Identification of adults with lived experience of modern slavery in the UK

Research Summary

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Key findings

First Responder training

1. The majority of First Responders surveyed (88%, 37/42) thought that training should be mandatory for all frontline workers in First Responder Organisations. This should be read against the finding that 10% of surveyed First Responders had received no training in relation to their role, and almost a quarter (24%) attributed their preparedness to identify adults with lived experience of modern slavery to training undertaken at their own expense. Respondents who had received First Responder training frequently commented that this was only offered on an initial, one-off basis, and was not a regular feature of their employment.

2. The project identified a number of essential components that should be included in First Responder training, covering general awareness and indicators, as well as practicalities around safeguarding and making referrals into the National Referral Mechanism ("NRM" – the UK's system for identifying and supporting people with lived experience of modern slavery). Discussions with people with lived experience of modern slavery highlighted additional areas that such training should focus on, underlining the need for First Responders to be capable of providing accurate and accessible information about the NRM to ensure the possibility of an informed decision on whether to be referred, as well as the need for First Responders to be trained in trauma-informed approaches.

3. To be effective, training needs to be evidence-based and it needs to be informed by the views and experiences of individuals with lived experience of modern slavery and of those involved in frontline work. As such, these perspectives need to be incorporated into every aspect of training development and design. Training must also be updated regularly to reflect changes in the law and policy around modern slavery.

4. The research underlined the importance of structured and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of training impacts, but noted that this was rarely implemented owing to a lack of time and resources. Participants also noted that formal and informal opportunities for sharing training experiences and resources could have a marked benefit on the type, quality and effectiveness of training provided.

Duty to Notify (DtN)

1. Both the number of adults referred into the NRM and reported through the DtN process have been increasing since 2015 (with the exception of 2020, due to the impact of Covid-19). Yet, since 2020, proportionally more people have been refusing a referral into the NRM, so instead were reported through the DtN process.

2. There were different patterns in terms of the nationality and gender of adults referred into the NRM and reported through the DtN, as well as in terms of the First Responder Organisation involved. There were, on the other hand, minimal differences with regard to exploitation type(s).

3. In around one fifth of DtN reports for 2020 and 2021, the First Responder filing the report did not indicate any reason as to why the individual refused to enter the NRM. In reports where at least one reason was recorded, the most common was that the person denied the exploitation experience or victim status and/or that the NRM didn't apply to them (23% of reports which included at least one reason), followed by wanting to put the experience behind them (14%), being afraid of the traffickers (10%), a refusal to engage (8%), and that the individual felt safe/was already being supported (8%).

4. Research findings indicated that people with lived experience of modern slavery were referred into the NRM without providing any consent, felt compelled to consent to a referral, were not given enough information to consent meaningfully, or were under the impression that entering the NRM involved a requirement to collaborate with the police.

Priority recommendations

General

1. The Home Office should ensure that changes to law, policy and processes, including any changes to the NRM and DtN online referral forms and Statutory Guidance, are communicated to First Responder Organisations prior to coming into effect. First Responders must be given adequate time to familiarise themselves with any such changes and to prepare accordingly, including, where necessary, by providing additional training to their staff.

2. Statutory First Responder Organisations should identify Single Points of Contact ("SPOCs") within the organisation who can advise on referrals or complex cases. These individuals should have the appropriate knowledge and experience to perform this role, including completion of a higher level of training.

Training

1. Mandatory training should be introduced for all statutory First Responder Organisations to ensure that all staff members who are internally tasked with making NRM referrals and DtN reports complete training consistent with their required level of knowledge on a regular basis.

2. The Home Office should introduce a programme for monitoring satisfactory completion of the e-learning by requiring an email address to access the module and asking knowledge and confidence-based questions before and after the training is completed. The monitoring data should be made publicly available (in an aggregated and anonymised form) so that it can be used to better understand and improve training uptake among First Responders.

3. First Responder Organisations should consider opportunities for partnering with other frontline organisations (including, but not limited to, civil society organisations and modern slavery lived experience advisory groups) in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of training programmes.

4. Views and experiences of individuals with lived experience of modern slavery and of those involved in frontline work should inform all legislative, policy, and practical developments, including the development of any training materials.

Duty to Notify

1. The Home Office should openly publish detailed DtN data which includes all information gathered via the reports (save for the information that ought to be redacted for data protection purposes) to allow further engagement and analysis by the public, researchers, and civil society actors.

2. The Home Office should improve data collection by making the field 'reasons for not entering the NRM' on the DtN referral form a mandatory one. The collection of more data on this topic will allow for more effective monitoring of trends and patterns in DtN reports.

Background

In recent years, the United Kingdom's system for identifying and supporting people with lived experience of modern slavery – the National Referral Mechanism ("NRM") – has undergone significant revisions due to changes in legislation and statutory guidance. NRM data has also revealed changing patterns in the number and nature of identified cases of exploitation referred into the system since data collection first started in 2015. This includes a significant rise in the number of adults with lived experience of modern slavery who are declining the possibility of being referred into the NRM to be formally identified and supported through that mechanism.

These patterns have been accompanied by widespread concerns across the sector with regard to the coverage and quality of the training provided to 'First Responders', who are formally tasked with referring individuals into the NRM. Presently, only staff members of a designated First Responder Organisation ("FRO") are authorised to refer individuals into the NRM. Referred individuals are then formally identified as potential or confirmed 'victims of trafficking or modern slavery' by specialised decision-making units within the Home Office ("Competent Authorities"). Where an adult does not consent to a referral, in England and Wales, the case can (and in the case of statutory First Responders, must) be reported anonymously through the same online referral system (known as the 'Duty to Notify', or "DtN").

Aims and methodology

In light of the changing patterns documented in the NRM and DtN data in recent years, together with widespread concerns over the coverage and quality of the training provided to First Responders, the objectives of the project were:

1. To quantitatively and qualitatively assess identification-related training available to statutory and non-statutory First Responder Organisations, as well as to design, in partnership with First Responders, a pilot framework for assessing training effectiveness.

2. To identify good practices, as well as good practice structures, that increase the quality of referrals into the NRM.

3. To explore identification patterns, including gaps and promising practices, according to the characteristics of adults with lived experiences of modern slavery (including, *inter alia*, exploitation type, gender, and FRO involved in the referral).

4. To explore the meaning and understanding of 'informed consent' and the reasons why adults with lived experience of modern slavery decide to give (or not to give) consent to enter the NRM.

In terms of methods, the project included a mix of desk research, a quantitative and qualitative survey (42 responses), an analysis of selected training materials by a multi-disciplinary review panel using a common assessment framework, and qualitative focus groups with First Responders and people with lived experience of modern slavery (supplemented by individual, semi-structured interviews). This was further supplemented by a co-creation workshop with staff members of FROs to design a pilot framework for assessing training effectiveness. Lastly, the project team completed an analysis of publicly available NRM and DtN data, together with a first-of-its-kind analysis of DtN data for 2020 and 2021 secured through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Home Office.
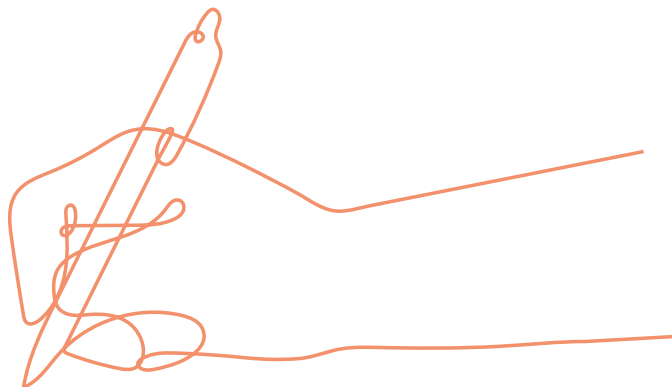
Findings

Training

1. Participants agreed that training is a key factor in improving the accurate identification of people with lived experience of modern slavery and ensuring informed consent for an NRM referral.

This was reflected in the fact that the majority of First Responders surveyed (88%) thought that training should be mandatory for all frontline workers in First Responder Organisations. Some of these respondents also specified mandatory repetition of training (for instance, on an annual basis) to ensure that First Responders are made aware of any relevant trends in modern slavery offences and informed of any policy and legislative developments relevant for discharging their role. Research participants from across the different components of the project recognised that lived experience input is key to impactful training for First Responders, particularly in relation to building trust, seeking informed consent and understanding barriers to the disclosure of a modern slavery experience.

2. In terms of the coverage of training provided to First Responders, there is very little publicly available information.

10% of surveyed First Responders had received no training in relation to their role, and almost a quarter (24%) attributed their preparedness to identify adults with lived experience of modern slavery to training undertaken at their own expense, implying that training provided within their organisation was insufficient. While the government has previously reported that basic training is mandatory for the staff of statutory First Responder Organisations, there is no publicly reported data on the uptake or attendance at training sessions.

3. In terms of the quality of training provided, a review of a selected number of training materials revealed some promising practices, as well as areas for improvement.

Promising practices included: dispelling common misconceptions surrounding modern slavery, using a variety of training methods and audiovisual tools to deliver the trainings, and using training initiatives that were 'survivor-led'. Areas for training improvement included: misleading definitions of trafficking and modern slavery, stereotypical portrayals of offences, a failure to raise awareness of vulnerabilities based on specific personal and/or situational characteristics, a lack of practical guidance on how to make NRM referrals and submit reports through the DtN process, and a lack of information on trauma-informed or culturally sensitive approaches.

4. Discussions with people with lived experience highlighted additional areas that training should focus on.

Lived experience consultants highlighted the need for First Responders to be capable of providing accurate and accessible information about the NRM process to ensure the possibility of giving informed consent for a referral (including on the interview and possible outcomes, predicted timelines, and specifics surrounding the nature of the support provided). Consultants also highlighted the importance of listening skills and the ability to convey signals to ensure that individuals recounting their experiences feel heard and understood – a skill which was considered key to building trust. A related issue which arose frequently in discussions around training was the importance of educating First Responders in trauma-informed approaches and the significance of cultural sensitivity when interacting with persons with lived experience of modern slavery.

5. The research revealed an absence of structured, ongoing monitoring and evaluation of training, owing to a lack of time and resources, as well as challenges in ensuring that training is regularly updated to reflect changes in the law and policy around modern slavery.

Against this background and to address these concerns, the project team developed a 'Training Assessment Checklist – a 12 Point Programme', which is available in the main report as an Annex. Participants also noted that formal and informal opportunities for sharing training experiences and resources could have a marked benefit on the type, quality and effectiveness of training provided. The research revealed that networks are a critical resource in raising awareness, informing training design and promoting monitoring and evaluation of training.
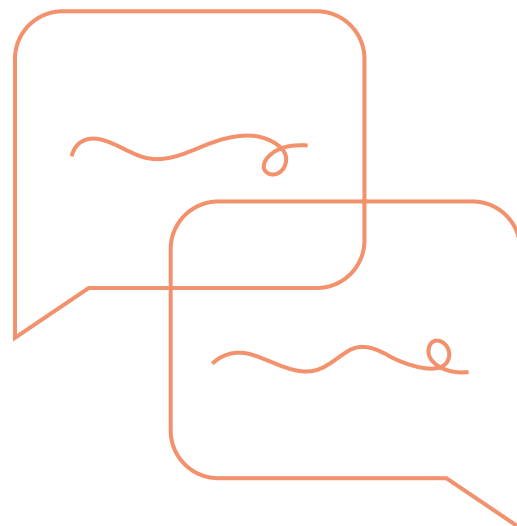
Good practices in reviewed First Responder training materials

1. Dispelling common misconceptions around modern slavery ('myth busting').

2. Highlighting the heightened vulnerability children, particularly in the context of forced criminality and 'county lines'.

3. Explaining the nature of the NRM process in detail.

4. Tailoring materials to the specific needs of participants, be it based on their geographical location (e.g., providing local statistics on modern slavery or foregrounding more prevalent forms of exploitation in the area), or their profession (e.g., placing greater emphasis on the Modern Slavery Act section 45 statutory defence when training police officers).

5. Using of a variety of training methods and audiovisual tools to maintain participants' engagement, while also employing situational exercises such as 'mock referrals', group work and scenario-based activities.

6. Including accounts of positive experiences of individuals with lived experience of modern slavery who had been successfully supported by the system (provided that consent have been given to share these with that specific group of training participants).

7. Initiatives such as the HTF 'Lived Experience: Train the Trainer' Project, where lived experience consultants developed and delivered their own individual, multi-agency modern slavery training to local authorities, police and community groups across London.

Areas for improvement in reviewed First Responder training materials

1. Conveying misleading definitions of modern slavery, including through insufficient engagement with international and domestic legal standards, frequent conflation between human trafficking and other modern slavery offences, and limited treatment of important concepts, such as 'consent'.

2. Presenting stereotypical portrayals of modern slavery offences, with problematic imagery involving chains, handcuffs, and hands clasped over the mouths of women and children. Research participants emphasised that these can be disempowering, while reinforcing the false conception that confinement is a common element of modern slavery, thus undermining the ability of First Responders to recognise indicators in practice.

3. Failing to raise awareness of specific personal and/or protected characteristics that may place individuals at a heightened risk of (certain types of) exploitation, including the absence of any gender perspective, and of the distinct vulnerabilities of LGBTQIA+ persons and of persons with disabilities.

4. Providing insufficient detail on how to conduct NRM referrals in practice – including how to conduct initial interviews, what and how much information to gather, and how to fill out the relevant forms (including what type of language to use when recording the individual's experience).

5. Providing insufficient practical information in relation to signposting to legal advisers, making relevant safeguarding arrangements, and supporting reconsideration requests.

6. Failing to include training on trauma-informed conduct. Trauma – if mentioned at all – was often only introduced as an indicator of modern slavery or as a potential barrier to disclosure. Reviews also frequently commented on a lack of training on culturally sensitive approaches.

Patterns in identification

The analysis compared published data about adults referred into the NRM with published data about adults reported through the DtN process in 2022, to provide insight into the scale and patterns of people with indicators of modern slavery who decide not to enter the NRM. Whilst recognising the potential for an unknown amount of double counting in the datasets, the research added the total number of NRM adult referrals and total number of DtN referrals in a given year, to calculate a ratio to show the proportion of adults who did not consent to NRM referral.

1. **The number of adults referred into the NRM and reported through the DtN has been increasing since 2015** (with the exception of 2020, due to the impact of Covid-19). **Since 2020, proportionally more people have been refusing a referral into the NRM**.[1]

The number of people reported through the DtN has increased consistently since 2015 – from 65 cases to 4,580 cases in 2022 – with a minor exception in 2020, likely owing to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on identification. The number of people referred into the NRM similarly increased year on year (apart from 2020), from 3,263 (2284 adults) in 2015 to 16,398 (8854 adults) in 2022.

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1. Based on analysis of published NRM and shared DtN data. As DtN data is anonymised it is not possible to analyse the extent to which the same individuals appear in both datasets.

DtN reports and adult NRM referrals: 2015-2022
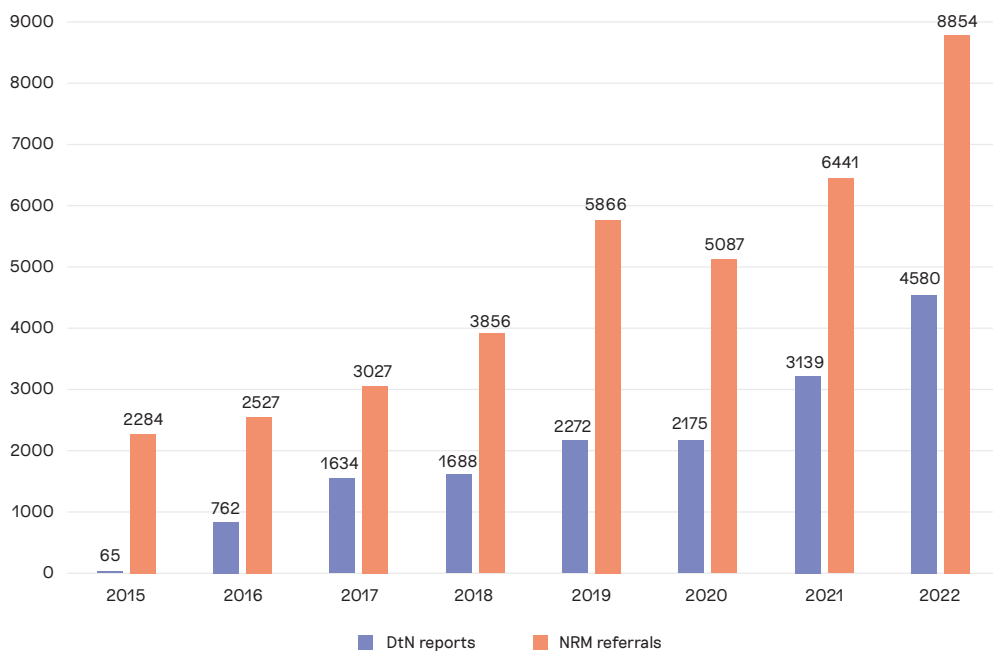
The most represented nationalities in the 2022 DtN reports were Eritrean (20%) and Albanian (18%), followed by British (9%), Sudanese (8%), Romanian (7%), and Chinese (5%). In parallel, the most represented nationalities in the 2022 adult NRM referrals were Albanian (41%), British (9%), and Eritrean (8%). The number of Sudanese (3%), Romanian (2%), and Chinese (1.5%) nationals referred to the NRM was significantly lower – in absolute and relative terms – compared to the DtN data. This means that **nationals of Sudan, Romania, and China were more likely than others to refuse consent to be referred into the NRM in 2022**, but further research is required to understand the reasons for this.
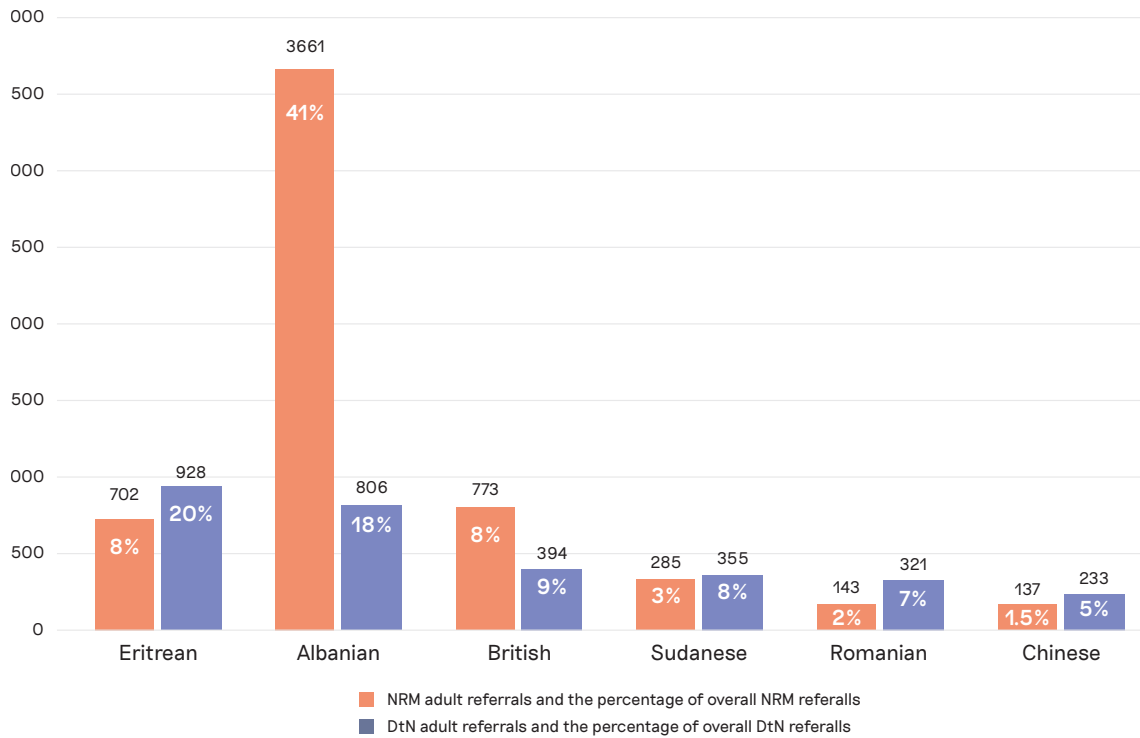
There is an overall similar distribution of exploitation type(s) across the published 2022 DtN and NRM datasets, with a slight over-representation of sexual exploitation in the DtN data and criminal exploitation in the NRM data, and a more significant over-representation of labour and criminal (as a multiple form of exploitation) in the NRM dataset.

In the published 2022 DtN statistics, the vast majority of DtN reports were filed by government agencies (3,119, or 68%, with **UKVI filing 2,624 reports, or 57%**)[2], followed by the police and Regional Organised Crime Units (1,253 or 27%). This is unsurprising as only statutory agencies are under a duty to notify.[3] By comparison, for the NRM data, the majority of adults in 2022 were referred by UKVI (2,856, 32%), followed by Immigration Enforcement (UKIE) (2,755, 31%) and NGOs (725, 8%). There is a significant over-representation of UKVI in DtN data with UKVI filing 57% of all DtN referrals, compared to 32% of the total of NRM referrals in 2022.

2. This is likely due to UKVI's role in asylum decision-making, which typically involves interviews during which a history of exploitation may be disclosed.

3. First Responder NGOs are not obliged to make DtN referrals where adults decide not to enter the NRM, but may continue to provide support (outside of the statutory funded Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract) or refer them to other supporting organisations.

NRM referrals and DtN reports in 2022 by nationalities

	Eritrean	Albanian	British	Sudanese	Romanian	Chinese
NRM	702 (8%)	3661 (41%)	773 (8%)	285 (3%)	143 (2%)	137 (1.5%)
DtN	928 (20%)	806 (18%)	394 (9%)	355 (8%)	321 (7%)	233 (5%)

■ NRM adult referrals and the percentage of overall NRM referalls
■ DtN adult referrals and the percentage of overall DtN referalls

（percentage numbers refer to the percentage of all NRM adult referrals and all DtN reports for 2022）

NRM referrals and DtN reports in 2022 by exploitation type
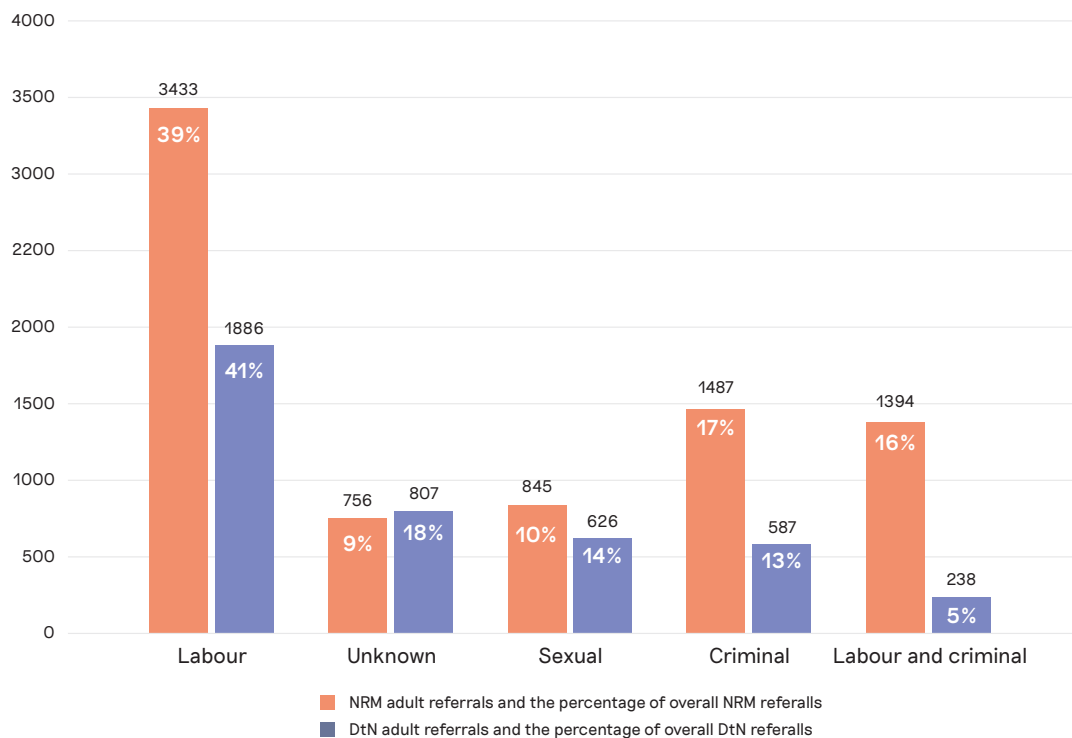
	Labour	Unknown	Sexual	Criminal	Labour and criminal
NRM	3433 (39%)	756 (9%)	845 (10%)	1487 (17%)	1394 (16%)
DtN	1886 (41%)	807 (18%)	626 (14%)	587 (13%)	238 (5%)

■ NRM adult referrals and the percentage of overall NRM referalls
■ DtN adult referrals and the percentage of overall DtN referalls

（percentage numbers refer to the percentage of all NRM adult referrals and all DtN reports for 2022）

NRM referrals and DtN reports in 2022 by referring agency

NRM adult referrals and the percentage of overall NRM referalls
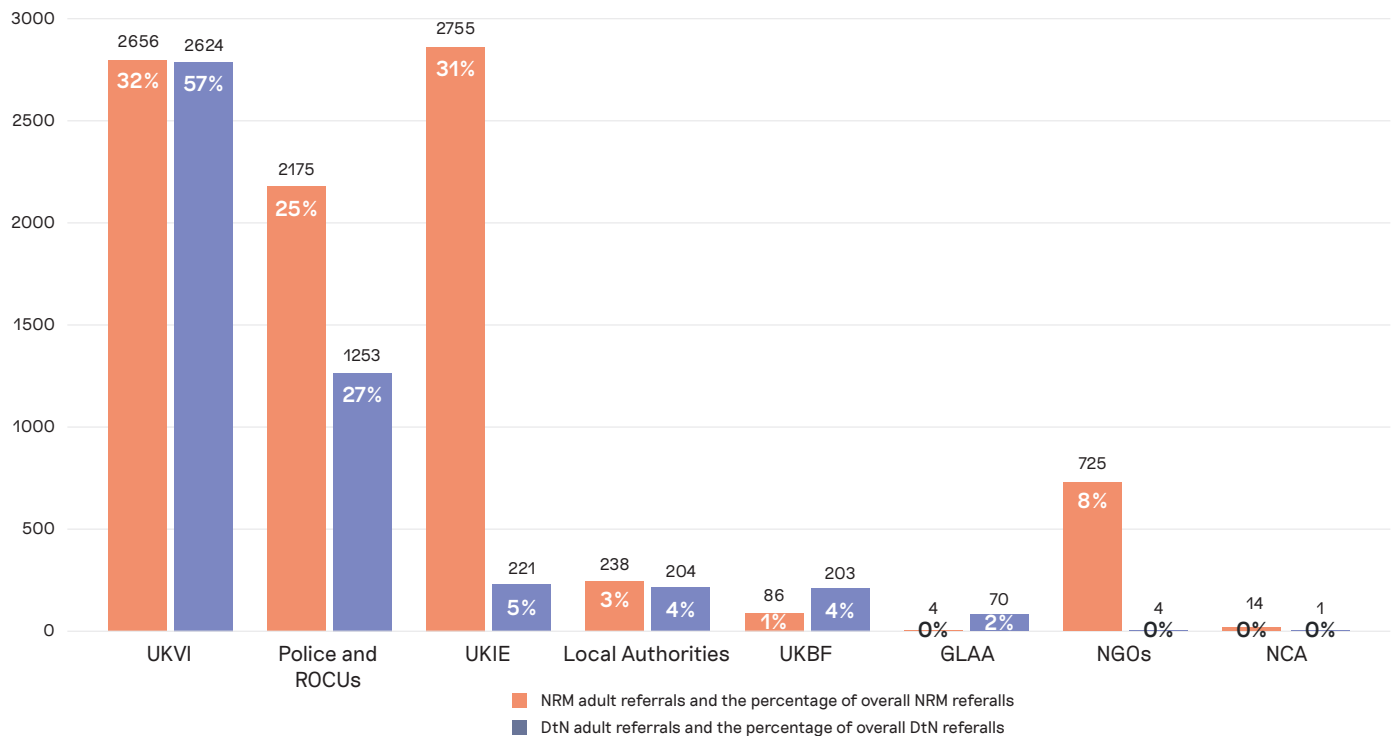DtN adult referrals and the percentage of overall DtN referalls

(percentage numbers refer to the percentage of all NRM adult referrals and all DtN reports for 2022)

2. **There are discernibly different patterns in terms of the nationality and gender of adults referred into the NRM and reported through the DtN, as well as in terms of the First Responder Organisation involved**, when comparing Home Office published NRM statistics for 2020 and 2021 to the Home Office DtN data shared under the MoU for the same years. **In terms of exploitation type, patterns are largely consistent across the two datasets**.

The analysis was able to reveal trends by personal characteristics of adults who were reported through the DtN procedure by statutory agencies in 2020 and 2021 compared to published NRM data for the same years. It was also able to explore for the first time the reasons provided for not entering the NRM, which can underpin additional future analysis and generate insights for the development of future policy and practice in the identification of adults with lived experience of modern slavery.
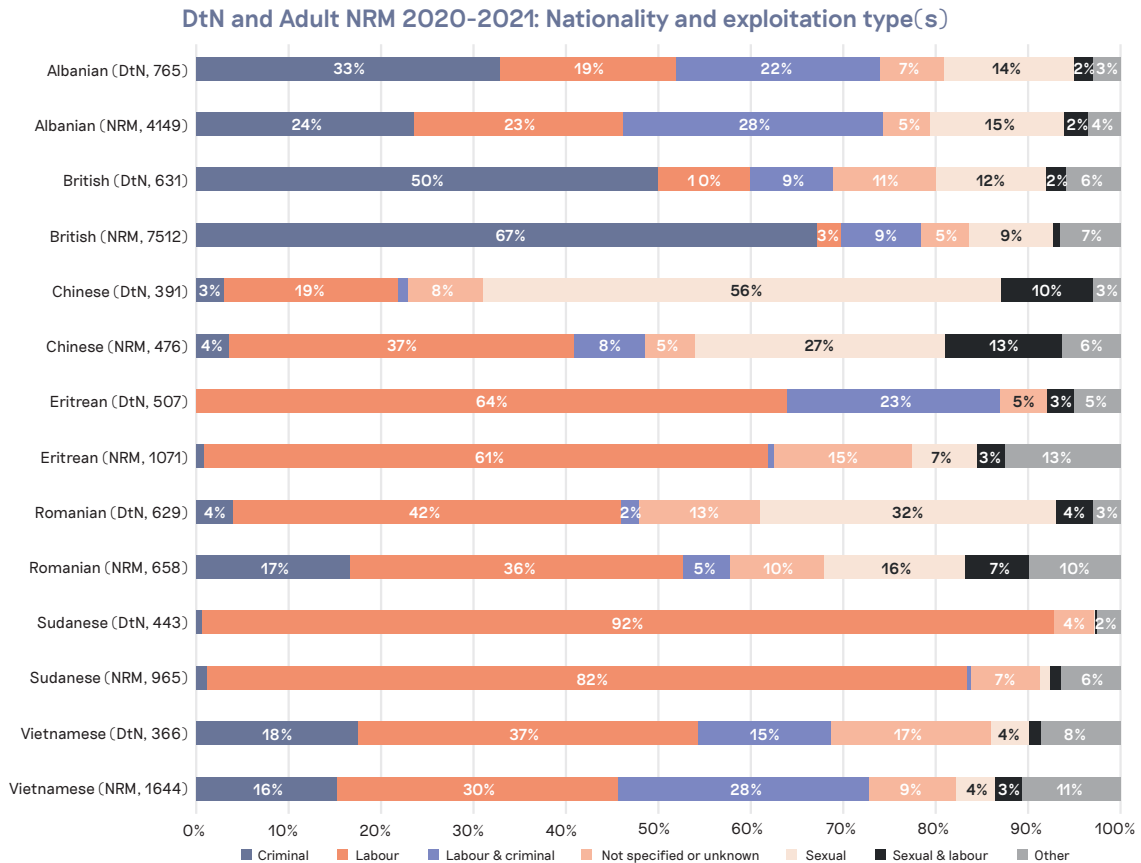
Nationality

A high proportion of British and Albanian adult nationals gave consent to enter the NRM (82%), followed by Vietnamese adult nationals (73%) in 2020 and 2021. By comparison, **60% of Romanian adult nationals did not give consent to enter the NRM** – the nationality with the highest proportions of adults not giving consent for referral into the NRM.

Gender

In relative terms, in 2020 and 2021 **there were proportionally more women in the DtN dataset than in the NRM dataset**. The majority of women who did not consent to be referred into the NRM were Romanian, followed by Chinese and then British nationals. The majority of men who did not consent to entering the NRM in 2020 and 2021 were Albanian nationals, followed by Sudanese, Eritrean and British nationals.

Exploitation type

The **majority of DtN referrals in 2020 and 2021 involved cases of labour exploitation, followed by sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation** – which is consistent with the distribution in the published NRM data from 2020 and 2021. There is a slightly higher share, in relative terms, of Albanian criminal exploitation in DtN reports over NRM referrals. British nationals subjected to criminal exploitation were more likely than not to consent to being referred into the NRM, and British nationals subjected to labour exploitation were more likely than not to refuse referral into the NRM. Chinese and Romanian nationals subjected to sexual exploitation were more likely than not to refuse referral into the NRM. On the other hand, Romanian nationals subjected to criminal exploitation were more likely to agree to be referred into the NRM.

DtN and Adult NRM 2020-2021: Nationality and exploitation type(s)

Nationality	Criminal	Labour	Labour & criminal	Not specified or unknown	Sexual	Sexual & labour	Other
Albanian (DtN, 765)	33%	19%	22%	7%	14%	2%	3%
Albanian (NRM, 4149)	24%	23%	28%	5%	15%	2%	4%
British (DtN, 631)	50%	10%	9%	11%	12%	2%	6%
British (NRM, 7512)	67%	3%	9%	5%	9%		7%
Chinese (DtN, 391)	3%	19%	8%	56%		10%	3%
Chinese (NRM, 476)	4%	37%	8%	5%	27%	13%	6%
Eritrean (DtN, 507)		64%	23%	5%		3%	5%
Eritrean (NRM, 1071)		61%	15%	7%		3%	13%
Romanian (DtN, 629)	4%	42%	2%	13%	32%	4%	3%
Romanian (NRM, 658)	17%	36%	5%	10%	16%	7%	10%
Sudanese (DtN, 443)		92%			4%		2%
Sudanese (NRM, 965)		82%		7%			6%
Vietnamese (DtN, 366)	18%	37%	15%	17%	4%		8%
Vietnamese (NRM, 1644)	16%	30%	28%	9%	4%	3%	11%

Referring agency

Almost all of the DtN referrals in 2020 and 2021 came from statutory First Responders, with an over-representation of government agencies (UKVI, UKIE, Border Force, GLAA) **and the police in the DtN over the NRM data**. 56% of DtN referrals were from government agencies, 38% came from the police and 6% from local authorities. There is a significant over-representation of UKVI (probably owing to their role in refugee determination) and a marginal over-representation of the police in DtN data over the NRM data.

DtN 2020-2021 data: Referring Agency

NGO/Third Sector
17
0%

Blank/Unknown, 1
0%

Local Authority
330
6%

Police
2017
38%

Government Agency
2954
56%
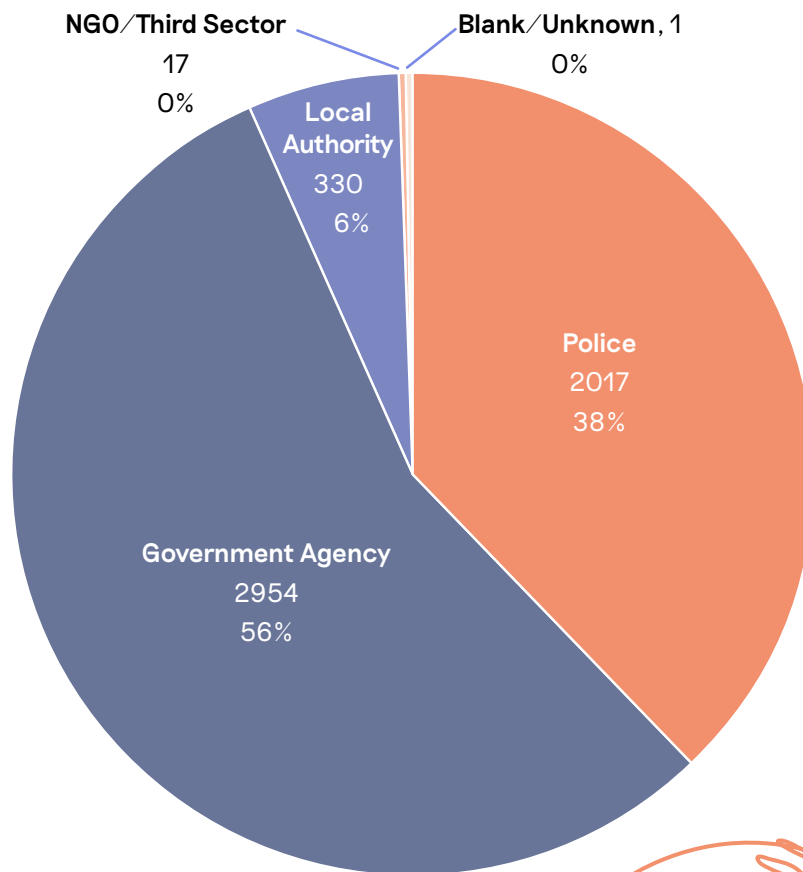
Reasons for not entering the NRM and the meaning of 'informed consent'

1. The DtN analysis for 2020 and 2021 provides unique insights into the reasons individuals give (or which First Responders give on their behalf) for not wanting to enter the NRM. From a quantitative perspective, 41% of DtN reports in 2020-2021 contain one or more of the following codes – *FR provided no response, PV gave no reason, FR perception, PV is unaware of referral, and FR did not ask for a reason,* **meaning that the reason(s) for not entering the NRM remain unknown. In reports where at least one reason was recorded, the most common was that the person denied the exploitation experience or victim status and/or that the NRM didn't apply to them (23% of reports which included at least one reason),[4] followed by wanting to put the experience behind them (14%), being afraid of the traffickers (10%), a refusal to engage (8%), and that the individual felt safe/was already being supported (8%).**

The "reason for not entering the NRM" is an open text box in the DtN form, free from dropdown menu constraints, and is not mandatory to complete. In some instances, the dataset contained quotes from the individual refusing the NRM referral, while in other cases it appeared to include perceptions of the First Responder as to why the individual refused an NRM referral. Where a response was provided for not giving consent to enter the NRM, typically only one reason was given, with a maximum of two.

The **reasons for not entering the NRM were coded both inductively** (based on focus groups with people with lived experience of modern slavery and existing research findings) **and deductively** (based on themes and patterns of responses). In total, **45 codes were generated from the 5,321 DtN referrals analysed**, which were categorised under **four macro themes** to classify reasons for not entering the NRM: **personal, exploitation-related, structural, and process-related.**[5]

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4. It needs to be noted that this does not mean that the individual was not, or had not been, exploited. Lack of self-identification as a 'victim of modern slavery' may depend on, inter alia, fear of traffickers, distrust in the authorities, or unwillingness to exit a(n exploitative) situation due to the absence of reasonable, concrete, and accessible alternatives – as acknowledged in research, including Alicia Heys et al, 'A Review of Modern Slavery in Britain: Understanding the Unique Experience of British Victims and Why it Matters' (2022) 5(1) Journal of Victimology and Victim Justice 54, which looks at British nationals; Noemi Magugliani, '(In)Vulnerable Masculinities and Human Trafficking: Men, Victimhood, and Access to Protection in the United Kingdom' (2022) 14(2) Journal of Human Rights Practice 726, which looks at non-British adult males; and Katarina Schwarz and Alexandra Williams-Woods, 'Protection and support for survivors of modern slavery in the UK: assessing current provision and what we need to change' (2022) 30(2) Journal of Poverty and Social Justice 98, which looks at people with lived experience of modern slavery more broadly. Similar findings are also acknowledged in the Home Office's 'Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for England and Wales (under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) and Non-Statutory Guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland' (October 2023) pp. 113-115.

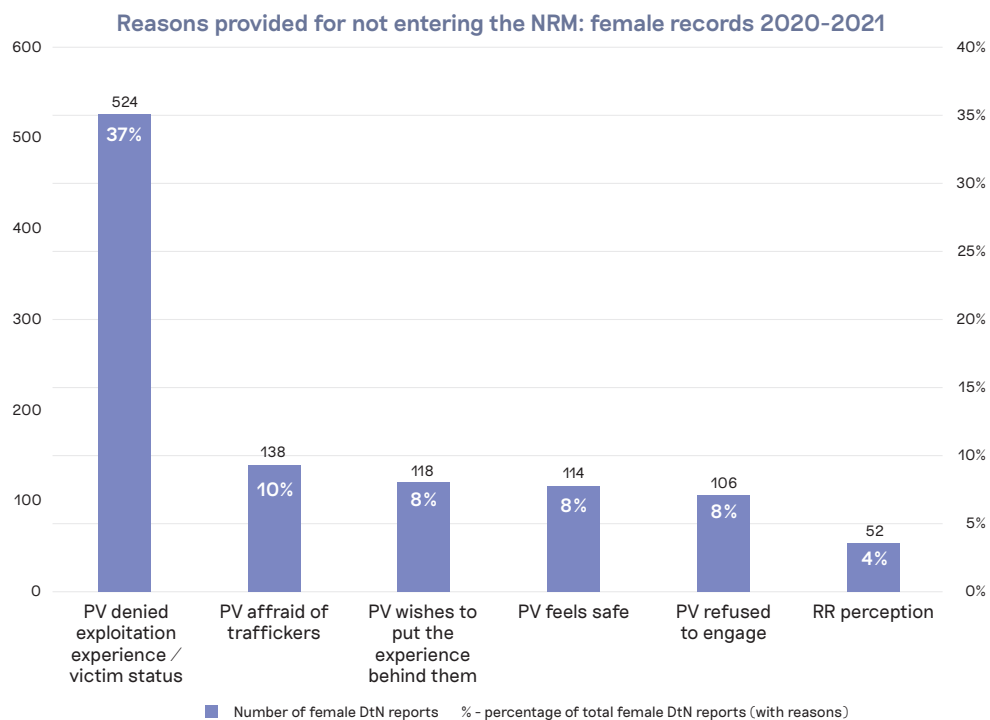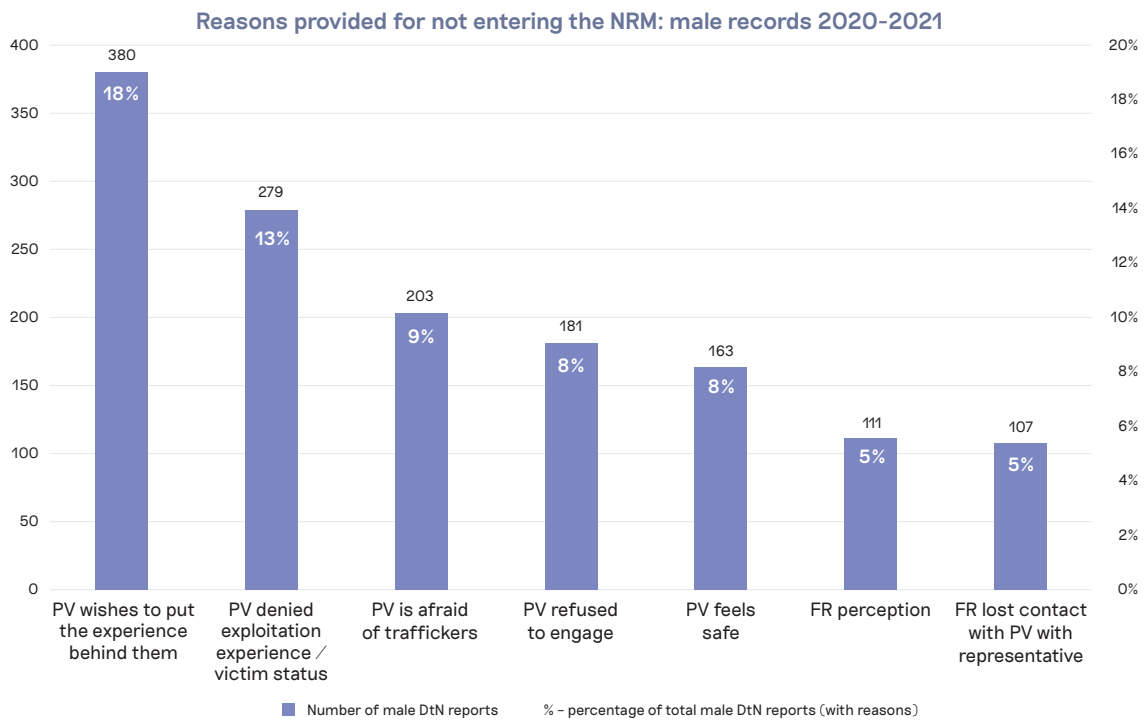5. For the full list of codes and categories, see the Annex below.

Nationality

Differences emerged, where at least one reason for not entering the NRM was provided, based on nationality.

- **British:** refusal to engage with the authorities (83, 18%), denial of exploitation and/or victim status (79, 17%), and fear of traffickers (75, 16%);

- **Albanian:** fear of traffickers (103, 21%), refusal to engage with the authorities (52, 11%), and the desire to leave the exploitative experience behind (44, 9%);

- **Romanian:** denial of exploitation and/or victim status (250, 50%) and a sense of safety (33, 7%);

- **Eritrean:** desire to leave the exploitative experience behind (142, 47%), individual believing that a referral would be detrimental to their wellbeing (46, 15%), and a sense of safety (36, 12%);

- **Sudanese:** desire to leave the exploitative experience behind (139, 47%), a sense of safety (46, 16%), and the prioritisation of an asylum application and/or already having refugee status (20, 7%);

- **Chinese:** denial of exploitation and/or victim status (104, 37%), fear of traffickers (35, 13%), and the desire to leave the exploitative experience behind (26, 9%);

- **Vietnamese:** denial of exploitation and/or victim status (55, 25%), refusal to engage with the authorities (23, 10%), and "FR perception" (26, 9%).[6]

Gender

For **men**, where a reason for not entering the NRM was provided, most common was the **desire to put the exploitative experience behind them** (**18%**), followed by the denial of the exploitation experience and/or victim status (13%) and fear of traffickers (9%). By comparison, for **women**, where a reason was recorded the most common was the **denial of the exploitation experience and/or victim status** (**37%**), followed by fear of traffickers (10%) and the desire to put the exploitative experience behind them (8%).

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6. Amongst the information coded as FR perception, by way of example, the dataset contains references to the individual not wanting referral to the police, or the individual not being able to 'give enough details to the police that would be enough for an investigation'.

Reasons provided for not entering the NRM: male records 2020-2021

■ Number of male DtN reports	% – percentage of total male DtN reports (with reasons)

Reasons provided for not entering the NRM: female records 2020-2021

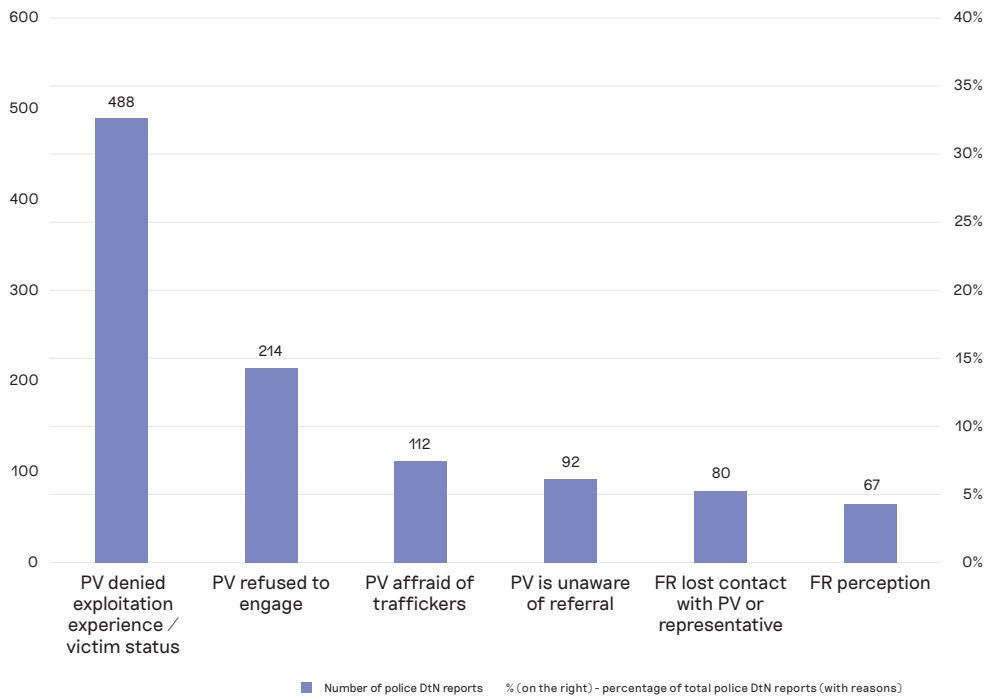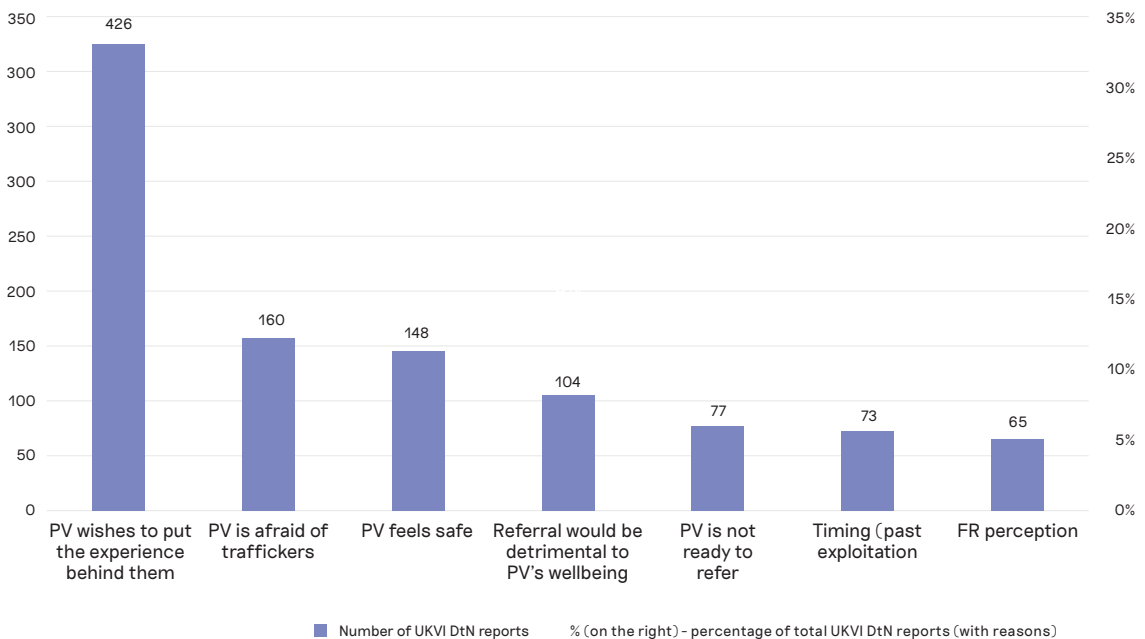|	
■ Number of female DtN reports	% - percentage of total female DtN reports (with reasons)

Referring agency

The main reason provided for not consenting to enter the NRM in **police DtN reports** for 2020 and 2021 was **denial of exploitation and/or victim status** (**37%**), followed by a refusal to engage with the authorities (16%), and fear of traffickers (9%). In comparison, the most common reasons not to enter the NRM for individuals who were reported through the DtN by **UKVI** was the **desire to put the experience behind them** (**31%**), followed by fear of traffickers (160, 12%), and a sense of safety (148, 11%) – the latter often associated with the fact that exploitation happened outside of the United Kingdom (e.g., in transit during a migration journey).

Fear of traffickers was a common reason provided in both police and UKVI in DtN reports (where a reason was provided). Denial of the exploitation experience and/or victim status and a refusal to engage with the authorities were significant codes in police DtN referrals, while the codes were minimally present in UKVI reports. On the other hand, a **desire to leave the experience behind was predominant amongst UKVI reports, while that code was minimally present in police reports**. The same is also true for the code "referral would have had a detrimental impact on wellbeing".

### Reasons provided for not entering the NRM in police DtN reports 2020-2021

■ Number of police DtN reports	% (on the right) - percentage of total police DtN reports (with reasons)

Reasons provided for not entering the NRM in the UKVI DtN records 2020-2021

■ Number of UKVI DtN reports	% (on the right) - percentage of total UKVI DtN reports (with reasons)

2. Research findings indicate that people with lived experience of modern slavery have been referred into the NRM without providing any consent, felt compelled to consent to a referral, were not given enough information to consent meaningfully, or were under the impression that entering the NRM involved a requirement to collaborate with the police.

In focus groups with people with lived experience of modern slavery, the majority of participants shared that they had either felt compelled to consent to a referral, were not sure what exactly they were consenting to, or had been referred without giving consent at all. Without accurate information provided by First Responders about the NRM, consent (or lack thereof) cannot be deemed to be 'informed'. **A meaningful number of notes contained in the 'reasons for not entering the NRM' field for 2020 and 2021 DtN reports clearly indicate that the information provided hinted at a requirement to collaborate with (criminal) investigations, or provide information to the police, as part of the NRM process (206, 6%).** In these latter cases, the inability to provide 'sufficient intel' was often reported as the reason for not entering the NRM, indicating that individuals decided not to enter because they believed that cooperation with the police was a condition of referral and would not be able or willing to support an investigation.

In a handful of instances, the First Responders' notes hinted at a perception of the NRM as an immigration-focused system that was therefore 'unfit' for those who already hold legal status in the United Kingdom (40, 1%). In a few other cases, the individual did not consent based on an assumption (and/or a misrepresentation) that being referred into the NRM would necessarily entail relocation within the United Kingdom and accommodation in a safe house (12, 1%). In others, individuals were referred through the DtN process without first having an opportunity to consent (or not) on the basis that the 'potential victim is not identified at present' or the 'potential victim is in prison' (141, 3%). The dataset also contained 155 instances of First Responders losing contact with the individual or their representative (4%).
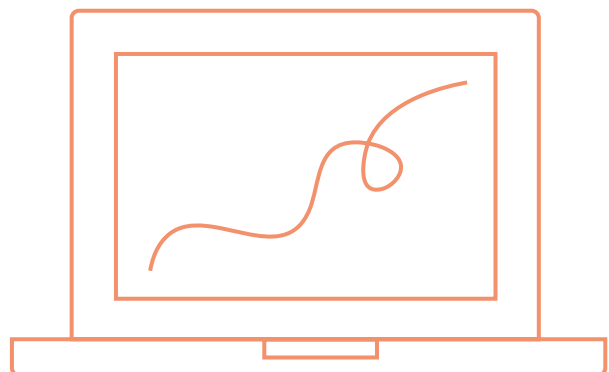
Recommendations

A. For the Modern Slavery Unit at the Home Office

A1. General recommendations

1. Ensure that changes to law, policy and processes, including any changes to the NRM and DtN online referral forms and Statutory Guidance, are communicated to First Responder Organisations prior to coming into effect. First Responders must be given adequate time to familiarise themselves with any such changes and to prepare accordingly, including, where necessary, by providing additional training to their staff. Support should also be offered to help First Responders adapt to any such changes and to ensure they are able to perform their functions effectively – for instance, in the form of detailed guidance on the practical effects of changes on the referral process and online form;

2. Ensure that changes to law, policy and process follow a clear consultation procedure and that transparency is maintained when making and communicating decisions related to modern slavery. This applies, among other things, to decisions surrounding the composition of First Responder Organisations, as well as ministerial commitments to implementing pre-NRM Places of Safety.

3. Ensure that the views and experiences of individuals with lived experience of modern slavery and of those involved in frontline work inform all legislative, policy, and practical developments, including the development of any training materials.

A2. Training recommendations

1. Update the Home Office e-learning modules for First Responders as a matter of priority and ensure that these are amended in advance of any future changes to the referral process to ensure that First Responders can be trained on these before they come into effect;

2. Make it mandatory for all statutory First Responder Organisations to ensure that all staff members who are internally tasked with submitting NRM referrals and DtN reports complete training consistent their level of knowledge on a regular (e.g., annual) basis;

3. Introduce a programme for monitoring satisfactory completion of the e-learning by requiring an email address to access the module and asking knowledge and confidence-based questions before and after the training is completed. The monitoring data should be made publicly available (in an aggregated and anonymised form) so that it can be used to better understand and improve training uptake among First Responders;

4. Support the further development of an accessible database of training materials and create a standardised tool for monitoring and evaluating training provided to First Responders, potentially building on the training assessment framework developed as part of this project (see Annex 1 of the main report).

A3. Duty to Notify recommendations

1. Openly publish detailed DtN data which includes all information gathered via the reports (save for the information that ought to be redacted for data protection purposes) to allow further engagement and analysis by the public, researchers, and civil society actors;

2. Improve data collection by making the field 'reasons for not entering the NRM' on the referral form a mandatory one. The collection of more data on this topic will allow for more effective monitoring of trends and patterns in DtN reports. In addition to the open text box for 'reasons for not entering the NRM', a new multiple-choice question could be added, based on the codes created in this report, so that the reasons for not entering the NRM can be easily analysed and concerns about entering the NRM assessed;

3. Explore the feasibility of taking steps to widen the number of organisations which can submit a Duty to Notify report. Currently, this is only First Responder Organisations, which may not show an accurate representation of the true scale of people with lived experience of modern slavery being identified yet refusing to being referred into the NRM. It is possible that once the Illegal Migration Act comes into effect, fewer people with lived experience of modern slavery will make contact with the authorities, making the DtN data less reflective of how many people decide not to enter the NRM. Any concerns about the qualifications of organisations to make DtN referrals could be addressed by requiring organisations to have completed the Home Office e-learning modules first.

B. For First Responders (and other Frontline Organisations)
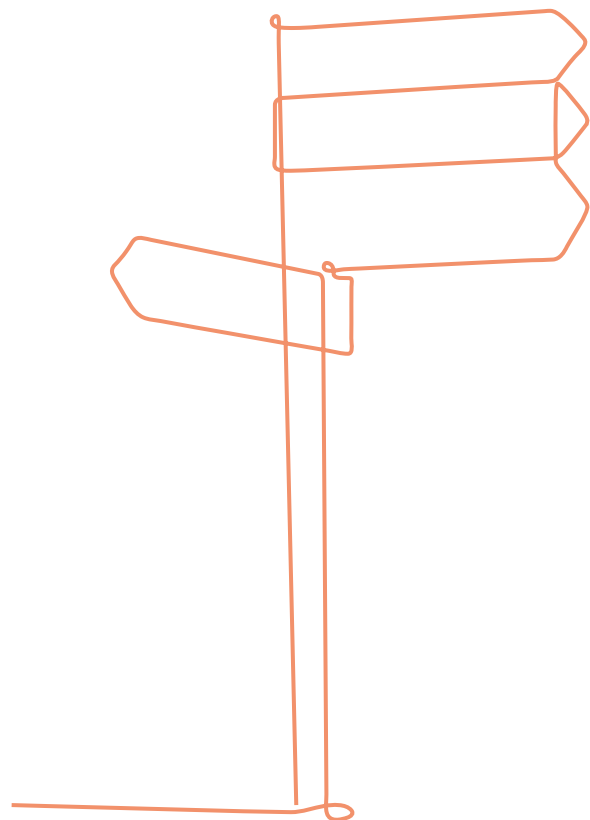
B1. General recommendations

1. Identify Single Points of Contact ("SPOCs") within the organisation who can advise on referrals or complex cases. These individuals should have the appropriate knowledge and experience to perform this role, including completion of a higher level of training;

2. Provide ongoing support to First Responders and staff of relevant frontline organisations, including necessary psycho-social support, in recognition of the nature of the work and the possibility of burnout, secondary trauma, and related issues.

B2. Training recommendations

1. Make training mandatory within all First Responder Organisations for all staff members who are internally tasked with filing NRM referrals and DtN reports, as well as for all other staff members who may come into contact with people with lived experience of modern slavery in a professional capacity;

2. Ensure that the meaning of 'informed consent' is clearly communicated in all levels of training, and that staff members understand the need to ensure that informed consent is obtained, rather than assumed, for all NRM referrals;

3. Ensure that the views and experiences of people with lived experience of modern slavery inform the design, development, delivery and monitoring of training delivered to First Responder Organisations and all other frontline organisations whose staff may come into contact with people with lived experience of modern slavery in a professional capacity;

4. Provide an induction and facilitate mentoring opportunities for new staff members involved in identification and referral processes;

5. Building on the training assessment framework developed as part of this project, develop training monitoring mechanisms informed by measurable objectives and standards and ensure that these are regularly implemented. These monitoring mechanisms should be based on an understanding of training evaluation as an ongoing learning opportunity for the individual, programme and organisation;

6. Consider opportunities for partnering with other frontline organisations (including, but not limited to, civil society organisations and modern slavery Lived Experience Advisory Groups) in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of training programmes.

Areas for further research

Monitoring and evaluation of training is an area that needs further data collection and research, as does the current availability of training provision among First Responders. Further research is also required to analyse areas of support that would benefit FROs and other frontline organisations and to explore how their needs (both practical, capacity-based needs, as well as other support needs, such as those relating to secondary trauma) could be best addressed. In addition, research is required to analyse in greater detail the findings of the DtN data presented in this study (as well as any findings from more recent DtN data), in so far as distinctive patterns have emerged with regard to reasons for not entering the NRM based on nationality and gender, as well as in relation to variations between the proportion of DtN reports to NRM referrals by nationality. This research should also take into account how recent policy developments – such as the implementation of the Nationality and Borders Act – have contributed to changing patterns or otherwise impacted the operation of the DtN process.

Annex

Code	Frequency	Description
FR provided no response	1,025 (20% of total dataset entries)	This code includes all instances where the First Responder either left the text box empty, or only submitted a response indicating: 1. DtN 2. MS1 3. N/A It also includes instances in which the First Responder indicated that the report was compiled prior to engaging with the individual (5 instances).
Potential victim (PV) denied exploitation experience / victim status	803 (15% of total dataset entries, 23% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes instances in which it was reported that the individual stated that they have not been exploited and/or are 'not a victim', and thus that the NRM 'does not apply' to them. This should be read with caution, as denial of exploitation and/or victim status cannot be equated with factual absence of exploitation.
PV gave no reason	725 (14% of total dataset entries)	This code includes all instances in which the First Responder indicated that the question was posed (directly or indirectly), but the individual did not give a particular reason as to why they did not consent to entering the NRM.
PV wishes to put the experience behind them	498 (10% of total dataset entries, 14% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes instances in which it was reported that the individual stated they wanted to 'get on with [their] life', or 'put it in the past'. It was often associated with references to the referral being potentially detrimental to the individual's wellbeing: see "Referral would be detrimental to PV's wellbeing" below.
PV is afraid of traffickers	342 (7% of total dataset entries, 10% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes instances in which it was reported that the individual stated they were afraid of repercussions from traffickers, with a focus on their own health and wellbeing. See further under "Family reasons".
PV refused to engage	287 (5% of total dataset entries, 8% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated they did not want to engage with the process. While it could have been coded as "PV gave no reason", the research team felt that the use of the word engagement was worthy of a separate category.

PV feels safe	277 (5% of total dataset entries, 8% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated that they felt safe and/or had access outside of state-provided specialised modern slavery services to a support network and/or services – including, for example, within a particular community.
FR perception	162 (3% of total dataset entries, 5% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This is a macro-code which includes several sub-categories that relate to particular perceptions of the First Responder compiling the DtN. These may relate to the way(s) in which the NRM was explained to the individual – in so far as it was possible to understand this from a limited text box – and/or to what the First Responder perceived the reason(s) for not entering to be. This code includes, inter alia: 1. PV does not wish to support prosecution; 2. PV has misperception of NRM as immigration focused; 3. FR compiled a collective referral; 4. FR was unaware of NRM; 5. PV cannot provide sufficient intel. This final category is considered particularly relevant given the implication that it means that collaboration with a criminal investigation or prosecution was a requirement.
FR lost contact with PV or representative	155 (3% of total dataset entries, 4% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances where it was suggested that consent was not obtained due to contact with the individual being lost. This code also includes a limited number of instances where the individual died before the referral could be compiled (2) and where there were suggestions that the individual might have been re-trafficked (1).
Referral would be detrimental to PV's wellbeing	132 (3% of total dataset entries, 4% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual did not want to enter into the NRM due to fear of re-traumatisation and potential detrimental impact(s) on their wellbeing – especially from a mental health perspective. As mentioned above, this code is often found alongside "PV wishes to put the experience behind them".
PV is unaware of referral	122 (2% of total dataset entries, 4% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the DtN was filed without the knowledge of the individual – and thus without any direct engagement. The majority of these instances relate to court proceedings, where the Crown Prosecution Service requested a referral to be made (by the police), but the individual was not reachable / had not been contacted by the referring agency.

PV does not need support	113 (2% of total dataset entries, 3% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual indicated that they did not need support. It was often found alongside references to "PV feels safe" and/or "PV already has protection framework".
FR did not ask for reason	111 (2% of total dataset entries, 3% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	While this code could have been (or become) part of "FR perception", the research team believed it was significant to highlight this as a separate code, considering its frequency and significance for the research. This code includes all instances in which the First Responder did not ask – and stated they did not ask – the individual for a reason as to why they were declining an NRM referral.
PV is not ready to be referred	106 (2% of total dataset entries, 3% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual did not feel ready to be referred into the NRM, whether because they needed more time to think about it, or because they could not process the information on the NRM that they had received during the interview. In some instances, the First Responder indicated that the individual was signposted to support services.
PV does not see benefit of referral	89 (2% of total dataset entries, 3% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated that the NRM was not offering sufficient guarantees and/or benefits – oftentimes linked to the individual's specific needs (e.g., compensation) or to the inability of the NRM to remedy the situation of (past) exploitation. In several cases, this was coded alongside "Timing (past exploitation)" – see below.
Timing (past exploitation)	86 (2% of total dataset entries, 2% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated that the exploitation happened in the past and that they were not interested in the NRM. Oftentimes, this was coded alongside "PV does not see benefit of referral" or "PV wishes to put the experience behind them". In some cases, it was linked to the exploitation occurring in a third country (for instance, during a migration journey).
Field was redacted	73 (1% of total dataset entries, 2% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which the First Responder provided an answer but, because of the field being redacted by the Home Office prior to sharing the dataset, it was not possible to identify any reason(s).

PV prioritised asylum application / already has refugee status	72 (1% of total dataset entries, 2% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated that they did not consent to enter the NRM because either they decided to give priority to their asylum application or they already had refugee status and were therefore not interested in pursuing an NRM referral. This was often linked to "PV wants to avoid delays to asylum claim".
PV wishes to return to country of origin	71 (1% of total dataset entries, 2% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated they were only interested in repatriation – whether to (re)join their family (see also "Family reasons") or to put the experience behind them (see also "PV wishes to put the experience behind them").
PV already has protection framework	67 (1% of total dataset entries, 2% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual explained that they were already receiving state support outside of the NRM, be that through social workers and/or local authorities, or through other public services.
Family reasons	64 (1% of total dataset entries, 2% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated that they did not want to be referred for reasons that had to do with their family. This code includes, inter alia: 1. Family reasons – fear for family members; 2. Family reasons – threats to family members; 3. Family reasons – financial; 4. and Family reasons – perpetrator is a family member. It does, therefore, include both instances where the wellbeing of family member(s) is in danger, whether in the United Kingdom or in the country of origin, and where threats to the individual's wellbeing come from their own family member(s), as in the case of family members who are involved with traffickers. This latter scenario represents, however, only a handful of cases.
PV wants legal advice	63 (1% of total dataset entries, 2% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated they wanted to seek legal advice before deciding, or they were in the process of receiving legal advice on the NRM. While this could have been part of the "PV is not ready to be referred" code, the explicit mention of legal advice was an element that the research team deemed significant.

PV wishes to continue in current work / situation	53 (1% of total dataset entries, 2% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated they would rather stay in their current situation than be referred into the NRM, mostly for economic reasons (including the need to repay a debt) but also for immigration-related reasons. This also includes: 1. PV wishes to retain right / ability to work; 2. and PV is afraid of deportation / has a pending deportation order.
PV is afraid of authorities / reporting to the police	51 (1% of total dataset entries, 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated they were afraid of the authorities – more often than not of the police and/or the immigration authorities – and that they were afraid that the state was unable or unwilling to protect them.
PV wants to avoid delays to asylum claim	43 (1% of total dataset entries, 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated that they had an ongoing asylum claim and they believed – whether following legal advice or based on network knowledge – that the NRM would delay their claim.
PV does not trust the system	42 (1% of total dataset entries, 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes instances in which it was reported that the individual stated they did not trust the system, in particular – but not limited to – its ability to ensure protection against traffickers and deliver some form of justice. This includes, inter alia: 1. PV does not want to formalise referral (pen to paper); 2. PV believes the system is racist; 3. PV is only interested in being released (and not interested in engaging with the state).
PV does not want support	41 (1% of total dataset entries, 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated they did not want support (see above "PV does not need support" for the distinction). This was often coded together with "PV feels safe" or "PV denied exploitation experience / victim status".

Exploitation happened outside of the UK	37 (1% of total dataset entries, 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated that the exploitation happened outside of the United Kingdom and that the NRM was therefore unable to have any meaningful consequence on justice and/ or accountability. In several instances, this was associated with "PV wishes to put the experience behind them" or "Referral would be detrimental to PV's wellbeing".
PV is 'grateful' to traffickers	37 (1% of total dataset entries, 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated they were grateful to traffickers, or have forgiven traffickers and do not want to 'cause [them] trouble'.
Unclear from entry	33 (1% of total dataset entries, 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances where a response was provided by the First Responder, but it was unclear what the reason was for not entering the NRM. While this could have been coded as "PV gave no reason", there were elements of a reasoning provided by the individual, but the recording of said elements did not allow for a full understanding of the circumstances.
PV is out of country	33 (1% of total dataset entries, 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual had already left the United Kingdom. While this could have been coded as "FR lost contact with PV or representative", the research team considered it significant that in these instances contact was lost not within the United Kingdom, but outside of the territory.
PV wants to avoid trouble	26 (less than 1% of total dataset entries, less than 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated that they wanted to avoid getting into trouble. It was, however, unclear whether this related to fear of traffickers and/or fear of reporting to the authorities. The research team thus left the code as it appeared in the entry.
PV is afraid of being stigmatised	23 (less than 1% of total dataset entries, less than 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated that they were afraid of being stigmatised, especially within their own communities. They therefore did not want anyone to know about their victimhood and exploitation.

Language barriers	20 (less than 1% of total dataset entries, less than 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that it was impossible to communicate with the individual due to language barriers. While this could have been coded as "PV gave no reason" or "FR provided no response", the research team believed it was significant to highlight the specificities of this code.
PV has already been referred	19 (less than 1% of total dataset entries, less than 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual had already been referred into the NRM, and that the referral would therefore have been a duplicate of an earlier engagement.
PV is in prison	19 (less than 1% of total dataset entries, less than 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual was detained in prison at the time of the report, and that no access to the individual could be secured for the purpose of establishing whether they wanted to be referred or not.
PV is afraid	17 (less than 1% of total dataset entries, less than 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated they were afraid, though not specifying whether they were afraid of traffickers, the authorities, family members, or stigma (or a combination of the above).
Religion	14 (less than 1% of total dataset entries, less than 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual did not want the state to be involved, as they did not believe it could deliver 'justice', which in their words was 'in God's hands'.
PV wishes to remain anonymous	12 (less than 1% of total dataset entries, less than 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated that they wanted to remain anonymous. While this could have been coded under many other categories, it was significant – in the eyes of the research team – that anonymity came up as a distinct concept.

PV wishes to avoid relocation within the UK	12 (less than 1% of total dataset entries, less than 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated that they were integrating in a specific location within the United Kingdom and they did not want to be relocated. The research team believes that this could have been coded as "FR perception", as entering the NRM does not necessarily mean being relocated, but there were not enough data points to confidently state that this was a misrepresentation of the NRM on the part of the First Responder.
PV has criminal charges	3 (less than 1% of total dataset entries, less than 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated that they did not want to be referred because of pending criminal charges. This is a code that, even after careful analysis, leaves more questions open than answered.
PV blames themselves for the exploitation	3 (less than 1% of total dataset entries, less than 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes instances in which it was reported that the individual stated that they did not want to be referred because they felt that they were to blame for what happened to them, thus refusing assistance and support.
PV is unable to consent	3 (less than 1% of total dataset entries, less than 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual was unable to give consent, due for example to inebriation or use of substances.
PV does not wish to be seen as a 'snitch'	3 (less than 1% of total dataset entries, less than 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes all instances in which it was reported that the individual stated that they were not a 'snitch' or a 'grass' – in other words, that they did not want to be seen as cooperating with state authorities.
PV was instructed by solicitor not to consent	1 (less than 1% of total dataset entries, less than 1% of dataset entries with at least one reason)	This code includes the only instance in which it was explicitly stated that a solicitor instructed the individual not to consent – though the reasons are unknown.

Categorisations

Personal reasons

PV feels safe; PV does not need support; PV wishes to return to the country of origin; PV wishes to continue in current work / situation; PV wishes to put the experience behind them; Referral would be detrimental to PV's wellbeing; PV is afraid of being stigmatised; PV is grateful to traffickers; PV denied exploitation experience / victim status; PV prioritised asylum application / already has refugee status; PV does not want support; PV is out of country; PV refused to engage; PV does not wish to be seen as a snitch; PV is afraid of traffickers; PV wants to avoid trouble; PV is not ready to be referred; PV wants legal advice; PV wishes to remain anonymous; PV wishes to avoid relocation within the UK; Religion; Family reasons; PV blames themselves for the exploitation; PV was instructed by solicitor not to consent; PV is afraid; PV has criminal charges; and PV is unable to consent.

Exploitation-related reasons

Exploitation happened outside of the UK; Timing (past exploitation).

Structural reasons

PV is afraid of authorities / reporting to the Police; PV does not trust the system; PV does not see benefit of referral; PV already has protection framework; PV wants to avoid delays to asylum claim; Language barriers; FR lost contact with PV or representative; PV is in prison; PV is unaware of referral.

Process-related reasons

FR perception; FR did not ask for reason; PV gave no reason; PV has already been referred; No response provided; Unclear from entry; Field was redacted.

MODERN SLAVERY & HUMAN RIGHTS | POLICY & EVIDENCE CENTRE

Led by the Bingham Centre

The Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC) was created by the investment of public funding to enhance understanding of modern slavery and transform the effectiveness of law and policies designed to address it. The Centre funds and co-creates high quality research with a focus on policy impact, and brings together academics, policymakers, businesses, civil society, survivors and the public on a scale not seen before in the UK to collaborate on solving this global challenge.

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