷ also mentioned an incident where a client attempted to end her life and another source¹³⁸ reported there had been cases of self-harm as well as suicide attempts of asylum seeking women during the pandemic. In one UK source,¹³⁹ which referred to the negative impact that lockdown had had on the mental health of survivors, suggested that this may then impinge upon survivors' abilities to recount their narratives coherently to authorities. City Hearts (a service providing NGO in the UK) claimed that 60% of their service users had no internet access and 15% had no access to a digital device. They made a link between digital poverty and how this hindered survivors' access to mental health services, their overall mental health and wellbeing and also their risk of being re-trafficked.¹⁴⁰

A global report¹⁴¹ raised concerns around the potential further traumatising of child survivors in relation to being more likely able to find abuse materials due to increased distribution of Child Sexual Exploitation Material (CSEM). When discussing actual impacts and potential

¹³⁰ Human Trafficking Foundation (01 June 2020)

¹³¹ Human Trafficking Foundation (01 June 2020); Ella's (30 April 2020).

¹³² ATLEU (30 April 2020).

¹³³ National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 2020).

¹³⁴ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020).

¹³⁵ Ella's (30 April 2020).

¹³⁶ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020); Esiovwa and Lozano (Survivor Alliance) (01 May 2020); The Baca Charity (30 April 2020).

¹³⁷ ADAVU (30 April 2020).

¹³⁸ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020).

¹³⁹ Freedom from Torture and Helen Bamber Foundation (May 2020).

¹⁴⁰ City Hearts (30 April 2020).

¹⁴¹ Wagner and Huang (01 May 2020).

risks to survivors' mental health, US sources¹⁴² also discussed how stay-at-home orders and social isolation had been triggers of trauma. A survivor-leader in her essay reports how other survivors around the United States had felt re-traumatised, depressed, anxious and unsafe and that others had felt panic due to being unable to pay bills.¹⁴³ This sentiment was also reiterated in other sources, including one published at the start of the pandemic by a survivor, which stated that whilst the isolation was incomparable to that which most survivors had faced, it was serving as a negative reminder to many from this community.¹⁴⁴ This source also discussed how chronic stress had been exacerbated by fears surrounding Covid-19 such as contracting or dying from the virus and that the unpredictability of the pandemic had been a trigger of past traumas. Social distancing was also discussed in this blog and how this could remind survivors of how their traffickers controlled their interactions in the past, and that as a result, this may lead to survivors not wishing to comply with government guidance. Social distancing as a trigger was also discussed in another US source as it can imitate exploitation previously experienced such as being isolated, not in control, the unpredictability of each day and living in fear.¹⁴⁵

One US source¹⁴⁶ shared that a survivor who testified in federal court just before the pandemic felt anxious that her former traffickers could harm her, as first responders would be diverted to deal with Covid-19 related calls and therefore arrive too late to help her. According to a factsheet¹⁴⁷ compiled by CAST, Arm of Care had reported youth and young adult survivors were more fearful about the future as a result of the pandemic.

3.3.4 Anxiety around immigration status

A key theme which was discussed in depth in the UK sources was the link between the uncertainty around survivors' immigration status and their mental health.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, how anxiety had been exacerbated during the pandemic due to lack of information from the Home Office and having to await immigration decisions in isolation with more time to worry about it since. As a Victim Care Contract subcontractor commented, '[without leave to remain the \[conclusive grounds\] has no real meaning for them](#)'.¹⁴⁹ This same source described this as the most prominent issue affecting clients' mental health stating that many had reached '[breaking-point](#)' as a consequence of delays and that they had heard a survivor describe it as being '[like a death-sentence](#)'. Another report¹⁵⁰ indicated that lack of information from the Home Office was hindering the well-being and recovery of survivors.

According to a US source,¹⁵¹ survivors in the US were anxious that Covid-19 would increase their visibility and risk of being reported to immigration authorities. This had also made them apprehensive about accessing support from public health systems.

¹⁴² CAST (22 September 2020); ECPAT USA (4 August 2020); Lipenga (The Human Trafficking Legal Center) (16 July 2020); John Cootn Richmond, Ambassador-at-large office to monitor and combat trafficking in persons (25 June 2020); HEAL (29 May 2020) ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 2020); National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 2020); Eduardo and Powell (Sanctuary for Families) (27 March 2020).

¹⁴³ Lipenga (The Human Trafficking Legal Center) (16 July 2020).

¹⁴⁴ Eduardo and Powell (Sanctuary for Families) (27 March 2020).

¹⁴⁵ ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 2020).

¹⁴⁶ Safe Horizon (21 May 2020).

¹⁴⁷ CAST (22 September 2020).

¹⁴⁸ Esiovwa and Lozano (Survivor Alliance) (01 May 2020); Victim Care Contract subcontractor caseworker (30 April 2020).

¹⁴⁹ Victim Care Contract subcontractor caseworker (30 April 2020).

¹⁵⁰ Esiovwa and Lozano (Survivor Alliance) (01 May 2020).

¹⁵¹ Safe Horizon (25 June).

3.4 Heightened risk of exploitation

Across the different sources, a rise in modern slavery and human trafficking was expected as a direct consequence of the pandemic. It was predicted that Covid-19 would exacerbate some of the complex contributing factors that lead to modern slavery such as poverty, lack of protective legislation, and lack of labour protections and that this would increase the amount of people who will become potential targets for exploitation.¹⁵² A widely expressed concern across publications was that the pandemic and the subsequent economic downturn would exacerbate existing inequalities in every country regardless of its economic strength.¹⁵³

3.4.1 For children and young people

Children were identified as a population who are at a heightened risk of exploitation as a consequence of the pandemic. The global sources¹⁵⁴ tended to focus on child labour, child marriage, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence towards girls, whereas, the UK sources¹⁵⁵ were centred more specifically on sexual exploitation and briefly mentioned the criminal exploitation of children. There was also an explicit focus on the role school closures had played in increasing risks to children. A UK Government report¹⁵⁶ discussed the potential risks from criminal exploitation teenagers face if they are not in school. Newly arrived unaccompanied asylum seeker children into the UK were identified as those at a heightened risk of being trafficked due to having to quarantine for 14 days upon arrival in unsupervised accommodation.¹⁵⁷

There were numerous reports that Covid-19 had made traffickers shift their efforts online so as to recruit and exploit people.¹⁵⁸ A UN report¹⁵⁹ found that traffickers had recruited and groomed victims via online methods during the pandemic and that there had been indications that trafficking for online sexual exploitation and demand for child sexual abuse material had also increased. A charity working with child survivors living in the UK indicated that young people would be targeted by exploiters taking advantage of the disruption to the provision of in-person support that young people had been provided with pre-Covid-19.¹⁶⁰ Children were identified, in the global-focused sources, as being at an increased risk of being forced to beg, work, become trafficked and married as a consequence of loss of household income.¹⁶¹

A reoccurring theme across the sources¹⁶² (including global, UK and US sources) was that online child abuse and exploitation had increased during the pandemic. A UK Government report¹⁶³ found that online child abuse and sexual exploitation had risen during the first four

¹⁵² The Centre for Social Justice and Justice Care (1 July 2020); UN (1 June 2020); Alliance 8.7 Secretariat (01 July 2020).

¹⁵³ Polaris (07 April 2020); Polaris (24 March 2020).

¹⁵⁴ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and UN Women (30 July 2020); UN (01 June 2020); Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (May 2020); Wagner and Huang (01 May 2020); UNHCR (26 March 2020); UNHCR (16 March 2020).

¹⁵⁵ Her Majesty's (HM) Government (26 June 2020); Hampshire PCC (30 April 2020).

¹⁵⁶ HM Government (26 June 2020).

¹⁵⁷ The Baca Charity (30 April 2020).

¹⁵⁸ John Cotton Richmond, Ambassador-At-Large (7 October 2020); OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and UN Women (30 July 2020); ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 2020); Wagner and Huang (01 May 2020); Tech Against Traffic (16 April 2020).

¹⁵⁹ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and UN Women (30 July 2020).

¹⁶⁰ The Baca Charity (30 April 2020).

¹⁶¹ ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 2020); Tech Against Traffic (16 April 2020); Anti-Slavery International (1 April 2020).

¹⁶² John Cotton Richmond, Ambassador-At-Large (7 October 2020); CAST (22 September 2020); HM Government (26 June 2020); Konrad (June 2020); HEAL (29 May 2020); ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 2020); Texas Education Agency (9 May 2020); Wagner and Huang (01 May 2020); Hampshire PCC (30 April 2020); Tech Against Traffic (16 April 2020); National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 2020).

¹⁶³ HM Government (26 June 2020).

months of the pandemic in the UK. Another UK source¹⁶⁴ added that there was an increased risk of children of sex workers being exploited as their parent(s) may be required to work from home under new restrictions.

The heightened risk to children of being trafficked for sexual exploitation was a preoccupation across the US sources as well. According to a blog¹⁶⁵ posted by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children at the start of the Covid-19 outbreak, they had become aware that exploiters were:

Openly discussing the pandemic as an opportunity to entice unsupervised children into producing sexually explicit material.

Furthermore, a source¹⁶⁶ stated that law enforcement in the San Francisco Bay Area region reported a rise in the number of children being groomed online. A US report¹⁶⁷ published by the Research-to-Policy Collaboration highlighted how school closures had placed children at a heightened risk of being groomed online and also coerced by relatives to be used in the live-stream child sex abuse trade. A blog¹⁶⁸ discussed the important role teachers play (as well as healthcare professionals and social workers) in recognising the signs of trafficking, often before others do, but that remote learning would have a negative impact on their ability to do this. This source also discussed how an increase in screen time would increase a child's risk of being targeted online by abusers. They reported that social media and dating apps were being used to exploit victims and suggested that school closures and remote learning may result in a spike in trafficking among children and young people.

Traffickers were reported to have been utilising social media platforms as a vehicle to target children for the purposes of sexual exploitation who were also spending more time online unsupervised due to school closures and reduced childcare options.¹⁶⁹ The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) issued warnings to parents, caregivers and educators in relation to the heightened risk of children being targeted by traffickers. They did this at the very start of the pandemic in March,¹⁷⁰ and later in October, they issued a Public Service Announcement. Again, this was done to alert parents that children were at an increased risk of being targeted online. In the source they shared a case of a 13 year old girl who had gone missing and was later rescued by Customs and Border Protection after being groomed online.¹⁷¹ College students were also identified as an at risk group when it came to being trafficked during campus closures especially those who had previously relied on jobs in hospitality and retail which had been closed due to the pandemic.¹⁷²

The connection between school closures and risks of forced labour and child marriage were also discussed in a UN source.¹⁷³ This report used modelling to predict that the pandemic would result in a further 13 million more child marriages globally due to a combination of factors such as lockdown measures, economic instability and disruptions to support services and

¹⁶⁴ Hampshire PCC (30 April 2020).

¹⁶⁵ National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (17 June 2020).

¹⁶⁶ CAST (22 September 2020).

¹⁶⁷ Konrad (June 2020).

¹⁶⁸ ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 2020).

¹⁶⁹ ECPAT USA 30 July 2020); EXPAT USA (08 April 2020).

¹⁷⁰ FBI (23 March 2020).

¹⁷¹ FBI (15 October 2020).

¹⁷² National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 2020).

¹⁷³ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (24 April).

programmes. Displaced persons were also identified by a UN source¹⁷⁴ as those at an increased risk of sexual exploitation.

3.4.2 For women and girls

UN agencies shared reports¹⁷⁵ of a rise in gender-based violence since the onset of the pandemic and their reports¹⁷⁶ suggested that these rates would continue to climb globally. In the UK, the survey conducted by Sisters not Strangers reported that women were trapped during lockdown with abusive partners and there had been incidents of violence, honour violence, and sexual violence but that many women had felt they were unable to leave because of uncertainty around access to safe housing or the ability to move during the lockdown.¹⁷⁷ In the US, a source¹⁷⁸ found that Covid-19 had been used by abusers as a tool to isolate, and withhold medical assistance and finances from victims of domestic violence. They suggested that those fleeing domestic violence would trigger a rise in sex and labour trafficking as a longer-term consequence of the pandemic. 'Social distancing' was also described as a factor which hindered the ability of victims to escape their traffickers and may maximise traffickers' ability to control those they exploit.¹⁷⁹

Global reports¹⁸⁰ referred to the closure of support services to women as one of the issues contributing to the heightened risk to girls and women of violence. Three UK sources¹⁸¹ discussed reduced access to health screening, sexual health clinics and contraceptives due to school and wider closures as a result of the pandemic and intimated that these factors would pose further health risks to children and women, in particular. Three US sources¹⁸² described how the stay-at-home orders had increased the risk of partner exploitation for survivors and that it also had reduced opportunities for intervention. Staff at Safe Horizon's Family Court (a US NGO) reported that legal staff had received requests for orders of protection due to acts of domestic violence (among other forms of abuse) for those trapped with their traffickers due to the stay-at-home orders.¹⁸³

3.4.3 Due to deteriorating working conditions

Deteriorating working conditions was discussed across sources as a trigger for the enslavement of already marginalised groups. Sources¹⁸⁴ with a global focus identified undocumented migrants, seasonal workers, guestworkers and domestic workers as those facing a higher risk of becoming vulnerable to trafficking networks as a result of the pandemic. Migrant workers who had secured employment abroad via their traffickers may have been left stranded and unable to return to their home countries, unemployed and vulnerable to debt bondage.¹⁸⁵ It was reported by two sources¹⁸⁶ that unemployment would also have a huge impact on the families of migrant workers who rely on migrant remittances. Undocumented workers were discussed in a US source¹⁸⁷ as those at a greater risk of not only being exploited as a result of the pandemic but also of not reporting exploitation as a result of their immigration

¹⁷⁴ UNHCR (26 March 2020).

¹⁷⁵ UN Women (April 2020); UNODC (29 April 2020).

¹⁷⁶ UN (01 June 2020); UNHCR (26 March 2020).

¹⁷⁷ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020); UNDP (April 2020).

¹⁷⁸ CAST (April 2020).

¹⁷⁹ ArtWorks for Freedom (16 April 2020).

¹⁸⁰ UN Women (April 2020); UNHCR (26 March 2020).

¹⁸¹ Hampshire PCC (30 April 2020); Hope for Justice (April 2020); The Baca Charity (30 April 2020).

¹⁸² HEAL (29 May 2020); Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020); National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 2020).

¹⁸³ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

¹⁸⁴ UN (01 June 2020); Verité (24 April 2020); Walk Free Foundation (23 April 2020).

¹⁸⁵ Verité (24 April 2020); Walk Free Foundation (23 April 2020).

¹⁸⁶ UN (01 June 2020); Walk Free Foundation (23 April 2020).

¹⁸⁷ National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 2020).

status. Additionally, this source claimed that many of this population would not be eligible for government relief packages.

Concerns around the heightened risk of modern slavery in supply chains due to Covid-19 were also raised alongside calls for the international community to evaluate supply chains in the aftermath of the pandemic.¹⁸⁸ Other sources¹⁸⁹ discussed how due to economic disruption, companies may nurture environments which enable exploitation to thrive by forgoing labour inspections and hiring cheaper forms of labour.

A UK report¹⁹⁰ predicted that demand for forced labour would increase as a way to save costs. According to a FLEX briefing,¹⁹¹ low-paid “key” workers were under pressure to work in unsafe conditions. This source also discussed how due to Covid-19 restrictions, labour inspections had been reduced or that some agencies were conducting these remotely despite the fact that these play an important role in preventing and addressing exploitative practices. Workers in construction, agriculture, healthcare and domestic work were named in another source¹⁹² as those who were likely to be expected to work in unsafe conditions and for longer working hours. In certain sectors supplying (suddenly) high demand items such as gloves, masks, and hand sanitizers had created conditions which had enabled modern slavery to thrive such as forced labour, exploitation of workers and less accountability.¹⁹³ In the US, prison labour had been used to meet the demand of hygiene products and masks by the government.¹⁹⁴

In addition, fewer labour and business supply chain checks had been carried out in these sectors thus, leading to fewer victims being identified and an increase in exploitation. In addition to mask and glove manufacturing, an increased demand for workers in agriculture, delivery services, and caring roles had also increased.¹⁹⁵ However, this source also reported that in tandem with this, there had been indications that governments had slackened their approaches to the enforcement of laws relating to modern slavery along with a reduction in social services available for marginalised groups such as refugees and immigrants. According to the Alliance 8.7 Secretariat global UN report,¹⁹⁶ which was inspired by surveys with mostly CSOs, they had found that the respondents stated that abuses in private and public supply chains was one of the most pressing issues to be addressed and that a policy response was necessary.

3.4.4 Due to loss of employment

UK sources¹⁹⁷ stated that the survivor community in the UK, who have the right to work, had reported loss of employment as a direct result of the pandemic, many of whom were on zero hour contracts. According to Hampshire PCC, the demand for the services of sex workers decreased stating that places such as massage parlours had closed.¹⁹⁸ Lancashire PCC stated that traffickers had lost income from more public-facing industries such as nail bars and car washes that closed during the initial lockdown, and yet, this UK source also indicated that

¹⁸⁸ Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (5 August 20); Verité (24 April 2020).

¹⁸⁹ Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (May 2020); Cockayne and Smith (April 2020); Human Rights Initiative (30 April 2020).

¹⁹⁰ Hoffman et al. (April 2020).

¹⁹¹ FLEX (01 April 2020).

¹⁹² National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 2020).

¹⁹³ CAST (August 2020); Human Rights Initiative (30 April 2020).

¹⁹⁴ Cockayne and Smith (April 2020).

¹⁹⁵ Verité (24 April 2020).

¹⁹⁶ Alliance 8.7 Secretariat (01 July 2020).

¹⁹⁷ Esiovwa and Lozano (Survivor Alliance) (01 May 2020); Hope for Justice (30 April 2020); Justice and Care (30 April 2020); Hampshire PCC (30 April 2020).

¹⁹⁸ Hampshire PCC (30 April 2020).

the sex industry had continued, however, it had shifted increasingly off-radar.¹⁹⁹ Whilst this contrasts with other reports such as a report by Humber Modern Slavery Partnership,²⁰⁰ it seems the argument being made is that sex work may not be decreasing but rather continuing in an even more covert way. This, therefore, has the potential as FLEX point out, to place this group at a greater risk of poverty but it also may mean they could take higher risks to secure income.²⁰¹

One source²⁰² suggested that sex workers (referring to the closure of Amsterdam's Red Light district) may be forced to still meet clients in less safe spaces and thus, put their health and safety at risk. This source also reported that there had been an increased demand for *online* sexual content.²⁰³ A US source²⁰⁴ stated that the boundaries between labour and sexual exploitation may become even more opaque than they are currently because it of the difficulty in ascertaining whether individuals have been coerced into web-based sex work or are doing this work voluntarily.

US sources²⁰⁵ also discussed how unemployment due to Covid-19 would increase the risks of people becoming trafficked. It was suggested that recruitment into sex trafficking or forced labour could rise in California as a result of job losses.²⁰⁶ Arizona was identified by traffickers living in areas with tighter restrictions as '*an ideal location*' to relocate their activities as they had more freedom here.²⁰⁷ In April, this state witnessed a rise in commercial sexual activities according to the Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) Unit reports. A blog²⁰⁸ indicated that many people who were trafficked were being coerced to generate additional income for their traffickers either via extra work or criminal activity. New York State witnessed an increase in human trafficking referrals.²⁰⁹

3.4.5 Discrimination towards migrant workers likely to surge

An overarching theme across the data was that the Covid-19 pandemic had caused and is expected to continue to cause discrimination towards already marginalised groups such as sex workers, especially those who are migrants.²¹⁰ One article²¹¹ raised concerns that the rise in nationalist politics may negatively impact and even stigmatise migrant workers as sources of transmission risks. A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) briefing note also expected that this discrimination would have a negative impact upon migrants' ability to secure employment.²¹² Another charity suggested children could encounter educational materials which stigmatise certain '*at risk*' groups thus exacerbating their social exclusion.²¹³ Discrimination towards people of colour and their vulnerability to Covid-19 was a core focus in the US sources as previously discussed (see section 3.2 on page 18). However, reference was also made to the brutal killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and how these acts

¹⁹⁹ Lancashire PCC (30 April 2020).

²⁰⁰ Humber Modern Slavery Partnership (30 April 2020).

²⁰¹ FLEX (01 April 2020).

²⁰² ArtWorks for Freedom (16 April 2020).

²⁰³ ArtWorks for Freedom (16 April 2020).

²⁰⁴ National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 2020).

²⁰⁵ CAST (22 September 2020); ATEST (15 May 2020); ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 2020); CAST (April 2020).

²⁰⁶ CAST (April 2020).

²⁰⁷ Mayor's Human Trafficking Task Force- Arizona (July 2020).

²⁰⁸ ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 2020).

²⁰⁹ Governor of NY (13 August 2020).

²¹⁰ Anti-slavery International (15 July 2020); Walk Free Foundation (23 April 2020).

²¹¹ Cockayne and Smith (April 2020).

²¹² UNDP (April 2020).

²¹³ Hope for Justice (April 2020).

had unveiled ‘another pandemic’. This essay described black survivors of modern slavery as those who have felt ‘invisible’ and how they had been shaken by this ‘double pandemic’.²¹⁴

3.4.6 Due to hindered victim identification efforts

A policy brief²¹⁵ which drew upon Tech Against Trafficking’s Covid-19 Impact Survey found that one of the most reported effects of Covid-19 had been that victims of sexual exploitation and forced marriage were unable to escape exploitation or reach out for help. This issue was also raised by a number of other sources²¹⁶ which predicted that efforts to identify potential victims would be hindered as the frontline professionals (for instance health care professionals, social workers and law enforcement officials) usually involved in this process would have had their efforts focused on limiting the spread of the virus and their time increasingly devoted to ensuring the public were complying with government measures. Justice and Care (UK) reported that police had been redeployed which had, in turn, decreased their ability to conduct detection and investigations.²¹⁷ This source also stated that in the UK, those who did not wish to enter the NRM faced further vulnerabilities because repatriations had been paused leaving victims to find their own means by which to return to their countries of origin.²¹⁸

In the US, it was reported that measures to prevent the spread of the virus had enabled traffickers to further tighten their control over those they exploit.²¹⁹ A UN policy brief²²⁰ indicated that these situations may lead individuals, such as stranded migrants and refugees fleeing conflict, to resort to human smuggling and by extension, place them at risk of being trafficked. Another report²²¹ claimed that migrants trying to enter the US and UK had actually led to an increase in demand for human smugglers.

3.5 Heightened risk of re-exploitation

A range of sources with a US, UK and global focus highlighted that survivors who had left their situations of slavery were at a heightened risk of being re-trafficked as a result of the pandemic. A UK source²²² also reported that survivors had expressed fears about being targeted again in the future by former traffickers. Similarly, a US report²²³ predicted that survivors would be targeted by traffickers during this time. These concerns were reiterated in other US sources, one of which referred to how court closures and disruption to prosecutions were causing survivors anxiety around their former traffickers being released and retaliating against them.²²⁴ The Trafficking Law Center had assisted clients who had shared these same concerns due to the fact that there had been discussions by officials that prisoners (including former traffickers) would be released in response to Covid-19 outbreaks in prisons.²²⁵ Notably, this source also stated that the Trafficking Law Center had also reported instances where the pandemic had been causing survivors not only re-traumatisation but also for some to have the ‘urge to use [drugs] or return to the life [of commercial exploitation]’. On the other hand, this source also suggested that survivors of human trafficking in prisons who get released may

²¹⁴ Lipenga (The Human Trafficking Legal Center) (16 July 2020).

²¹⁵ Wagner and Huang (01 May 2020).

²¹⁶ ATEST (29 July 2020); Unseen (30 April 2020); UNODC (29 April 2020); UN Migration (16 April 2020).

²¹⁷ Justice and Care (30 April 2020).

²¹⁸ Justice and Care (30 April 2020).

²¹⁹ ATEST (29 July 2020).

²²⁰ UN (01 June 2020).

²²¹ Monroe (May 2020).

²²² Helen Bamber Foundation (30 April 2020).

²²³ John Cootn Richmond, Ambassador-at-large office to monitor and combat trafficking in persons (25 June 2020).

²²⁴ ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 2020).

²²⁵ National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 2020).

find themselves homeless, unable to work, evicted, unable to buy food and thus at risk of re-exploitation. A blog²²⁶ written at the start of the pandemic by Sanctuary for Families, a US-based organisation, warned that survivors may be at a greater risk of re-exploitation if approached by a new trafficker promising relief from the stress of the pandemic. Service providers in Arizona reported that a number of survivors of sex trafficking who had walked away from 'the Life' had returned to their former situations of slavery as a result of job losses and housing insecurity.²²⁷ A US source²²⁸ described survivors as those who are experiencing grief as a result of the pandemic as follows:

We are grieving all that we built after we each escaped our traffickers: independence, financial security, stability, trust.

Safe Horizon reported that survivors (who were former clients) who had lost employment or had been evicted had returned seeking emotional and mental support.²²⁹ Another US source also discussed how progress made by survivors in their recovery would be threatened by unemployment, evictions, homelessness and food insecurity.²³⁰

Other sources²³¹ warned that evictions, job losses, lack of healthcare, legal and other services would heighten survivors' risks of being re-trafficked.

The following section will focus on addressing the second research question.

What are the mitigation strategies that have been put in place for victims and survivors of modern slavery? Taking into consideration:

- a. who has put these in place and;
- b. when were they implemented?

4. Findings: strategies implemented to mitigate risks to victims and survivors of modern slavery as a result of Covid-19

Anti-trafficking efforts of UN agencies, governments and CSOs alike have been hindered by the Covid-19 crisis. What follows is a discussion of the mitigation strategies that have been put in place by governments (including devolved and local governments), law enforcement, multi-agencies and CSOs at nationwide/federal, regional/state, local, and individual organisation levels in the UK and US. The following responses were mapped onto the risks according to the themes outlined above. Some interventions did not neatly align to the risk categories. These are the strategies identified in the review but it is important to acknowledge that other strategies may have been employed by organisations but not necessarily written about and thus, have not been captured in this evidence review. In addition, some sources did not give exact dates of when certain mitigation strategies were implemented. Therefore, dates that were indicated are noted. Dates when interventions were announced and yet not indicated when they were actually implemented are also noted where this was retrievable from the sources.

²²⁶ Eduardo and Powell (Sanctuary for Families) (27 March 2020).

²²⁷ Mayor's Human Trafficking Task Force- Arizona (July 2020).

²²⁸ Lipenga (The Human Trafficking Legal Center) (16 July 2020).

²²⁹ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

²³⁰ National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 2020).

²³¹ CAST (22 September); The Vinciworks blog (3 August 2020); Safe Horizon (21 May 2020); ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 2020); Wagner and Huang (01 May 2020); Group of Experts on Action on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) (April 2020); Hope for Justice (April 2020); UNODC (29 April 2020).

4.1 Mitigation strategies in relation to: barriers to accessing basic amenities and financial assistance

4.1.1 *Basic amenities and financial assistance*

In the UK, from 15 June 2020, those in outreach support (not in Home Office accommodation) or through the Victim Care Contract (VCC) received an increase in weekly payment from £35 to £39.60. Child dependents weekly payments increased from £20.50 (first child) and £13.55 (each additional child) to £39.60 per child. Additional weekly payments of £5 for under 1 year olds and weekly payments of £3 for children aged 1-3 years old were given. Pregnant women began to receive £3 per week and those who entered support within 8 weeks of their due date or those who had a dependent child of less than 6 weeks old became eligible for a one-off £300 maternity grant.²³² The Immigration Minister announced on 27 October 2020 that asylum weekly support rates would increase by 3p from £39.60 to £39.63 and that payments of £8 towards clothing, travel and non-prescription medication would be offered.²³³ In May/June 2020, the Home Office and the Salvation Army worked in partnership to ensure that potential and confirmed victims of modern slavery were able to access support including the implementation of a cashless alternative-card payment option.²³⁴ Hope for Justice provided food parcels for those who found accessing food difficult during the pandemic due to few available online shopping slots, digital poverty, language barriers and lack of resources.²³⁵ According to the charity Sisters not Strangers, whilst the Home Office did not make an announcement at the time, those who had been denied asylum from the end of March became eligible for Section 4 support if they could prove they would become destitute. In addition, those also denied asylum receiving Section 95 support became eligible for Section 4 support for the same length of time.²³⁶

In the US, 3 Strands Global Foundation's (an anti-trafficking US NGO that provides educational resources to raise awareness of human trafficking and focuses on enabling the reintegration of survivors through employment) social workers and case managers distributed nappies, formula, food and toilet paper for survivors and their families during the pandemic.²³⁷ In Brooklyn, New York, Safe Horizon's Anti-Trafficking Program provided financial support by switching gift card delivery to digital e-cards during the course of March and April.²³⁸ In this same source, Restore (a New York-based NGO that works with survivors of sex trafficking) reported that it had provided financial assistance to over 30 people whose wages had been lost due to Covid-19 and at the time that the report was published (April) stated that they had capacity to continue to offer financial support. In July, Arizona's Human Trafficking Task Force noted that Phoenix Starfish Place (a permanent housing programme for survivors of sex trafficking and their families in Arizona) had distributed food parcels, masks, and art supplies.²³⁹

4.1.2 *Accommodating those at risk of homelessness*

In the UK, the Welsh Government announced plans for local authorities to ensure those experiencing homelessness were placed in safe accommodation including those with NRPF. This was followed up by plans announced in June to move those from temporary

²³² HO Modern Slavery Unit (18 June 2020).

²³³ Philip (27 October 2020) cited by the Refugee Council at: <https://media.refugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/04120727/27.10.20-Chief-Executives.pdf>.

²³⁴ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

²³⁵ Hope for Justice (30 April 2020).

²³⁶ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020).

²³⁷ CAST (22 September 2020).

²³⁸ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

²³⁹ Mayor's Human Trafficking Task Force- Arizona (July 2020).

accommodation into more long-term accommodation.²⁴⁰ In addition, the Wales Anti-Slavery Leadership Group partnered with the Wales Homeless Action Group during the Response phase (18 March) and Recovery phase (from 31 July) of the pandemic to safeguard people experiencing homelessness from exploitation. The Ministry for Housing and Communities and Local Government in Westminster (MHCLG) announced plans to accommodate those experiencing homelessness, however, unlike more comprehensive measures taken by the Welsh government, the MHCLG and the Home Office indicated that local authorities could decide whether to provide support to individuals with NRPF.²⁴¹ In April, the Home Office introduced a policy to suspend evictions from government-funded accommodation for those housed by the Victim Care Contract, for an initial period of three months.²⁴² At the end of June, this policy was reviewed and extended until 6 August. In Scotland, the government ensured that individuals being supported in the NRM, could stay within accommodation and receive support whilst restrictions were in place, irrespective of whether they received a negative Reasonable or Conclusive Grounds decisions on their victim status during this period.²⁴³ An increase in (Scottish) government funding (26% increase for Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance (TARA) to £581,252 and a 40% increase of £922,065 for Migrant Help) enabled Migrant Help and TARA to expand accommodation capacity which was key during the pandemic.²⁴⁴ In Northern Ireland, support including accommodation was extended for adult victims of modern slavery, both those who had received positive and negative conclusive grounds decisions.²⁴⁵

In the US, CSOs continued to provide shelter for trafficking survivors throughout the pandemic. Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS), an NGO that works with (mostly) underage youth who have been sexually exploited based in New York State, have displayed on their website that they are continuing to run a housing programme for the safety and care of the girls and women they work with.²⁴⁶ Sanctuary for Families, in New York also reported that their shelters were continuing to run with staff onsite.²⁴⁷ However, Restore's Safehome, was at full capacity at the time of the report (April) but indicated that it was continuing to process applicants wishing to use the facilities.²⁴⁸ On 29 June, the Governor of Minnesota announced that \$25.8 million of the CARES Act would be used to support vulnerable populations within Minnesota including survivors of human trafficking.²⁴⁹

In August, the Office for Victims of Crime, a part of the US Department of Justice, awarded \$35.1 million as part of the Housing Assistance Grants for Victims of Human Trafficking program to 73 organisations. This is to be spent over two years ensuring short term and longer term housing assistance is given to survivors of modern slavery. It also includes assistance in relation to utility costs, security deposits, relocation costs and to help survivors secure employment, and receive occupational training and counselling.²⁵⁰ The Office of Public Affairs, also a part of the US Department of Justice, allocated awards of \$643,163 as part of the Specialized Training and Technical Assistance on Housing for Victims of Human Trafficking program. This programme aims to deliver training and technical assistance for organisations

²⁴⁰ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

²⁴¹ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020).

²⁴² HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

²⁴³ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

²⁴⁴ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020); Scottish Government (May 2020).

²⁴⁵ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

²⁴⁶ GEMS (n.d.).

²⁴⁷ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

²⁴⁸ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

²⁴⁹ Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan (Minnesota) (29 June 2020).

²⁵⁰ Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs (21 September 2020).

that work with survivors of human trafficking to enable them to offer appropriate housing for their service users.²⁵¹ In July, it was reported that Phoenix Police Department's Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) unit received \$20,000; part of this was used to provide emergency hotel rooms for survivors in the pandemic.²⁵²

4.1.3 Legal advice and support

In April, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the National Police Chiefs Council (of England and Wales) adopted an interim charging protocol which sought to ensure that only the most pressing crimes of modern slavery were placed immediately into the court system in response to Covid-19.²⁵³

In New York, Safe Horizon's Anti-Trafficking Partnership's attorneys were reported (in April) to be offering legal services along with hotlines open 24 hours. Their assistance included support with immigration relief applications.²⁵⁴ Legal support was also available via phone for young people at Covenant House in New York (at least prior to April).²⁵⁵ Legal services were operational at Sanctuary for Families for sex and labour trafficked survivors. Staff were also available to offer in-person support when required for both survivors' legal cases and/or for their wellbeing.²⁵⁶

4.2 Mitigation strategies in relation to: risk of exposure to and transmission of Covid-19

4.2.1 Providing in-person support to young people safely: adapting under new measures

The Baca charity listed a number of measures that they implemented to support child survivors during the pandemic (prior to 4 May 2020).²⁵⁷ They were one of the few UK organisations which explicitly outlined measures they had taken (in writing) in order to minimise the spread of the virus between the young people and caseworkers. However, this is not to suggest that measures were not put in place by a number of other organisations.

In July, it was reported that the Arizona State University's Sex Trafficking Intervention and Research office was collaborating with staff from Strategic Initiatives to devise ways of delivering street outreach in a way that was safe.²⁵⁸

4.2.2 Safe housing

In New York, Covenant House adapted their facilities (by April) in response to Covid-19 outbreaks by creating rooms for those who were symptomatic so they could self-isolate. Young people who had Covid-19 symptoms stayed in converted classrooms. In another facility, they converted office spaces into a 'wellness space' for young people who were self-isolating. They took measures to reduce the numbers of young people per room and converted office spaces into bedrooms. They also discussed assigning young people to a floor and closing communal areas so as to minimise the risks of transmission. Youth and staff were provided with facemasks and facilities were disinfected daily. New arrivals underwent medical assessments to assess whether young people needed to self-isolate. Those already self-isolating could only end their self-isolation after an assessment by the health centre. The health clinic operated Monday- Friday and an on-call doctor was available at the weekends. Staff were assigned by floors so as to prevent crossover.²⁵⁹ Sanctuary for Families also reported that they had

²⁵¹ Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs (21 September 2020).

²⁵² Mayor's Human Trafficking Task Force (Arizona) (July 2020).

²⁵³ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

²⁵⁴ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

²⁵⁵ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

²⁵⁶ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

²⁵⁷ The Baca Charity (30 April 2020)

²⁵⁸ Mayor's Human Trafficking Task Force (Arizona) (July 2020).

²⁵⁹ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

ensured there was enough food and protected staff and clients from contracting the virus through protective equipment such as masks and also cleaning the facilities.²⁶⁰ In Arizona, (prior to July) part of a grant of \$250,000 allocated to Starfish Place was used to help cover the costs of converting facilities to make them Covid-19 compliant as well as enabling remote learning to take place for survivors of sex trafficking. To enhance safety and facilitate social distancing, they also created more outdoor spaces.²⁶¹

4.2.3 Access to healthcare and testing

Freedom United launched a campaign calling on governments, including the UK Government, to provide access to healthcare and adequate support for migrants and survivors and to ensure they would not be deported or detained.²⁶² In April, the UK Government issued guidance that regardless of immigration status, testing and treatment for Covid-19 would be free.²⁶³ In June, Doctors of the World (an international NGO whose UK branch runs healthcare, information and support for marginalised groups such as sex workers and migrants) filmed videos with information about Covid-19 such as testing and mask-wearing for UK migrants in partnership with the Mayor of London and are continuing to update this (last version updated on 12 December at the time of writing this evidence review).²⁶⁴

In the US, at the very start of the pandemic, Journey Out (a California-based service provider that works with victims of commercial sexual exploitation) distributed thermometers and information on how to keep safe in outreach bags that were given to victims of sex trafficking in parts of California.²⁶⁵ In Southwest Florida, Médecins Sans Frontières worked alongside local partners, including the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, to support migrant agricultural workers, especially those at risk of Covid-19. They set up mobile clinics and tested workers and offered medical assistance and information about social distancing in Spanish, Haitian Creole, and English.²⁶⁶ Testing capacity was increased and extended opening hours to match the shift patterns of the workers.²⁶⁷ In May, it was reported that Phoenix Starfish Place had enabled clients to avail of telehealth and telemedicine. They were awarded \$75,000 of an Arizona Attorney General 2020 fund to be used to expand clinical and support services.²⁶⁸

4.3 Mitigation strategies in relation to: risk to mental health

4.3.1 Access to technology and internet

Access to digital technology and Wi-Fi was discussed in relation to mental health and wellbeing across the UK sources. According to one NGO, some women had received data and phone credit from different organisations (the names of these organisations were not provided) so they could avail of online support services and receive information.²⁶⁹ However, they also reported that many devices promised by the government had not actually been received by their service providers.²⁷⁰ According to the Office of the Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester, some organisations, (the names of these organisations were not provided) secured phones and data packages by acquiring grants or redirecting their own finances to

²⁶⁰ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

²⁶¹ Mayor's Human Trafficking Task Force (Arizona) (July 2020).

²⁶² Freedom United (26 August 2020).

²⁶³ HM Government (23 April 2020).

²⁶⁴ Doctors of the World (15 June 2020).

²⁶⁵ Journey Out (15 March 2020).

²⁶⁶ Coalition of Immokalee Workers (20 May 2020).

²⁶⁷ Coalition of Immokalee Workers (29 May 2020).

²⁶⁸ Phoenix Starfish Place- Mayor's Human Trafficking Task Force- Arizona (July 2020).

²⁶⁹ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020).

²⁷⁰ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020).

facilitate this. This was to reduce the effects of isolation facing survivors during lockdown who had no online access.²⁷¹

4.3.2 In-person support

In the UK, from March until May 2020 (at least), The Baca charity offered a combination of online and in-person support,²⁷² mostly aimed at supporting the mental wellbeing of the young people they were assisting. This included online art therapy. They also compiled educational materials for the young people to access online and supported the young people's remote learning in English, Maths and ICT during the initial school closures (academic year 2019-2020) to give them a sense of routine each day. They also loaned laptops so that the young people did not have to share devices, and they had a team who were on-call 24/7 in case of emergencies. They also provided support to young people attending remote appointments. According to the written sources included in this evidence review, there was more written about in-person support by organisations working with children and youth, however, this does not necessarily mean that organisations working with adults were not also providing a combination of in-person and remote support at times- they may not have written about it in their reports.

In New York, staff at Covenant House sought to offer a sense of stability, safety and 'normality' but also to combat boredom by organising additional activities for trafficked and homeless youth. Whilst their social workers provided services remotely, they continued to have one social worker present at the accommodation.²⁷³

4.3.3 Online support and training

In June, Homeless Link in collaboration with Mental Health First Aid England and NHS Homelessness Response Team developed an online Mental Health First Aid course for volunteers and staff at hotels who were hosting the homeless.²⁷⁴ In California, online and phone clinical therapy and empowerment groups were offered for victims of sex trafficking.²⁷⁵ According to CAST, 3 Strands Global worked with 71 survivors in their Employ and Empower program following the 'shelter at home' orders.²⁷⁶

In the US, the NGO WEAVE, who works with victims of sexual exploitation in California, offered counselling by phone during the pandemic.²⁷⁷ In New York, GEMS launched an app to enable staff and members to connect easily, access resources and participate in daily activities. It also had a calendar function so that members could join virtual daily activities. They ran their Educational Initiative Programme to support the remote learning of young women.²⁷⁸ They also report on their website (at the time of writing this evidence review) that they are continuing to operate daily programmes as well as drop-in programmes remotely via Zoom and also social media outlets so as to support and engage the girls with whom they work.²⁷⁹ Safe Horizon, also in New York, reported in April that their social workers were continuing to offer trauma-focused therapy, counselling and case management during the

²⁷¹ Office of the Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester (30 April 2020).

²⁷² The Baca Charity (30 April 2020).

²⁷³ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

²⁷⁴ *Human Trafficking Foundation (HTF) Advisory Forum Newsletter* (15 June 2020).

²⁷⁵ Journey Out (15 March 2020).

²⁷⁶ CAST (22 September 2020).

²⁷⁷ WEAVE (21 April 2020).

²⁷⁸ GEMS (n.d.).

²⁷⁹ GEMS (n.d.).

pandemic.²⁸⁰ In the same source, Covenant House also stated that their social workers were providing therapy remotely on the phone and through videocalls.²⁸¹

4.4 Mitigation strategies in relation to: heightened risk of exploitation

4.4.1 Children and young people

From March 2020, Barnardo's-run Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTG) Service continued to deliver support during the pandemic, moving its sessional work online.²⁸² Children were supported by ICTG Direct Workers who worked alongside safeguarding partners during this time on issues such as immigration, social care and criminal justice. ICTG Regional Practice Co-ordinators (RPCs) supported and advised professionals in regard to NRM referrals, safeguarding issues, trafficking orders and awareness raising around Section 45 statutory defence. The Scottish government released the Covid-19 National Child Protection Guidance (last updated on 31 August 2020) with the aim of ensuring vulnerable children including those trafficked would be protected and supported during the pandemic.²⁸³ In May, a Covid-19 Children and Families Collective Leadership Group was formed to evaluate local and national work related to vulnerable children in Scotland.²⁸⁴

On 19 April, the UK Government announced it would give £1.6 million to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's (NSPCC) Childline. From June until 31 August 2020, Barnardo's 'See, Hear, Respond' project was operationalised. This initiative was funded by the Department for Education and sought to support children and young people in England facing harm during Covid-19 who did not have social care involvement. The Covid-19 'Vulnerable Children's Hub' was set up by the Home Office and other government departments to ensure a coordinated approach would be adopted towards addressing issues such as the threat of child sexual exploitation and abuse, child criminal exploitation, modern slavery and the impact of domestic abuse on children.²⁸⁵ In April, the Chancellor announced that the government would provide charities, who work with the most vulnerable, £76 million of emergency funding.²⁸⁶ Of the £750 million funding pledged to the voluntary sector, £34 million would be aimed at charities providing children with support during the pandemic. In June, Vulnerable Children National Charities Strategic Relief Fund of £7.6 million was pledged to large national Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise organisations to ensure services which help safeguard children who had experienced economic hardship could continue to run in England and Wales.

In the US, the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime awarded over \$97.4 million to service providers and human trafficking task forces across the US (announced in September 2020). These 'programs' have various titles and aims. From this fund 43 organisations which support victims of human trafficking were recipients of \$23.6 million as part of the 'Services for Victims of Human Trafficking program'. Notably, around \$14.8 million of the \$97.4 million grant was dedicated towards programmes involving children and young people who have been trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked. These programmes, their aims and the amounts allocated are outlined as follows. Four recipients were allocated the 'Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking' program worth over \$4.2 million. This programme seeks to further efforts to coordinate and apply State-wide

²⁸⁰ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

²⁸¹ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

²⁸² HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

²⁸³ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

²⁸⁴ HM Government (October 2020).

²⁸⁵ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

²⁸⁶ HO Modern Slavery Unit (18-Jun-20)

approaches to vulnerable populations such as children and young people who are survivors of human trafficking including the integration at state or tribal level of human trafficking policy and programming.²⁸⁷

Four organisations were awarded \$1.8 million from the Preventing Trafficking of Girls program which aims to assist prevention and intervention efforts such as mentoring girls at risk of or already victims of sex trafficking.²⁸⁸ There were four recipients of the Services for Minor Victims of Sex Trafficking program that were awarded over \$6.8 million in total. The states, tribes and units of local government which received this award are expected to provide services to child victims of sex trafficking that ensure their safety and recovery either directly or working through partnerships.²⁸⁹

The Services for Minor Victims of Labor Trafficking program awarded nearly \$2 million to three organisations to support children who are survivors of forced labour. The aim of this programme is to develop and strengthen service programmes for children who have been labour trafficked.²⁹⁰ In addition to the Office for Victims of Crime awards, around \$3.5 million was awarded by the Office of Justice Programme's National Institute of Justice towards research and evaluation of human trafficking. Out of this, \$1 million was allocated as part of the 'Research on Law Enforcement Responses to Sex Trafficking of Minors' program to respond to the sex trafficking of children. An aim of this research is to ascertain the extent to which law enforcements adopt practices that respond to children as victims rather than as criminals.²⁹¹

In October, the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons stated that the Department of Justice and Health and Human Services had been working in partnership with local governments and NGOs to learn about the effect that the pandemic is having on child trafficking. They also reported that the Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice had been working in consultation with leading tech companies (as have Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and UK) to help make effective public service announcements in response to the online sexual exploitation of children that has been taking place during the pandemic. In response to the rise in traffickers targeting children online, the Department of Homeland Security furthered efforts in its online safety messaging for children. The Immigrations and Customs Enforcement and the Homeland Security Investigations streamed and televised iGuardian presentations and reports during the course of 2020 and they also filmed a video series with a school district called 'Digital Dangers'. Guidelines for governments and stakeholders were issued by the Department of Labor to ensure the protection of children who had been made vulnerable to forced labour due to the pandemic. Four webinars were organised by the Department of Education as part of a series that sought to protect students from being trafficked. These webinars provided information and anti-trafficking online strategies for teachers as a response to the increased amount of time children and young people have been spending online. In April, the Department of Health and Human Services partnered with the Department of Justice to host national virtual listening sessions that focused on issues of child trafficking and ways to prevent and respond to it. The impact of Covid-19 on children was explored along with discussions about the approaches that were being adopted at federal, state and local levels to safeguard children. In May, the Department of Health and Human Services announced the release of a new grant of \$3.5 million for the Human

²⁸⁷ Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs (21 September 2020).

²⁸⁸ Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs (21 September 2020).

²⁸⁹ Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs (21 September 2020).

²⁹⁰ Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs (21 September 2020).

²⁹¹ Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs (21 September 2020).

Trafficking Youth Prevention Education Demonstration Program. The aim of this programme was for local education agencies (in collaboration with a NGO) to develop and adopt human trafficking prevention programmes. New funding (though the amount was not stipulated in the source) was also announced for NGOs working in Native communities to address issues of human trafficking.²⁹²

In May, the Texas Education Agency released guidance for educators teaching remotely in relation to identifying children who may be at risk of exploitation as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and school closures. They were advised to discuss internet safety and to encourage children to talk to trusted adults if they were at risk. Guidance was also given on how to report suspected cases of online exploitation. According to this source, the Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team worked in partnership with 3 Strands Global Foundation to enable schools in Texas to offer a free online training and prevention programme on human trafficking. The material has also been amended to include 'a trauma-informed distance learning curriculum'.²⁹³

In the US, CSOs have been responding to issues related to the exploitation of children. Resources for children and parents were developed by National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) to help keep them safe online.²⁹⁴ ECPAT USA also developed training workshops for schools on human trafficking with a focus on sex trafficking and also online safety.²⁹⁵ They also developed guides to prevent online sexual exploitation²⁹⁶ and launched the [#ReadItSetIt](#) campaign which aimed to enable the protection of children and others online during the pandemic.²⁹⁷ In New York, Safe Horizon reported that their essential programmes such as the Streetwork Project locations were continuing to operate for homeless young people as had all Child Advocacy Centers.²⁹⁸ The FBI also issued information on how to report victims of child sexual exploitation during the pandemic.²⁹⁹

4.4.2 Gender-based violence

In the UK, postal workers, delivery drivers, and other key workers were asked by Cumbria police to be vigilant and report any 'signs of abuse' during lockdown.³⁰⁰ This UN source, published in July, also used the 'Bright Sky App' launched by Hestia in 2018 in the UK as an example of an effective way for survivors to access information and support in a safe way during lockdown and to document episodes of violence.

In Houston, Texas, a Domestic Violence Awareness Campaign was launched by the Mayor Turner (of Houston) in April. Mayor Turner also announced that Uber would be offering \$50,000 for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking for the use of Ride Services.³⁰¹ In New York, it was announced on 1 October that over \$31 million would be allocated towards addressing human trafficking crimes as well as domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking from additional tribal grants that were awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women.³⁰² In Arizona, it was announced in July that \$1 million would be provided for NGOs that work to support victims of domestic violence such as Chicanos por La Causa,

²⁹² Office to monitor and combat trafficking in persons (19 October 2020).

²⁹³ Texas Education Agency (9 May 2020).

²⁹⁴ National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (17 June 2020).

²⁹⁵ ECPAT USA (19 September 2020).

²⁹⁶ ECPAT USA (11 October 2020).

²⁹⁷ ECPAT USA (04 August 2020).

²⁹⁸ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

²⁹⁹ FBI (15 October 2020).

³⁰⁰ UN Women (30 July 2020).

³⁰¹ Mayor of Houston (22 April 2020).

³⁰² Department of Justice, US Attorney's Office Northern District of New York (1 October 2020).

Chrysalis, DOVES, Shelter without Walls, Sojourner Center and the Arizona Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence.³⁰³

4.4.3 Supply chains and labour inspections

In April 2020, the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner wrote a letter to the Home Office regarding concerns around victim support.³⁰⁴ Then in June, the Commissioner met virtually with the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), NGOs and trade unions where concerns about labour exploitation were discussed. A temporary licensing scheme was introduced in May (later suspended in June) by the GLAA to ensure the protection and safety of vulnerable workers within the food sector. On 20 April, the Home Office issued guidance for businesses to mitigate possible risks of modern slavery within supply chains during the pandemic.³⁰⁵ It also gave businesses more time to release their Modern Slavery Statements³⁰⁶ in response to Covid-19.³⁰⁷

This same report also outlined the UK's response to Covid-19 overseas.³⁰⁸ They listed the work of Freedom Fund, Ethical Trade Initiative and also the government's new Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility scheme in partnership with large retailers. This scheme aims to enable people vulnerable to exploitation and supply chains especially in the garment and agricultural sector (in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Rwanda and Ghana) to be able to recover and be resilient in the face of the economic disruption caused by the pandemic. They claimed this may positively impact 165,000 workers directly and more broadly another 800,000 or more across UK supply chains. This announcement was made on 14 August by the Department of International Development.³⁰⁹ In June, a practical guide about responsible recruitment for employers and labour recruiters in global supply chains, during and in the aftermath of the pandemic, was developed by The Responsible Recruitment Toolkit (RRT) and Stronger Together.³¹⁰ A discussion sheet and checklist on ways to operationalise occupational health and safety measures to protect employees during the pandemic was developed by ETI and FairWear for its members also in June. In the US, Safe Horizon created an infographic which provided information on workers' rights.³¹¹

According to a global report, the media and consumers in the US and Europe have displayed a greater awareness of issues facing worker, working conditions, and corporate social responsibility in response to Covid-19. This source also referenced the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act which aim to restrict products from being imported that are connected to forced labour.³¹²

4.4.4 Employment

The Office for Victims of Crime continued to fund its 'Promoting Employment Opportunities for Survivors of Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Project' allocating \$300,000 with the aim of enabling survivors access to quality education and employment opportunities.³¹³ In

³⁰³ Mayor's Human Trafficking Task Force- Arizona (July 2020).

³⁰⁴ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

³⁰⁵ See Home Office (2020) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-reporting-modern-slavery-for-businesses/modern-slavery-reporting-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic>

³⁰⁶ The purpose of 'modern slavery statements' is to ensure businesses are engaging with and addressing within their supply chains issues of forced labour and human trafficking.

³⁰⁷ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

³⁰⁸ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

³⁰⁹ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

³¹⁰ HTF Advisory Forum Newsletter (8-Jun-20).

³¹¹ Safe Horizon (21 May 2020).

³¹² Verité (24 April 2020).

³¹³ Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs (21 September 2020).

response to reports that tenants, newly unemployed and those unable to pay rent, had been subjected to demands for sexual favours as a form of payment by landlords, District Attorney Mr Donoghue promised tenants would be protected under the Fair Housing Act (announced in May).³¹⁴

4.4.5 Victim identification

On 24 June 2020, the three-week [#SlaveryonYourDoorstep](#) social media campaign was launched by Crimestoppers.³¹⁵ This tied in with the easing of (the first) lockdown measures and the re-opening of businesses in which the public were asked to spot the signs of modern slavery across sectors and to report them anonymously. Hestia released their sixth publication of the Underground Lives series with a focus on victims of criminal exploitation.³¹⁶ Whilst the research was conducted prior to the pandemic it was expected to provide insight for those seeking to support those who had subsequently been recruited during the pandemic.

In Scotland, TARA delivered a webinar, in July 2020, for frontline workers including information on the support available to survivors and the role of frontline workers in relation to modern slavery.³¹⁷ Twelve multi-agency sessions were also carried out remotely across Scotland in May, June and July by TARA. Throughout the pandemic, Police Scotland partnered with Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the GLAA, TARA, Migrant Help, and Border Force and issued briefings on trafficking and exploitation trends.³¹⁸ This information was shared to all Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Business Resilience Centre as well as a workforce of more than 1.4 million employees.

Online modern slavery training was released in July by the Home Office for all First Responders so that they could identify and refer potential victims of modern slavery to the NRM.³¹⁹ The Home Office created and distributed a flyer on 'spotting the signs' for non-First Responder staff such as those working in food banks. This Annual Report on Modern Slavery also claimed that victims were identified as a result. Project AIDANT Covid-19 was launched by the National Crime Agency (NCA) and the GLAA with an emphasis on awareness raising especially in food processing, food packaging and agricultural sectors.³²⁰ As a result, 16 arrests were made and 13 potential victims of modern slavery were identified and referred to the NRM (although the exact time-frame of when this took place is not stated in the report).³²¹

In the US, on a legislative level, the LIFT Act passed the House of Representatives on 22 September 2020.³²² The aim of this legislation is to assist survivor-centred efforts to enable the Department of State to better ascertain information on and prevention of modern slavery in the US. Although this bill was introduced in January 2020 by Senators Richard Blumenthal (Democrat Connecticut) and Josh Hawley (Republican Missouri) they added that the Act:

[Seeks to stop modern day slavery, even as the Covid-19 crisis is exacerbating it.](#)³²³

In terms of victim identification, efforts seem to have continued across certain states despite the pandemic. In Arizona, between 1 April – 30 June, the Phoenix Police Department's Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) unit identified and referred 10 sex-trafficked children. They

³¹⁴ Department of Justice, US Attorney's Office Eastern District of New York (18 May 2020).

³¹⁵ HO Modern Slavery Unit (8 July 2020).

³¹⁶ *HTF Advisory Forum Newsletter* (28 July 2020).

³¹⁷ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

³¹⁸ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

³¹⁹ HO Modern Slavery Unit (8 July 2020).

³²⁰ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

³²¹ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020).

³²² See *LIFT Act* (2020) <https://www.congress.gov/bills/116/congress/house/bills/5664/text>

³²³ Richard Blumenthal US Senator for Connecticut (12 August 2020).

reported that their usual enforcement activities had not been disrupted by the pandemic. This unit received \$20,000 of which some was used to fund investigations and the recovery of victims.³²⁴ In New York, the Police Department and the New York Police Department Human Trafficking Unit reported, in April, that they were continuing to investigate cases and were conducting in-person interviews where necessary. They stated that they were also in contact with victims of cases via remote means.³²⁵ Also in New York, a social media campaign [#TruthAboutTrafficking](#) was developed. The aim of the campaign was to dispel some of the misconceptions around trafficking and to offer contact details for reporting incidents of trafficking.³²⁶ In Hawaii, the Department of Transportation collaborated with the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Department of Transportation in an effort to train people working in the aviation sector to recognise the signs of and to prevent human trafficking.³²⁷ The FBI shifted forensic interviews of children and young people remotely but where possible in-person interviews were conducted using Protective Personal Equipment (PPE).³²⁸

On a more nationwide level, new efforts to prevent human trafficking were developed. A project was piloted in collaboration with the Coca-Cola Company and Blockchain Trust Accelerator and the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. This project aimed to use technology to disrupt the efforts of traffickers in relation to contract switching- that is when 'an unscrupulous recruiter gives a migrant worker one contract in their home country and then, once the worker reaches the destination country, switches it for one with exploitative terms'.³²⁹ The National Human Trafficking Hotline operated by Polaris Project updated how it operated and expanded its services in response to the pandemic and was able to receive texts and 'other forms of communication' as a way to offer support for victims and survivors, as well as give information to law enforcement.³³⁰ The Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime awarded \$17.7 million to 27 programmes to further efforts of multidisciplinary human trafficking task forces. Just under \$5 million was allocated to three organisations to train and offer technical assistance for task forces. Both these grants were part of the Enhanced Collaborative Model (ECM) Task Force to Combat Human Trafficking programme.³³¹

4.5 Mitigation strategies in relation to: heightened risk of re-exploitation

In the US, there were reports that NGOs were seeing those who had left their situation(s) of slavery return for support. In New York, Restore offered assistance to former service users whose situations had changed due to Covid-19.³³² Sanctuary for Families, oversaw internships for survivors to make sure that they received the support they needed during the pandemic. They also provided laptops to enable survivors undertaking the Economic Empowerment Program to continue to undergo their training remotely.³³³

³²⁴ Mayor's Human Trafficking Task Force- Arizona (July 2020).

³²⁵ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

³²⁶ Governor of New York (13 August 2020).

³²⁷ Hawaii Department of Transportation (23 September 2020).

³²⁸ Office to monitor and combat trafficking in persons (19 October 2020).

³²⁹ John Cotton Richmond, Ambassador-At-Large Office To Monitor And Combat Trafficking In Persons (7 October 2020); Department of Justice- Office for Victims of Crime (14 May 2020).

³³⁰ John Cotton Richmond, Ambassador-At-Large Office To Monitor And Combat Trafficking In Persons (7 October 2020).

³³¹ Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs (21 September 2020).

³³² Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

³³³ Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

From the literature surveyed, this review did not identify concrete examples of interventions being put in place by UK organisations to reduce the risk to survivors of modern slavery being re-exploited.

5. Discussion: main findings and implications

The findings of this review provide insight into the risks and actual impacts (highlighted between 1 March and 31 October 2020) of the Covid-19 pandemic to victims and survivors of modern slavery and the potential risks facing those who are at risk of entering slavery.

Firstly, victims and **survivors face barriers in relation to accessing basic amenities and services which provide support**. Being unable to access basic amenities creates a host of new risks and exacerbates existing ones such as food insecurity, homelessness, financial instability, and delayed justice. These impacts can be further compounded by **digital poverty** where survivors may be eligible for support but unable to access it. According to the evidence review findings, issues around accessing basic amenities such as safe housing also has the potential to place victims and survivors at a heightened risk of being exposed to and transmitting Covid-19.

Secondly, fears were raised throughout the sources that victims and survivors are those who are more likely to develop complications from the virus due to pre-existing health issues connected to their histories or present situations of exploitation. Additionally, **delays in accessing healthcare treatment due to fears around deportation or being unable to afford it** also exacerbate this risk. Notably, findings suggest that racism, poverty, access to healthcare all contribute to magnifying the risk of not only modern slavery but also of contracting Covid-19. Furthermore, this population are at a heightened risk of being exposed to the virus in the very first place compared to the general population. This is because those in situations of trafficking such as migrant workers or sex workers often lack the freedom to adopt protective measures and often live in overcrowded accommodation or work in unsafe working conditions.

Thirdly, a key risk permeating the data was that the **coronavirus pandemic has impacted upon the mental health of victims and survivors**. This has been caused by a combination of factors such as issues around accessing mental health services due to reduced capacity and issues of digital exclusion. Lockdowns and stay at home orders, self-isolation and social distancing have had a negative impact on pre-existing mental health issues such as depression and anxiety but there also have been reports that these measures have been a trigger of past traumas. Uncertainty around immigration status has been a source of anxiety for some survivors. Furthermore, in-person support and the structure, access to information, and at times companionship that this can bring has been missed by survivors. Service providers have indicated that remote support also leads to the potential for safeguarding issues to be missed that would be identified if support was being delivered in-person.

Fourthly, the findings also reveal that **survivors who have left their situations of slavery may be at risk of being re-exploited** due to unemployment, reduction in working hours, lack of access to healthcare, support services and also disruption to court cases and legal support. Additionally, some survivors reported they have been targeted by former traffickers or fear that they would be. Finally, due to a combination of factors such as measures that have been adopted to contain the spread of the virus, the economic crisis, and the increased pressure faced by healthcare systems, the pandemic has also created additional risks to already marginalised groups such as children, women, people of colour, refugees, domestic workers, care workers, and undocumented migrants.

The findings of this evidence review also capture some of the mitigating responses that have been put in place by anti-slavery CSOs, law enforcement as well as US and UK government departments. Arguably, the Covid-19 crisis has revealed gaps in the US and UK governments' existing policies and provisions for victims and survivors of modern slavery and prompted some action especially in areas of welfare provisions (see *Annex 1* for UK risk and responses, *Annex 2* for US risk and responses and *Annex 3* for a timeline of key policy events in both UK and US jurisdictions).

5.1 Implications

5.1.1 *A population at heightened risk of homelessness and of contracting Covid-19*

Containing the spread of the virus was a focus of the UK and US governments during the first few months of the pandemic as seen by the 'everybody in' letter³³⁴ that was issued to local governments in the UK and the 'shelter-in-place' orders enacted by most states in the US (Lyu and Wehby, 2020). The UK and US governments focused efforts on housing those at risk of homelessness which included those who were victims of modern slavery. In the UK, this included both recognised victims of modern slavery and those whose claims had been rejected. This was a strategy prioritised and implemented across the four nations of the UK. However, according to NGO reports, it seems that despite the introduction of these policies some asylum seeking and refugee women were left destitute at the start of the pandemic whilst other survivors had issues accessing their regular financial support.³³⁵ Furthermore, overcrowded Home Office National Asylum Support (NASS) accommodation placed some survivors at a higher risk of contracting the virus since it was difficult to practice social distancing or self-isolation.³³⁶ Those who were required to self-isolate did not necessarily have the support networks to do this. In the US, \$35.1 million was awarded to organisations for immediate and long-term housing assistance for survivors of modern slavery. However, this support was only allocated around six months into the pandemic.³³⁷ And yet, there had been reports that the capacity of shelters had been stretched prior to the release of this funding.³³⁸ Furthermore, times for referrals into safe housing had been delayed by the Department of Public and Social Services.³³⁹

³³⁴ See Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (26 March 2020) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/928780/Letter_from_Minister_Hall_to_Local_Authorities.pdf

³³⁵ Sisters not Strangers (July 2020); Human Trafficking Foundation (01 June 2020); Hope for Justice (30 April 2020).

³³⁶ Hestia (30 April 2020); Justice and Care (30 April 2020).

³³⁷ Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs (21 September 2020).

³³⁸ CAST (22 September 2020).

³³⁹ CAST (22 September 2020).

Next steps:

Therefore, it is recommended that safe accommodation is prioritised by UK and US governments as the pandemic continues to unfold. The capacity of shelters may need to be increased to ensure that survivors who are at risk of homelessness are not also placed at a greater risk of contracting Covid-19 or becoming even more vulnerable to re-trafficking or other forms of exploitation. Unused facilities need to be refurbished and hotels should be used in order to house those at risk of homelessness and to facilitate social distancing. Referral times also need to be reduced. Whilst healthcare provisions for Covid-19 related issues are available to undocumented migrants in both jurisdictions (Homeland Security, 2021; Public Health England, 2021), more needs to be done to reassure this population through accessible forms of communication that they would not be reported to immigration authorities if they got tested, sought medical treatment or got vaccinated. Newly identified survivors need to be able to access initial health screening to ensure that appropriate measures are implemented to ensure their protection from Covid-19.

5.1.2 US emergency funding legislation excludes workers vulnerable to exploitation

Whilst the US government has responded to the coronavirus pandemic with economic packages such as the CARES Act,³⁴⁰ there are individuals that have been excluded from such support such as undocumented workers, those working in agriculture or domestic work. Furthermore, as these schemes are limited to offering short term relief they are likely to leave the longer-term socio-economic shocks of the pandemic unaddressed.³⁴¹

Next steps:

It is therefore, recommended that these marginalised groups are included in these financial assistance provisions such as unemployment benefits. Workers in agricultural, food processing and packaging, domestic and cleaning sectors on temporary non-immigrant visas such as H2A, H2B, B-1 and J-1 should have their visas renewed promptly so as to reduce the risks of becoming trafficked and exploited.

5.1.3 The mental health and wellbeing of survivors needs to be prioritised

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, it has been evidenced that modern slavery has monumental impacts upon the mental (and physical) health and wellbeing of survivors (Such et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is common for survivors to experience unmet mental health needs after exiting slavery (Wright et al., 2020). Emerging empirical studies suggest that the initial months of the Covid-19 pandemic has had an adverse impact on people's mental health in the UK and the US (see Daly et al., 2020; Kadidiatou, et al., 2020). It is, therefore, unsurprising that risks to the mental health of victims and survivors of modern slavery have been compounded, and thus, permeated the evidence review findings. In particular, it was reported that the lockdown and lack of freedom of movement had triggered trauma from survivors' past experiences of exploitation and that pre-existing mental health issues such as anxiety and depression had worsened.³⁴² And yet, the findings also exposed that there have been strikingly

³⁴⁰ *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act)* (2020) see <https://www.congress.gov/bills/116th-congress/senate-bill/3548/text?q=product+actualizaci%C3%B3n>

³⁴¹ Wagner and Huang (01 May 2020).

³⁴² CAST (22 September 2020); ECPAT USA (4 August 2020); Lipenga (The Human Trafficking Legal Center) (16 July 2020); Sisters not Strangers (July 2020); John Cootn Richmond, Ambassador-at-large office to monitor

few mitigation strategies implemented during the first seven months of the pandemic in both UK and US contexts in relation to the new and exacerbated mental health risks facing survivors of modern slavery.

Notably, CSOs have led the way in terms of putting in place strategies to support the mental health of survivors especially in the US. They have done this by providing digital devices and mobile phone data packages as well as providing remote support such as counselling, therapy, and community support groups. CSOs who support survivors have displayed creativity as they have had to adapt and provide new ways of supporting this community. These have included Zoom singing groups and virtual 'drop-ins' which have been, reportedly, an essential form of support to many. However, issues arose for those who were unable to access virtual support groups due to digital poverty and exclusion (this will be discussed below). Nonetheless, remote support has proven to be a lifeline in the absence of in-person support, and will need to be continued.

Next steps:

US NGO Sanctuary for Families suggested at the start of the pandemic that care also needed to be taken when using technology as camera angles, text messages and videoconferences can also act as triggers for those who have experienced online sexual exploitation (Eduardo and Powell, 2020). Therefore, CSOs in both the US and UK should also consider ensuring that their remote support is survivor-informed so as to ensure the welfare and mental wellbeing of those they seek to support.

At governmental level, it is recommended that UK governments allocate more resources to mental health services. Access to free mental healthcare services needs to be available to all irrespective of immigration status. Early intervention may contribute to the recovery and reintegration of survivors and help to prevent longer-term impacts on their mental wellbeing in the aftermath of the pandemic. Whilst in the UK, the Home Office had to review its immigration processes early into the pandemic, the changes that were implemented were reportedly not communicated to those affected. This proved to be one of the primary sources of anxiety for survivors which had even directly led to some becoming suicidal (See sources by ADAVU, 2020; Esiovwa and Lozano, 2020; Sisters not Strangers, 2020; Victim Care Contract subcontractor caseworker, 2020). Therefore, it is essential that information about immigration processes are communicated in a clear, accessible and timely way to survivors. For instance, in Portugal, migrants were given residency and were able to access a range of services at the very start of the pandemic (UN, 2020). Such an approach is likely to alleviate a lot of stress caused to survivors awaiting decisions on their legal status.

5.1.4 Lack of in-person support disadvantages survivors

Whilst social distancing measures have been necessary to contain the spread of Coronavirus, reports suggest that lack of in-person support disadvantages survivors. When legal services had been provided remotely, reports in the evidence review indicated that giving evidence and sharing experiences of exploitation can be more traumatic when done remotely without in-person support. Furthermore, survivors may have felt unable to testify (where children may be

and combat trafficking in persons (25 June 2020); HEAL (29 May 2020) ArtWorks for Freedom (16 May 2020); Esiovwa and Lozano (Survivor Alliance) (01 May 2020); Ella's (30 April 2020); The Baca Charity (30 April 2020); National Survivor Law Collective (16 April 2020); Eduardo and Powell (Sanctuary for Families) (27 March 2020).

present) thus, their access to justice may have been delayed. Reports also suggested that safeguarding issues are more likely to be missed when services are provided remotely. When in-person support had been necessary, survivors had been presenting with mental health issues.

Next steps:

Whilst aware that services have adapted and some may have resumed in-person support, a recommendation stemming from the evidence review is that it is important that in-person support continues for children and young people and that for adult survivors, in-person support needs to be resumed as soon as it is safe to do so. Where it is possible to provide face-to-face support safely, this should be considered especially when safeguarding issues have been raised or where a survivor's access to justice may be impinged and their safety endangered.

5.1.5 Digital poverty and exclusion hinder multiple aspects of survivors' lives

Many survivors would not have had access to devices and internet before the pandemic.³⁴³ Therefore, the shift from in-person to remote support compounded the exclusion that they already faced in this regard. During the pandemic, lack of access to internet and technology negatively impacted many areas of survivors' lives. On the one hand, it has exacerbated feelings of isolation, loneliness and has hindered their ability to participate in community groups during lockdown. On the other hand, it has inhibited survivors from accessing various forms of support such as (free school meal) food vouchers for their children, remote education, information about Covid-19, information about healthcare entitlements, mental health support services, legal assistance, as well as adequate and safe housing.

Next steps:

Given their importance, it is important to ensure that all survivors are provided with digital devices, data packages, and Wi-Fi as this can serve as a gateway by which a host of risks are mitigated and numerous human rights are fulfilled such as rights to education, information, healthcare, food, and housing (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). Additionally, what also emerged from the findings was that some survivors need support using technology, thus, it is important that this support is also available when technology is provided.

5.1.6 Risks to children of online sexual exploitation, trafficking, criminal exploitation and child marriage

Children were identified in a large number of sources as a population who are at a heightened risk of exploitation as a consequence of the pandemic. The global sources tended to focus on child labour, child marriage, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence towards girls, whereas, UK and US sources were centred more specifically on online sexual exploitation. Although empirical research is sparse on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on child trafficking, according to Rafferty (2020) current literature suggests there are four main areas of concern: children's health and psychological well-being, children facing a heightened risk from socioeconomic and other vulnerability factors, oversight in victim identification, and issues accessing recovery and reintegration services. This evidence review contributes to this emerging body of literature and offers some insights on risks facing children living in US and UK jurisdictions. The narratives examined indicated that exploiters are adapting their *modus operandi* shifting to online methods of exploitation especially targeting children and young

³⁴³ City Hearts (April 2020); Helen Bamber Foundation (30 April 2020).

people in both contexts. The UK Government and notably the Scottish government recognised the risks facing children and made this a focus of interventions. For instance, more funding was allocated for charities working with children, efforts were made to take a coordinated approach between NGOs and law enforcement actors over the course of the first seven months of the pandemic and these efforts look set to continue (HM Government, 2020). Overall, since May, a renewed focus on spotting the signs and victim identification more generally has been initiated in the UK by the UK Government and its agencies.³⁴⁴

In the US, over \$97.4 million has been awarded by the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime to human trafficking task forces and anti-trafficking service providers of which \$14.8 million has been allocated to programmes which focus on children and young people living in the US. These programmes include those which seek to prevent sex and labour trafficking of children. Efforts to prevent child trafficking have also been made especially through projects which train parents, guardians, educators and children on online safety. Victim identification appears not to have been as disrupted in certain states in the US context according to the evidence review findings.³⁴⁵ However, this may not be reflected nationwide.

Next steps:

Whilst there appeared to be a concerted effort to tackle potential risks to children and young people in relation to online sexual exploitation (in the UK and US), and labour trafficking (in the US), there seems to be a gap regarding responses in relation to risks of child marriage despite the fact this has been illuminated as a potential impact of school closures and economic instability in global studies (UNFPA, 2020). Furthermore, there was an increase in child marriages following school closures during the Ebola crisis in West Africa (Viner et al., 2021). Arguably, rates in child marriages may have increased in the Global North as well such as in the UK and US. The rise in gender-based violence has been coined the 'shadow pandemic' by UN Women (2020). Girls who are forced to marry are also subjects of this shadow pandemic. Therefore, it is recommended that more research is conducted in order to ascertain the risks facing children in the UK and US in relation to risks of forced marriage. Furthermore, the Child Marriage Bill in the UK (that has been side-lined due to Covid-19) which would criminalise child marriage in England and Wales needs to be prioritised in light of school closures (see December report by Karma Nirvana, 2020). Secondly, although the forced criminalisation of children is briefly mentioned without detail by a UK Government source, this also seems to be an area which is being neglected despite emerging evidence that lockdown has exacerbated the criminal exploitation of children and county lines in England (The Rights Lab, 2020; Pitts 2020). As education continues to be disrupted both in the UK and US contexts, teachers need to be trained to identify those who may be at risk of various forms of child exploitation with the added challenges of delivering education remotely.

5.1.7 The 'double pandemic' facing survivors and warnings that discrimination towards migrant survivors may surge

US sources foregrounded the further risks experienced by people of colour and discussed the interplay between racism, slavery and Covid-19 with one source describing racism and Covid-19 as the 'double pandemic' facing survivors of modern slavery (Lipenga, 2020). According to a recent report compiled by RESTORE (2021) in the US, leaders of anti-trafficking NGOs

³⁴⁴ HO Modern Slavery Unit (October 2020); HO Modern Slavery Unit (8 July 2020).

³⁴⁵ Hawaii Department of Transportation (23 September 2020); Governor of New York (13 August 2020); Mayor's Human Trafficking Task Force- Arizona (July 2020); Brooklyn Human Trafficking Task Force (16 April 2020).

reported a change in the demographic of survivors during the pandemic. The majority of participants interviewed indicated an increase in under 20 year olds, males, and a large number from Black/African American and Hispanic/Latinx communities. In the UK, Covid-19 has disproportionately affected minority ethnic groups, particularly those with Black and South Asian ethnic backgrounds who have an increased risk of death compared to those of White ethnic backgrounds³⁴⁶ (Office for National Statistics, 2020). For instance, these groups accounted for 25% of patients receiving intensive care support in the month of May 2020 (Razai et al., 2021). However, despite these statistics and also the recent waves of Black Lives Matter protests that also took place in the UK during the start of the pandemic, racial disparity in relation to Covid-19 and modern slavery was not discussed in UK sources (for notable exception see Sisters not Strangers report) to the extent that it was in the US sources.

Next steps:

Questions need to be raised as to why this is not being discussed by UK CSOs and governments despite the fact that Covid-19 is disproportionately affecting people of colour nationwide. As Poteat et al. (2020) argue, when discussing the impact of Covid-19 on Black Americans, not everyone is at equal risk of contracting Covid-19 or developing complications from the virus but 'this is a racialized disease' as many other morbidities. Therefore, antiracism policies need to be implemented in both US and UK contexts that address structural racism which is at the heart of racial disparities.

5.2 Recommendations summary

Recommendations for UK and US governments

- Prioritise the provision of safe and timely accommodation as the pandemic continues to unfold.
- Increase the capacity of shelters, refurbish unused facilities, reduce referral waiting times.
- Communicate clearly that undocumented migrants will not be reported to immigration authorities if they access testing, medical treatments or come forward for vaccination for Covid-19.
- Ensure access to free mental healthcare services is available for all (irrespective of one's immigration status).
- Continue to respond to the potential risks to children in relation to online sexual exploitation.
- Research is needed into the risks facing children in relation to child marriage.
- Research is needed into the risks facing children in relation to child labour and trafficking.
- Research is needed into the risks facing children in relation to the criminal exploitation of children.
- Educators need training and support to identify those who may be at risk of various forms of child exploitation.
- Ensure migrant workers enjoy the same protections as the US and UK populations in regard to addressing the impacts of Covid-19.
- Promote social cohesion.

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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/updatingethniccontrastsindeathsinvolvingthecoronaviruscovid19englandandwales/deathsoccurring2marchto28july2020>

- Implement policies that address the victimisation of communities linked to racism.

UK-specific

- Widen access to initial health screening for newly identified survivors.
- Allocate more resources to mental health services throughout the UK.
- Communication from the Home Office needs to be clear and timely with regards to immigration processes.
- Provide survivors with digital devices, data packages and Wi-Fi and ensure internet provision in supported accommodation.
- ICT support and training for survivors to be able to use devices.
- Provide free broadband across the UK.
- Prioritise the Child Marriage Bill in light of school closures.

US-specific

- Include guest and undocumented workers in financial assistance programmes such as unemployment benefits.
- Provide swift renewal of visa for workers on non-immigrants visas such as H2A, H2B, B-1 and J-1 so as to minimise their risks of being exploited.

Recommendations for NGOs in the UK and US

- Continue their creative means of remote support provision but ensure that remote support is survivor-informed e.g. camera angles, video calls and messages.
- Continue safe in-person support for children and young people.
- Resume in-person support for adults as soon as it is safe to do so.
- Provide safe in-person support for survivors where access to justice may be impinged and their safety endangered or where safeguarding issues have arisen.

UK-specific

- Increased discussion of racial disparity in relation to Covid-19 and modern slavery.

6. Conclusion

This rapid evidence review has offered a coherent and robust documentation of the actual impacts and the potential risks facing victims and survivors of modern slavery during the first seven months of the Covid-19 pandemic. It also has sought to capture the range of responses that have been implemented to mitigate these risks by CSOs and governments in the UK and US. The complex issues facing victims and survivors have been identified and yet nationwide-level (in both jurisdictions) responses to these risks seem quite limited according to this review. The findings of this evidence review echo the emerging academic literature which suggests that survivors of modern slavery are a population that are disproportionately at risk of contracting, transmitting or developing complications due to Covid-19 (Armitage and Nellums, 2020). It has revealed that strategies need to be implemented to ensure that ongoing risks to this population are attended to such as the mental health of survivors. Without immediate action in relation to the digital divide, victims and survivors will continue to be hindered from accessing their basic human rights. Racial disparity both in the US and UK needs to be acknowledged and addressed so as to mitigate the risks already facing people of colour both to modern slavery, on the one hand, and Covid-19 on the other. Lessons need to be learnt from the examples of good practice of those working on the frontlines of the anti-trafficking movement both in the UK and US. Finally, the voices and experiences of survivors need to be

listened to and acted upon so as to mitigate actual ongoing and long term risks facing this population in the months and years to come.

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Annexure

Annex 1: Risks and responses (at various levels) UK

Table 5: Risks and responses UK

Risks and key issues identified in review	Responses UK	Level of response
Risk 1: Barriers accessing basic amenities and financial assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss or delay of income Higher costs for basic food / hygiene Additional debt Digital exclusion due to cost Loss of free school meals / childcare Increased risk of homelessness Lower levels of support for those who have 'NRPF' / undocumented workers Delays in justice system / NRM Reduced access to legal support 	<p>Those in outreach support (not in HO accommodation) or through VCC received increase in daily payment.</p> <p>Those denied asylum from end of March eligible for section 4 support if they could prove they would become destitute. Those denied asylum receiving Section 95 support eligible for Section 4 support for same length of time.</p> <p>HO suspended evictions from government-funded accommodation for those housed by the VCC.</p>	National (UK-wide)
	<p>Scotland: individuals supported in the NRM could stay in accommodation and receive support Increase in Scottish Government funding for TARA and Migrant Help to expand accommodation capacity. Northern Ireland- support and accommodation extended for adult victims of modern slavery.</p> <p>CPS and National Police Chiefs Council adopted interim charging protocol to ensure urgent crimes of modern slavery placed into court system immediately.</p>	Regional (UK)
	<p>HO and Salvation Army worked to ensure potential and confirmed victims of modern slavery could access support via cashless card.</p> <p>Governments in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales took measures to place those at risk of homelessness and exploitation into accommodation.</p>	Local

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language barriers • Lack of privacy 	Hope for Justice provided food parcels	Individual organisations
Risk 2: Risk of exposure to and transmission of COVID-19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-crowding • Lack of support networks • Inadequate cleaning equipment • Discrimination against migrants • Lack of employment choice • Inability to access welfare support • Underlying health problems • Lack of access to healthcare • Digital exclusion 	UK Government: testing and treatment for COVID-19 is free (regardless of immigration status).	National (UK-wide)
		Regional
	Doctors of the World in partnership with Mayor of London filmed videos with up-to-date information about COVID-19 in different languages.	Local
	<p>The Baca charity took measures to reduce spread of COVID-19 between caseworkers and young people.</p> <p>Freedom United launched campaign calling on governments (including UK) to provide access to healthcare and support for migrants and survivors to ensure they will not be deported or detained.</p>	Individual organisations
Risk 3: Risk to mental health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of access to mental health services 	Sisters not Strangers (NGO) reported that Government digital devices weren't received.	National (UK-wide)
		Regional
	Homeless Link and Mental Health First Aid England and NHS Homelessness Response Team developed online Mental Health First Aid course for volunteers and staff at hotels hosting homeless.	Local

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of in-person support • Lack of access to education / work • Digital exclusion • Re-traumatisation • Anxiety about immigration 	<p>Office of Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester and Sisters not Strangers reported that some organisations (not named) provided phones, data packages and credit.</p> <p>The Baca charity compiled online educational materials to give young people a sense of routine during school closures. They loaned lap tops.</p> <p>The Bacca charity provided online art therapy, supported their remote learning and supported young people attending remote appointments. Had a 24/7 team on-call in case of emergencies.</p>	<p>Individual organisations</p>
<p>Risk 4a: Heightened risk of exploitation-children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks to children, especially connected to school closures • Online recruitment and abuse increased • Child marriage increased 	<p>UK Government pledged £76 million of emergency funding to charities working with vulnerable. Of £750 million funding pledged to the voluntary sector, £34 million would be aimed at charities providing children with support during the pandemic. £1.6 million pledged to NSPCC Childline.</p> <p>The COVID-19 'Vulnerable Children's Hub' set up by HO and other government departments for coordinated approach towards issues e.g. threat of child sexual exploitation and abuse, child criminal exploitation, modern slavery.</p>	<p>National (UK-wide)</p>
	<p>Scottish Government released the COVID-19 National Child Protection Guidance to ensure vulnerable children including those trafficked are protected and supported during the pandemic.</p> <p>Covid-19 Children and Families Collective Leadership Group was formed to evaluate local and national work related to vulnerable children in Scotland.</p> <p>The HO and Department of Education's Vulnerable Children National Charities Strategic Relief Fund of £7.6 million was pledged to large national Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise organisations which help safeguard children who had experienced economic hardship could continue to run in England and Wales.</p>	<p>Regional</p>

	Barnardo's-run ICTG Service continued sessional work online supported on issues such as immigration, social care and criminal justice working alongside safeguarding partners. ITCTG Regional Practice Co-ordinators (RPCs) advised professionals in regard to NRM referrals, safeguarding issues, trafficking orders and awareness raising around Section 45.	Local
	Barnardo's 'See, Hear, Respond' project (funded by the Department of Education) launched- supports children in England at risk during COVID-19 who do not have social care involvement.	Individual organisations
Risk 4b: Heightened risk of exploitation-women/girls		Nationwide
		Regional
	Postal workers, delivery drivers, key workers asked to report 'signs of abuse' to Cumbria police during lockdown.	Local
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic violence increased Support services for women and girls shut 	Individual organisations
Risk 4c: Heightened risk of exploitation-(migrant/domestic/agricultural) workers	<p>A temporary licensing scheme was introduced in May (later suspended in June) by the GLAA to ensure the protection and safety of vulnerable workers within the food sector.</p> <p>HO issued guidance for businesses to mitigate possible risks of modern slavery within supply chains. HO gave businesses more time to release their Modern Slavery Statements in response to COVID-19.</p>	National (UK-wide)
		Regional

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower regulation and standards in business • Loss of employment • Stigmatisation of migrant workers 	<p>Department of International Development announced new Vulnerable Supply Chains Facility scheme in partnership with large retailers and listed the work of Freedom Fund, Ethical Trade Initiative. The Responsible Recruitment Toolkit (RRT) and Stronger Together was developed.</p> <p>Throughout the pandemic, Police Scotland partnered with Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), the GLAA, TARA, Migrant Help, and Border Force and issued briefings on trafficking and exploitation trends. This information was shared to all Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Business Resilience Centre as well as a workforce of more than 1.4 million employees.</p> <p>Project AIDANT COVID-19 was launched by the National Crime Agency (NCA) and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) with an emphasis on awareness raising especially in food processing, food packaging and agricultural sectors</p>	Local
Risk 4d: Heightened risk of exploitation-victim identification	Online modern slavery training by the HO for all First Responders to help them identify and refer potential victims of modern slavery to the NRM. HO distributed 'spotting the signs' flyers for non-First Responder staff (e.g. those working in foodbanks).	National (UK-wide)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim identification efforts hindered • Police redeployed • Victims increasingly hidden • Victims trapped with their traffickers/those who exploit them 	Scotland: TARA delivered a webinar for frontline workers with information on what support is available to survivors and the role of frontline workers in relation to modern slavery.	Regional
	#SlaveryonYourDoorstep social media campaign was launched by Crimestoppers.	Local
	Hestia released their sixth publication of the Underground Lives series.	Individual organisations
Risk 5: Heightened risk of re-exploitation		National (UK-wide)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed court cases • Early release of traffickers 		Regional
		Local

		Individual organisations
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Annex 2: Risks and responses (at various levels) US

Table 6: Risks and responses US

Risks and key issues identified in review	Responses US	Level of response
Risk 1: Barriers accessing basic amenities and financial assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss or delay of income • Higher costs for basic food / hygiene • Additional debt • Digital exclusion due to cost • Loss of free school meals / childcare • Increased risk of homelessness 	<p>US Department of Justice, awarded \$35.1 million as part of the Housing Assistance Grants for Victims of Human Trafficking program to 73 organisations.</p> <p>The Office of Public Affairs of the US Department of Justice, allocated awards of \$643,163 as part of the Specialized Training and Technical Assistance on Housing for Victims of Human Trafficking program.</p> <p>The Specialized Training and Technical Assistance on Housing for Victims of Human Trafficking program awards \$643,163 total to deliver specialized training and technical assistance to victim service organizations to enhance their ability to provide appropriate housing for victims of human trafficking.</p>	Federal
	Governor of Minnesota announced that \$25.8 million of the CARES Act would be used to support vulnerable such as survivors.	State
	Phoenix Police Department's Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) unit received \$20,000; part of this had been used to provide emergency hotel rooms for survivors in the pandemic.	Local
	Sanctuary for Families, Covenant House provided legal support via phone for young people and Safe Horizon's Anti-Trafficking Partnership's attorneys offered legal services (NY).	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower levels of support for undocumented workers • Delays in justice system • Reduced access to legal support • Language barriers • Lack of privacy 	<p>3 Strands Global Foundation distributed nappies, formula, food and toilet paper.</p> <p>Safe Horizon's Anti-Trafficking Program provided financial support by switching gift card delivery to digital e-cards.</p> <p>Restore provided financial assistance to over 30 people whose wages have been lost due to COVID-19</p> <p>Phoenix Starfish Place had distributed food parcels, masks, and art supplies</p> <p>NGOs (Sanctuary for Families, GEMS, and Restore) provided shelter for trafficking survivors.</p> <p>(NY) Safe Horizon's Anti-Trafficking Partnership's attorneys offered legal services including immigration applications.</p>	Individual organisations
<p>Risk 2: Risk of exposure to and transmission of COVID-19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-crowding • Lack of support networks • Inadequate cleaning equipment • Discrimination against migrants • Lack of employment choice 		Federal
		State
	<p>Starfish Place (AZ) used part of a grant to enhance safety and refurbish facilities and provided telehealth and telemedicine for clients.</p>	Local
	<p>Covenant House (NY) adapted their facilities, creating rooms for young people to self-isolate, provided facemasks and did daily cleaning. New arrivals had medical assessments. Health clinic open Mon-Fri and on-call doctor at weekends.</p> <p>Sanctuary for Families (NY) took measures to protect staff and clients.</p> <p>Journey Out (CA) distributed thermometers, information on COVID-19 to victims of sex trafficking.</p> <p>Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Médecins Sans Frontières and local partners set up mobile clinics testing for COVID-19 and providing information for migrant agricultural workers in various languages.</p>	Individual organisations

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to access welfare support • Underlying health problems • Lack of access to healthcare 		
Risk 3: Risk to mental health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of access to mental health services • Lack of in-person support • Lack of access to education / work • Digital exclusion • Re-traumatisation • Anxiety about immigration 		Federal
		State
		Local
	<p>Staff at Covenant House (NY) organised additional activities to offer trafficked youth a sense of stability. They kept one social worker on-site and other social workers provided therapy remotely.</p> <p>WEAVE (CA) offered counselling by phone.</p> <p>GEMS (NY) launched an app to keep members connected and to join daily activities. They carried out zoom drop-in sessions and have run the Educational Initiative Programme to support remote learning. Safe Horizon (NY): social workers continued to offer trauma-focused therapy, counselling and case management.</p>	Individual organisations

<p>Risk 4a: Heightened risk of exploitation-children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks to children, especially connected to school closures • Online recruitment and abuse increased • Child marriage increased 	<p>US Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime awarded over \$97.4 million to service providers and human trafficking task forces across the US and include the following programmes:</p> <p>The Improving Outcomes for Child and Youth Victims of Human Trafficking program allocated over \$4.2 million.</p> <p>The Services for Minor Victims of Sex Trafficking program awarded over \$6.8 million.</p> <p>The Services for Minor Victims of Labor Trafficking program allocated nearly \$2 million.</p> <p>The Research on Law Enforcement Responses to Sex Trafficking of Minors program allocated almost \$1 million.</p> <p>The FBI issued information on how to report victims of child sexual exploitation.</p> <p>Immigrations and Customs Enforcement and the Homeland Security Investigations streamed iGuardian presentations and filmed a video series with a school district called 'Digital Dangers'.</p> <p>Department of Education organised webinars to protect students from being trafficked.</p> <p>Department of Health and Human Services partnered with the Department of Justice to host national virtual listening sessions on child trafficking.</p> <p>Department of Health and Human Services released new grant of \$3.5 million for the Human Trafficking Youth Prevention Education Demonstration Program.</p>	<p>Federal</p>
	<p>Texas Education Agency released guidance for educators teaching remotely in relation to identifying children at risk of exploitation.</p> <p>The Governor's Child Sex Trafficking Team worked in partnership with 3 Strands Global Foundation to enable schools in Texas to offer free online training and prevention programme on human trafficking.</p>	<p>State</p>

		Local
	<p>The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children developed online safety resources for children and parents.</p> <p>ECPAT USA developed training workshops for schools on human trafficking, sex trafficking and online safety and guides to prevent online sexual exploitation. They launched #ReadItSetIt campaign.</p> <p>Safe Horizon's (NY) programmes with homeless youth have continued as well as all Child Advocacy Centers.</p>	Individual organisations
<p>Risk 4b: Heightened risk of exploitation-women/girls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic violence increased Support services for women and girls shut 	<p>The Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women allocated \$31 million towards addressing human trafficking crimes as well as domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.</p> <p>The Preventing Trafficking of Girls program was allocated \$1.8 million.</p>	Federal
		State
	<p>\$1 million was provided for NGOs that work to support victims of domestic violence by the Mayor's Human Trafficking Task Force (AZ).</p> <p>Domestic Violence Awareness Campaign was launched by the Mayor of Houston (TX). Uber offered \$50,000 for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking for the use of Ride Services.</p> <p>In response to reports that tenants who were unable to pay rent had been subjected to demands for sexual favours as a form of payment by landlords, District Attorney Mr Donoghue (NY-Eastern District) promised tenants would be protected under the Fair Housing Act.</p>	Local
	<p>The National Human Trafficking Hotline operated by Polaris Project updated its services using text messages and giving law enforcement information.</p>	Individual organisations
Risk 4c: Heightened risk of exploitation-(migrant/domest	<p>The Coca-Cola Company and Blockchain Trust Accelerator and the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor piloted project aimed to disrupt perpetrators of forced labour using technology.</p>	Federal

ic/agricultural) workers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deteriorating working conditions • Lower regulation and standards in business • Loss of employment • Stigmatisation of migrant workers 	Hawaii's Department of Transportation collaborated with the Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Department of Transportation in an effort to train people working in the aviation sector to recognise the signs and prevent human trafficking.	State
		Local
		Individual organisations.
Risk 4d: Heightened risk of exploitation-victim identification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim identification efforts hindered • Police redeployed • Victims increasingly hidden • Victims trapped with their 	<p>LIFT ACT passed which aims to assist survivor-centred efforts to enable the Department of State to access better information on and to enable the prevention of modern slavery in the US.</p> <p>The Office for Victims of Crime awarded \$17.7 million to 27 programmes to further efforts of multidisciplinary human trafficking task forces.</p> <p>The ECM Task Force to Combat Human Trafficking program which allocated \$22.7 million from the US Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime.</p> <p>The Services for Victims of Human Trafficking program gave over \$23.6 million.</p> <p>The Research and Evaluation of Trafficking in Persons program allocated over \$2.5 million.</p>	Federal
		State
	The Police Department and the New York Police Department Human Trafficking Unit continued investigations into human trafficking.	Local

traffickers/those who exploit them	Phoenix Police Department's Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) unit continued their usual victim identification efforts. In NY social media campaign #TruthAboutTrafficking was launched.	
		Individual organisations.
Risk 5: Heightened risk of re-exploitation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed court cases • Early release of traffickers • Delayed court cases • Early release of traffickers 	The Promoting Employment Opportunities for Survivors of Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Project continuation funding of around \$300,000. Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime continued to fund its 'Promoting Employment Opportunities for Survivors of Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Project'.	Federal
		State
		Local
	Restore (NY) assisted former service users whose situations had changed due to the pandemic. Sanctuary for Families oversaw internships for survivors and provided laptops to enable survivors undertaking the Economic Empowerment Program to continue their training.	Individual organisations.

Annex 3: Timeline of key policy events

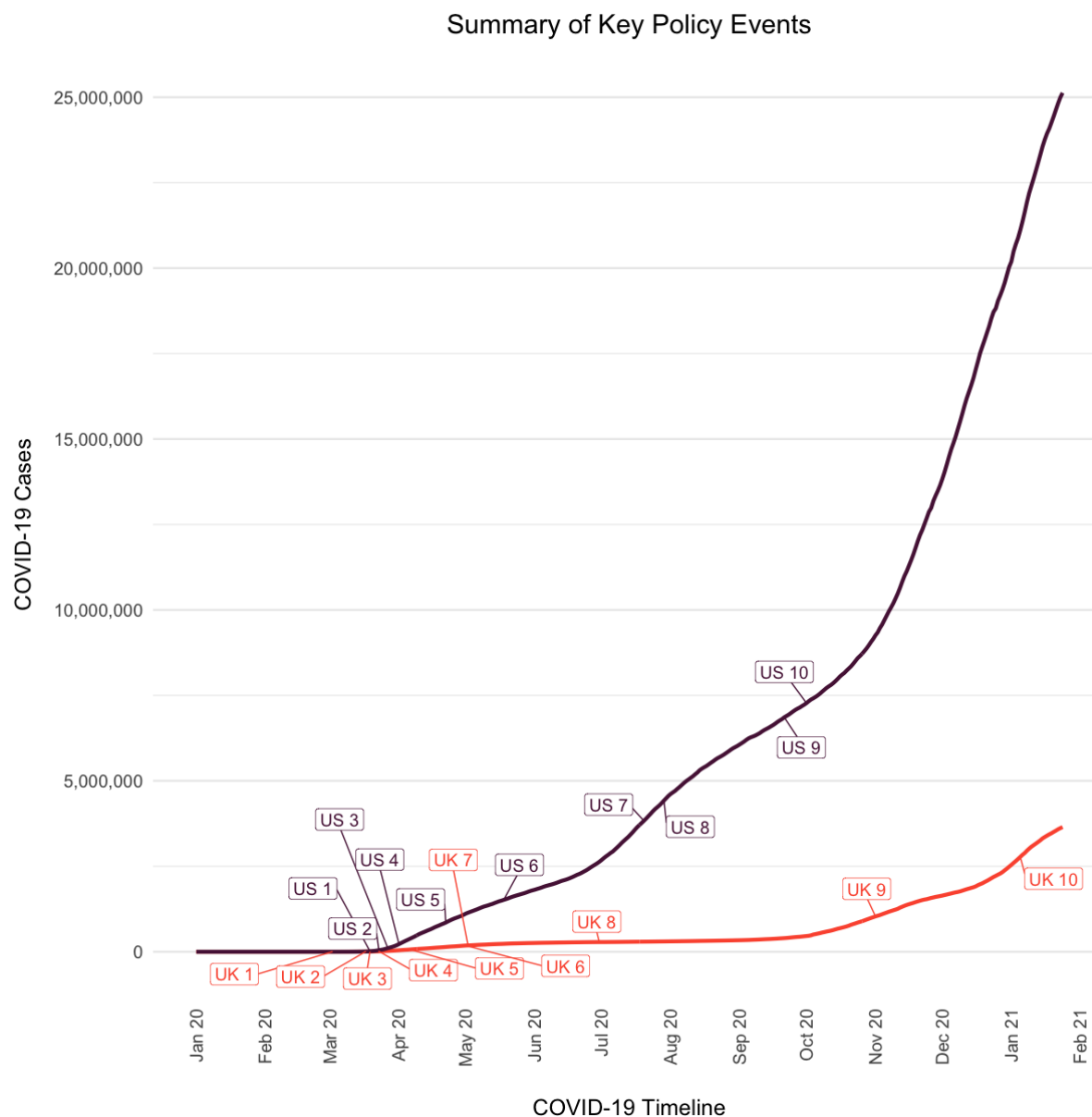


Figure 1: Timeline of key policy events

Key Policy Events Timeline

This timeline tracks key policy events (see *Figure 1*) in the UK and the US.

United Kingdom (Policy Events)

UK 1. Support for rough sleepers³⁴⁷ (17/03/2020). An initial emergency funding of £3.2 million is given to all local councils in England to support rough sleepers that need to self-

³⁴⁷ "Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for local government". URL: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-local-government>

isolate. **UK 2.** Adult social care and homelessness support³⁴⁸ (19/03/2020). £2.9 billion to the NHS and local authorities to increase adult social care resources and services for vulnerable people. **UK 3.** UK first national lockdown begins and schools close³⁴⁹ (23/03/2020). People are only allowed to leave their homes for basic necessities. **UK 4.** Victims Care Contract accommodation protected³⁵⁰ (06/04/2020). UK Government suspends (initially) 3 months to all evictions from government-funded accommodation for those housed by the VCC. **UK 5.** Home Office Modern Slavery support³⁵¹ (02/05/2020). In England and Wales, £3.8 million extra funding for domestic abuse and modern slavery services, and £7.8 million for charities working with vulnerable children. **UK 6.** Furlough scheme extended to October 2020³⁵² (12/05/2020). Initial extension of four months to the furlough scheme. Workers made redundant in the UK continue to receive 80% of their salary. **UK 7.** First local lockdown in the UK (in Leicester)³⁵³ (30/06/2020). Closure of schools and non-essential shops for 2 weeks (initially).

UK 8. 2020 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery³⁵⁴ (19/10/2020). The report included references to the COVID-19 vulnerable children's hub established by the Home Office. **UK 9.** Second national lockdown in England³⁵⁵ (01/11/2020). **UK 10.** Third national lockdown in England³⁵⁶ (05/01/2021).

United States (Policy Events)

US 1. First US lockdown (California)³⁵⁷ (19/03/2020). **US2.** FBI flags the increased risk of traffickers targeting children³⁵⁸ (23/03/2020). **US 3.** CARES Act signed into law³⁵⁹ (27/03/2020). **US 4.** Phoenix Police Department continues trafficking victim identification and

³⁴⁸ "£2.9 billion funding to strengthen care for the vulnerable". URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/2-9-billion-funding-to-strengthen-care-for-the-vulnerable>

³⁴⁹ "Prime Minister's statement on coronavirus (COVID-19): 23 March 2020". URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-address-to-the-nation-on-coronavirus-23-march-2020>

³⁵⁰ "Support for modern slavery victims affected by coronavirus". URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/support-for-modern-slavery-victims-affected-by-coronavirus>

³⁵¹ "Emergency funding to support most vulnerable in society during pandemic". URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/emergency-funding-to-support-most-vulnerable-in-society-during-pandemic>

³⁵² "Chancellor extends furlough scheme until October". URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-extends-furlough-scheme-until-october>

³⁵³ "Coronavirus: First local lockdown imposed in Leicester as government orders schools and shops to close". URL: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/coronavirus-leicester-lockdown-announcement-today-covid-19-cases-a9592406.html>

³⁵⁴ "2020 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery". URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2020-uk-annual-report-on-modern-slavery>

³⁵⁵ "Covid chaos: how the UK handled the coronavirus crisis". URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/ng-interactive/2020/dec/16/covid-chaos-a-timeline-of-the-uks-handling-of-the-coronavirus-crisis>

³⁵⁶ "Coronavirus: Schools around the UK to close" URL: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/55538338>

³⁵⁷ "Governor Gavin Newsom Issues Stay at Home Order" URL: <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2020/03/19/governor-gavin-newsom-issues-stay-at-home-order>

³⁵⁸ "School Closings Due to COVID-19 Present Potential for Increased Risk of Child Exploitation" URL: <https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/school-closings-due-to-covid-19-present-potential-for-increased-risk-of-child-exploitation>

³⁵⁹ "President Trump Signs \$2 Trillion Coronavirus Rescue Package Into Law" URL: <https://www.npr.org/2020/03/27/822062909/house-aims-to-send-2-trillion-rescue-package-to-president-to-stem-coronavirus>

enforcement efforts³⁶⁰ (01/04/2020). **US 5.** Houston launches its Domestic Violence Awareness Campaign³⁶¹ (22/04/2020). **US 6.** District Attorney Mr Donoghue (New York - Eastern District) offers protection to rental tenants under the Fair Housing Act³⁶² (18/05/2020).

US 7. Phoenix Police Department's Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) unit receives additional funding³⁶³ (20/07/2020). **US 8.** Minnesota proposes \$25.8 million in funding from the CARES Act to assist human trafficking victims and other marginalised populations³⁶⁴ (29/07/2020). **US 9.** Department of Justice / Office for Victims of Crime granted \$101 million to human trafficking task forces and relevant service providers across the US³⁶⁵ (21/09/2020). **US 10.** \$31 million allocated in New York to address human trafficking, domestic violence and various forms of sexual assault³⁶⁶ (01/10/2020).

³⁶⁰ "Mayor's Human Trafficking Task Force" URL:

<https://www.phoenix.gov/humanservicessite/SiteAssets/humanservices/programs/strategicinitiatives/compassplan/HT%20Newsletter%20July%202020.pdf>

³⁶¹ "Mayor Turner Launches Domestic Violence Awareness Campaign" URL:

<https://www.houstontx.gov/mayor/press/2020/domestic-violence-campaign.html>

³⁶² "U.S. Attorney Richard P. Donoghue Requests Public to Report Sexually Predatory Housing Practices Amid COVID-19 Pandemic" URL: <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edny/pr/us-attorney-richard-p-donoghue-requests-public-report-sexually-predatory-housing>

³⁶³ "Mayor's Human Trafficking Task Force Newsletter" URL:

<https://www.phoenix.gov/humanservicessite/SiteAssets/humanservices/programs/strategicinitiatives/compassplan/HT%20Newsletter%20July%202020.pdf>

³⁶⁴ "Governor Walz, Lt. Governor Flanagan Propose \$25.8 Million from CARES Act to Support Vulnerable Minnesotans" URL: <https://mn.gov/governor/covid-19/news/?id=1055-442058>

³⁶⁵ "Justice Department Awards Nearly \$101 Million to Combat Human Trafficking" URL:

<https://www.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh241/files/media/document/ovchumantraffickingfactsheet.pdf>

³⁶⁶ "Department of Justice Invests More than \$295.8 Million in Grants to Improve Public Safety, Serve Crime Victims in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities" URL: <https://www.justice.gov/usao-ndny/pr/department-justice-invests-more-2958-million-grants-improve-public-safety-serve-crime>