

The background of the lower section is a dark grey, almost black, image of several interlocking gears of various sizes, creating a complex, mechanical pattern.

# Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Programme Annual Report 2022/23

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## **1. Foreword by Alison Hernandez PCC for Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly and Chair of the Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Strategic Assurance Board**



A significant challenge in tackling any crime is the inability to grasp the scale and complexity of offending.

There is still work to be done before the twin scourges of Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime (MSOIC) are fully understood by law enforcement agencies, but great inroads have been made over the past decade in recognising these forms of exploitation.

Home Office data shows that referrals for modern slavery to the Competent Authorities have risen steadily over the past 10 years as agencies become more adept at spotting victims, winning their confidence and safeguarding them. Despite demands to tackle high profile issues like violence against women and girls the 12 months covered by this report saw a 12% increase in the number of live modern slavery investigations compared to the previous year – this must be viewed as a considerable success.

All too often the victims of modern slavery are children or people whose immigration status leaves them with additional vulnerabilities. Further inroads in tackling it will require more joined up thinking, training and peer support.

That is why I am pleased this annual report describes considerable strides made over 2022-23 to embed good practice into business as usual across all forces. The recruitment of specialist staff to help with the important areas of police force peer reviews and support and financial investigation will have a lasting legacy which will ultimately benefit modern slavery victims in years to come.

The MSOIC programme continued to address the underlying issues between partners and helped improve national police modern slavery training.

Much was also achieved in the effort to bear down on the lucrative and immoral criminal racket of Organised Immigration Crime (OIC) in 2022-23 – with a 50% uplift in disruptions on 2021-22.

Again, a focus on education and training - with seventeen events involving 43 forces delivered in the period covered by this report - will provide a lasting legacy for law enforcement agencies, their partners, and crucially, those who criminals would exploit for profits with little concern for their safety.

These crime types are intrinsically linked to so much other offending – that is why we must maintain focus on them in the years to come and that is why I am pleased that the Home Office has recognised this by pledging significant funding for the programme to continue.

## 2. Overview by ACC J Pearce, NPCC Lead for Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime



It is a privilege to have the opportunity to lead the modern slavery and organised immigration crime portfolio on behalf of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). I am extremely grateful for the invaluable support that I have received over the course of the past year. Much has been delivered at pace, thanks to the expertise and dedication of the staff members involved in the programme under the Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Unit (MSOICU) and numerous individuals from police and partner agencies who have played a crucial role in this collective commitment to eliminating slavery and combatting organised immigration crime.

The programme for 2022-23 has been dedicated to further integrating best practices into the everyday operations of all police forces. Despite facing challenges posed by changes in government and emerging priorities, the MSOICU has successfully adapted and continued to provide expertise, leadership, and guidance to police forces across England and Wales in their efforts to tackle these crimes. The recruitment of specialist staff has bolstered support in crucial areas, enhancing our capabilities and amplifying our support in assisting forces to meet the requirements of the Crown and Courts Act tasking put into place by the National Crime Agency (NCA), and strengthened our capacity to track and disrupt the financial flows associated with organised immigration crime.

Whilst we recognise that charge and prosecution rates need to improve, Police activity in the modern slavery space has shown promising growth, with nearly 4,000 live investigations underway. Through enhanced training and awareness campaigns we have equipped frontline officers with the necessary skills to recognise and respond to modern slavery. Our strong partnerships with Non-governmental Organisations (NGO) and specialists from across the charitable and public sector have facilitated victim support services, ensuring that victims receive appropriate care, protection, and access to legal remedies.

In addressing organised immigration crime, the MSOICU has prioritised supporting forces through peer reviews conducted by MSOICU staff. These reviews have resulted in the implementation of enhancement plans, with forces aligning their practices with the recommendations and guidance provided through the process. Furthermore, the MSOICU has played a crucial role in a multi-agency drive to address the flow of intelligence between law enforcement agencies. This collaborative effort aims to enhance the sharing and coordination of information and intelligence, enabling more effective detection and disruption of criminal networks.

Looking ahead, I am pleased to announce that the program has secured a 2-year funding agreement. This funding ensures the continuation of our crucial work in combatting these crime types. In addition, I am excited to share that we will soon be launching Project Terminus, which promises to bring further operational activity and advancements to the programme.

I hope that this annual report provides valuable insights into the achievements and ongoing efforts of the programme. We will continue to evolve our response to stay one step ahead of those who seek to profit from the suffering of others, and I extend our gratitude to all those who have supported us in this endeavour.



### 3. Executive Summary

#### Overview of the 2022/23 Programme

**Modern Slavery:** The focus of the Programme for 2022-23 was continuing to embed good practice into business as usual across all forces. We focussed on collaborative activity with other National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) portfolios and recruited specialist staff to assist with the important areas of police force peer reviews and support, and financial investigation. We reviewed and updated the national guidance for modern slavery investigations and worked closely with the Home Office Modern Slavery Unit in relation to emerging issues, including changes to the National Referral Mechanism and case law, and produced guidance for investigators to ensure the law enforcement community was informed of changing procedures and best practice. We continued to act as the conduit for addressing arising issues between the Competent Authorities and police forces and continued to assist with national police modern slavery training.

**Organised Immigration Crime:** The Tasking that police forces received from the National Crime Agency (NCA) under section 5

of the Crime and Courts Act 2013 has given policing a framework to work with to improve performance in tackling OIC. As a result, the emphasis of the Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Unit (MSOICU) has been on supporting forces to deliver against the tasking requirements. The main method used has been peer reviews conducted by MSOICU staff with the agreement and support of forces. The reviews have led to the introduction of enhancement plans whereby the MSOICU can offer several products to assist forces in improving performance. Alongside this the unit has been working with partners to understand and assess the impact of the Nationality and Borders Act 2022 that was enacted in June 2022. Additionally, we have been a key stakeholder in a multi-agency drive to address the flow of OIC intelligence between law enforcement agencies.

**Future Funding:** The Programme has secured a two-year (2023-25) provisional funding agreement from the Home Office of £1.3m for Modern Slavery and £2.6m for OIC each year.

### 4. National context

During 2022/23 the MOSICU has continued to work closely with the Home Office to provide support in the delivery of strategic priorities, particularly relating to policing and the criminal justice process. The unit adapted to changes in Government and emerging priorities across other threat areas and continued its focus on supporting police forces across England and Wales to improve their response to Organised Immigration Crime (OIC) and Modern Slavery (MS) through ongoing expertise, leadership, and guidance. The lack of an anticipated and updated Modern Slavery Strategy however has meant that some momentum and focus on MS has been lost in forces due to competing priorities such as Violence Against Women and Girls, OIC and County Lines.

However, police investigation activity in the MS space has continued to increase, with close to 4000 live investigations being undertaken across England and Wales. This represents a **12% increase in the number of live investigations** compared to last year. There has also been an increasing number of NRM referrals, by both policing and other first responders, and some proactive victim identification, especially in the Adult Services Website space. Policing's increased awareness of MS is reflected by a **7% increase in police referrals into the NRM**, demonstrating the MSOICU's ongoing impact in transforming the policing response and ability to better identify and safeguard potential victims of MS.

With around 60% of police investigations into MS related to criminal exploitation, a significant proportion of MS crimes therefore involve the complexities of the interplay with the dynamics of the NRM, the non-punishment principle for victims of trafficking and the case law established by VCL and AN. Despite efforts by the MSOICU and policing to work closely with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), with provision of training and guidance around VCL and AN, complexities such as the time required to investigate and prosecute MS offences, the inherent multiple vulnerabilities of victims of modern slavery sometimes mean, that policing activity to disrupt offending and safeguard victims, such as through Slavery and Trafficking Risk and Prevention Orders (STRO/STPO), may not lead to immediate successes in criminal justice outcomes.

The work of the MSOICU, including through the Regional Coordinator network, has focussed on the explicit needs of victims through the roll out and support of Victim Navigator Hubs. Ongoing work with other NPCC portfolios such as County Lines, particularly through the Prosecutions Oversight Group, is continuing to support forces in improving outcomes, including criminal justice outcomes, for victims.

**2022/23 saw the highest number of NRM referrals to date** representing an increased demand on ever pressed resources.

The war in Ukraine has triggered large movements of people across Europe providing opportunity for criminal exploitation for both OIC and MS. Similarly, the Syrian earthquake could trigger a change in policy to reflect large scale displacement of the population. Both events present a significant opportunity for organised criminals to exploit vulnerable and displaced persons.

## **5. Delivery against our key objectives**

To focus activity for the year, the strategic aims were developed in line with the emerging issues from the previous year's activity, areas identified as having the potential for improving the police response to relevant business areas and the prevailing intelligence picture of the threat. These were agreed with the Home Office and each aim was supported by detailed and focussed deliverables. Progress against the deliverables was reported to the Home Office on a quarterly basis.

### **Organised Immigration Crime strategic aims**

#### **1. To support forces to have a clear auditable system to facilitate the management and dissemination of community intelligence from migrants and associated community intelligence networks.**

MSOICU Regional Coordinators continue to engage at a neighbourhood level, identifying intelligence which reflects national priorities, or potentially has national or international links, and supporting/upskilling Neighbourhood Teams to maximise these opportunities. By providing in person advice, enabling access to systems, and involving partner agencies, teams are assisted to highlight and feed in intelligence that has value throughout the National Intelligence Model (NIM) spectrum, in line with key principles.

The MSOICU also seeks to progress proactive intelligence gathering against national priorities. A recent successful engagement via a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) with a high-risk community resulted in regular Police and Community Together (PACT) meetings, and a considerable uplift in community intelligence. This is one of several such engagements currently progressed as part of a MSOICU regional Proactive Intelligence Group.

The MSOICU is a key stakeholder in the National OIC Intelligence Flows Task Group chaired by the National Crime Agency and is central to the provision of a multi-agency intelligence tool for use by all UK police forces to improve collection and accurate dissemination in general and time critical scenarios.

## **2. To support forces to improve the operational response to clandestine OIC events and enhance a proactive intelligence-led approach with forces and ROCUs.**

The MSOICU has provided training and awareness in respect of clandestine events and the application of the 'Golden Hour' principles through OIC workshops, online training, and several in person training events. A total of seventeen training events have been held during the year involving all 43 forces in some capacity. As well as continuing to run the Hydra Courses for inspectors the unit set up a series of regional training events with Immigration Enforcement's Criminal and Financial Investigations Team (CFI) that were a combination of presentations and scenario-based discussions.

The unit has also developed seven 'Soundbite' videos and scripts and released them to forces to assist with bespoke training and awareness events.



Two 2-day conferences 'Demystifying OIC' for police officers and staff were held in Manchester and Wyboston respectively to provide learning inputs on OIC. These events were attended by just over 250 officers and staff from forces across England and Wales, Regional and Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) representatives and other law enforcement partners (Immigration Enforcement, Border Force, National Crime Agency). Attendees indicated that the conference had given them more awareness of how policing should be responding to clandestine events and had helped to identify the national strategic direction for OIC.

Feedback from attendees of the conferences included:

- 92% of respondents indicated that the conference had given them more awareness of how policing should be responding to clandestine events.
- 93% of respondents indicated that the conference helped to identify the national strategic direction for OIC.
- 96% of those responding reported that the conference helped them to identify potential investigative opportunities for OIC.
- 99% of respondents reported that the conference set out and clarified the national threat picture and need and requirements for intelligence collection in relation to OIC.

- 96% of respondents reported that they were clearer about who the key stakeholders are in the OIC landscape, and what support they can give.

The unit has supported forces to improve their command and control, operational response, and intelligence capture relating to OIC and clandestine events. Police **disruptions recorded against OIC total 254** for the year, equating to a **50% uplift** on the baseline from 2021/22. Following a MSOICU proposal the NCA OIC threat leads agreed to chair a national OIC Intelligence Flow Task and Finish Group which began in October 2022.

The MSOICU has worked with the Home Office and the NPCC Missing Portfolio to commission the Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) Hotel Practitioners Group. The group has come together to discuss shared issues and to agree a common approach to addressing them. The group, which meets monthly, has representatives from each of the forces affected by the provision of hotel accommodation. Whilst predominantly made up of police personnel, it has members from partner agencies who can reach back to their organisations to report, first hand, on the operational issues, in real time.

MSOICU staff have assisted in the drafting of new National Missing Persons Guidance, an Investigation Tactics document and have influenced the content of the 'Welfare Form' completed at first contact with a migrant child. The agreed, additional, eight pieces of information will promote better outcomes for missing migrant children.

### **3. To support the development of the national response plan to OIC lorry drops in all forces, including proactive haulage operations and prevention activity.**

The MSOICU has conducted a programme of Peer Reviews of police forces to ensure they can meet all the requirements of the CCA Tasking and develop their policing response to OIC. This ongoing process looks specifically at leadership and governance; operational response; investigation; intelligence capability; and training and awareness. At the conclusion of the review, a detailed report is provided to the force with an enhancement plan intended to drive performance and meet the requirements of the CCA Tasking. As part of the process, training and policy products already developed by the MSOICU, are utilised to help achieve the performance uplifts recommended in the enhancement plans.

In the year under report the unit completed seven reviews and had a further three in progress. A total of 230 recommendations were made and the MSOICU participated in the force task and finish groups set up to review and implement these recommendations.

Typical recommendations related to the need for training, a consistent command and control approach linked to the National Response Plan (NRP) and the flow of intelligence. The unit supported Norfolk & Suffolk Constabularies in implementing arrangements to start up a new Commercial Vehicle Unit to assist in an improved response to clandestine events on the road network.

For 2023/24 the Programme has received additional funding from the Home Office allowing it to accelerate this process to have completed a review of all forty-three forces by the end of August 2024.

The MSOICU has worked with forces to ensure they have the knowledge and processes to run multi-agency operations aimed at improving the volume and quality of intelligence.

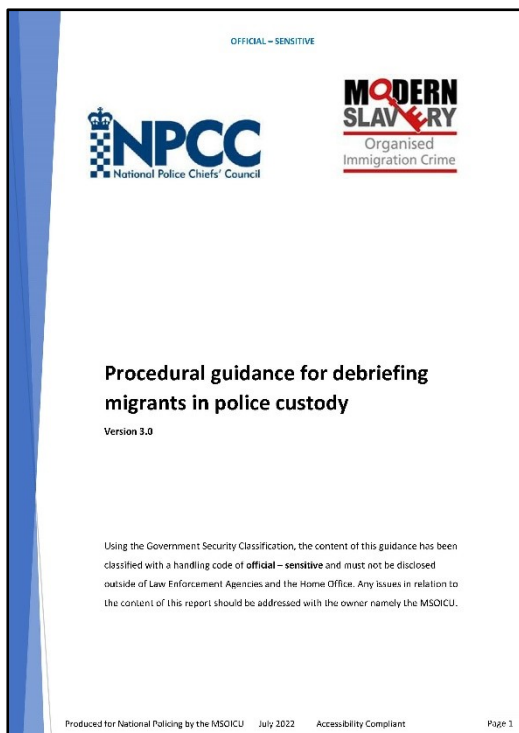
The unit has developed a Police Bronze Commander training package for the multi-agency Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP), lorry drop scenario and has worked to



encourage and support forces to carry out proactive haulage operations and prevention activity. An operation (Op Barham) in Kent has now collected over £1 million in Civil Penalty fines.

Sussex and Surrey Police, in conjunction with the Programme OIC team, the Resilience fora, Coroners and Joint Force Operations leadership ran a series of comprehensive exercises called Operation Haven to test the response to serious or potential loss of life events on the road network. A sister exercise engaged with Border Force and all maritime rescue co-ordination functions for a general maritime (GM) scenario.

**4. To support law enforcement to improve the quality, volume and routing of intelligence in respect of OIC and to support the prioritisation debriefs of potential victims of trafficking regarding their routes into the UK and how they crossed international/UK borders.**



The MSOICU has worked with other law enforcement partners and agencies to improve intelligence flows in respect of OIC. An example of this is Operation Orbis, which focuses on washing Pentip and other similar data through i247, Experian, Police National Database etc. to identify fraudulent insurance and registration of vehicles which are linked to organised crime nominals in the UK illegally or using fake or fraudulent documents. As a result of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) markers put on by Leicestershire Police between October 2020 to October 2022, 875 vehicles were stopped with 570 being seized (65%). 260 individuals were arrested and criminal assets to the value of £9 million were seized including cash, drugs and stolen property.

The MSOICU continued the pilot with debriefing potential victims of trafficking and has published guidance to policing. This will provide the launch pad for funding forces to facilitate migrant debriefs in a

community setting in 2023/24 and 2024/25.

**5. To support improved links between the general maritime and aviation communities in order to improve intelligence flows.**

The MSOICU provided MS and human trafficking training to 25 senior leaders of the International Wizz Air company and conducted face-to-face training with Wizz Air staff, at Luton. The audience were made up of the chief security officers and training staff, covering the countries the company operates from. The company arranged for staff from the UK, Hungary and the United Arab Emirates to attend.

Project Kraken is a national initiative to raise public awareness of terrorism and criminal or suspicious activity around our coasts and borders. This includes locations such as marinas, moorings and smaller ports. Project Pegasus is an initiative set up to get people who work in aviation or live near airports to join the fight against organised crime and terrorism. The MSOICU has supported law enforcement partners in the implementation of both Projects Kraken and Pegasus in local communities and has been a key partner within the Kraken Tactical Delivery Group, since the relaunch and refresh of the project by Border Force in 2021. This is a monthly meeting group comprising of multi-agency

representatives who have been involved in the direction and structure of the newly refreshed product, to include marketing, contact methods and intelligence flows and management.

The unit has a regular meeting structure with the Joint Maritime Security Centre (JMSC) to discuss intelligence relating to Kraken and improving the management and dissemination to police.

Following a presentation about Op First Post methodology Dorset Police agreed to a three-month pilot and this is being progressed. This will encompass visits to airfields and to maritime environments along the lines of Op Pegasus and Kraken.

The MSOICU continues to host professional development events for First Post officers, presenting the work of the programme and explaining the profile of OIC. Such presentations are regularly provided to an audience of 150+ officers, staff and partners.

## Modern Slavery Strategic Aims

### **1. Support forces to improve outcomes to modern slavery investigations by enhancing capabilities to increase the recording of force and ROCU disruptions with an MS & OIC-related threat.**

The MSOICU supports forces to improve outcomes to MS investigations by enhancing capabilities through targeted projects, activities, and initiatives. A key component in ensuring this national work transforms how police forces respond to MS is the MSOICU network of Regional Coordinators. These continue to deliver for forces in the advice and guidance they give and in the way they proactively support investigations.

The MSOICU's activities included collaborating with other NPCC portfolios, including the National County Lines and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) portfolios to coordinate an efficient police response. One example of this is how the unit provided assistance and MS guidance material for inclusion on a County Lines advice mobile application (App) designed for national roll out to the police service in October 2023. Another is the work conducted with the Vulnerability Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP) which has resulted in a pilot for joint peer reviews of police forces, in order to share resources and good practice. The unit continues to evaluate other future joint working opportunities.

This year the unit has again conducted a national force benchmarking exercise where all police forces are marked against the MS policing standards created and regularly updated by the MSOICU. This is a list of fifty standards covering how a force can ensure they are positioned to combat MS under the following headings: governance/structure; victims; intelligence; investigation; and training. This process allows targeted follow-up support and intervention where appropriate.

This year the MSOICU has extended the offer to conduct a fuller on-site peer review of forces in England & Wales against the national standards. During the reviews conducted to date, the MSOICU has identified opportunities for improved performance through the provision of practical advice, signposting to additional guidance and the ongoing support for the implementation of change.

Examples of good practice have been shared through the national Regional Coordinator network which regularly engages at multiple levels with all forces. In addition to physical visits, to lessen the burden upon forces, the MSOICU also continues to offer video conferencing to conduct a similar peer review process.

An additional team member was recruited to increase collaboration with the NPCC Financial Investigation and Proceeds of Crime portfolio. A national workshop was developed and delivered in September 2022 which was attended by over forty officers engaged in the financial investigation field. Using the information gathered at the workshop (which included the barriers and blockages to a financial investigation into MS) and the recommendations identified nationally, the MSOICU produced and published Financial Investigative Guidance which includes an annex on considerations when calculating reparation for victims. This guidance will assist Senior Investigation Officers compiling operational financial strategies, financial investigators (FIs) with broadening their knowledge on the support and legislation available for MS offences, and criminal investigators with their general financial knowledge. This is being circulated nationally and embedded in all policing areas. Financial investigation strategies and considerations are now included in the MS investigators course, along with a presentation which highlights the amount of money made from this crime type, the importance of early FI engagement and the difference confiscation and reparation orders can make to victims.

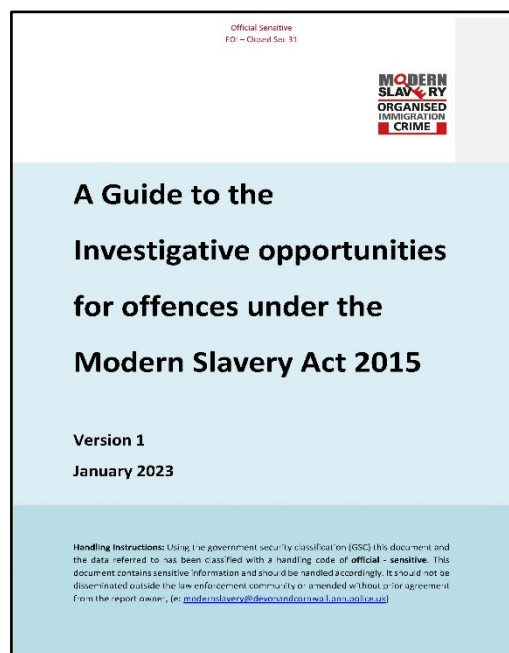
The MSOICU is now able to share best practice and has established a presence into Regional Economic Crime Units (RECU), the Joint Money Laundering Intelligence Team (JMLIT) and the Illicit Finance Working Group.

Working with the enormous amount of information and knowledge gathered by the MSOICU over recent years the unit worked with the College of Policing to review and re-write the national Authorised Professional Practice (APP) relating to MS investigations to ensure the guidance contained the most contemporary information available.

The MSOICU significantly updated the national policing guidance documents by combining them into one comprehensive electronic Investigation Guide. Part 1 describes the common elements of MS investigations and Parts 2-5 the individual elements of the four exploitation types. This document was published in March 2023 and sent to all 43 police forces and partner law enforcement agencies. A second redacted version will also be published to enable it to be shared with non-law enforcement partners. Several additional smaller guides were also produced such as those relating to hand car washes and exploitation by organised crime groups in Traveller communities.

The unit continued to develop and issue guidance for forces throughout the year, including a series of three bulletins which were published and shared across policing covering the emerging issues of harbouring; pre-charge advice, appeals and conspiracy; and Section 4 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The unit has continued to conduct targeted debriefs of police operations to identify good practice and lessons learned. Examples include those relating to a labour exploitation investigation that identified nearly 400 victims and an OIC reactive investigation into the clandestine entry of 29 people by boat into Cornwall.

The MSOIC has also worked to identify opportunities and funding streams to progress proactive intelligence gathering against national priorities. A recent successful engagement via an NGO with a high-risk community resulted in regular PACT meetings, and a considerable uplift in community



intelligence. This is one of several such engagements currently being progressed as part of a MSOIC team led regional Proactive Intelligence Group.

The unit also undertook a review of 18 sexual exploitation investigations to understand how investigators and the CPS work together to evidence the 'controlling' element of trafficking for sexual exploitation in organised crime group sex working.

## **2. To contribute to Home Office-led work to tackle modern slavery and improve support to victims by providing ongoing expert advice.**

The MSOICU has continued to support the Home Office in potential legislative amendments on Slavery Trafficking Risk Orders and Slavery Trafficking Prevention Orders provisions and the Modern Slavery Act. The unit has also continued to work closely with the Competent Authorities to monitor the impacts of National Referral Mechanism (NRM) decision-making times on police investigations to identify good practice and lessons learned and cascade this to law enforcement.

Collectively the Regional Coordinators' lens across the law enforcement system and forces, feeds into the implementation of national law enforcement actions plans, working groups, and initiatives. Their exposure and involvement in the threat landscape also provides Regional Coordinators with the evidence base for the programme to contribute to Home Office-led work. Monitoring MS-related cases, Regional Coordinators often identify and raise challenges and barriers in, but also learning from, working with forces and the CPS on MS prosecutions.

Following the successful piloting of Victim Navigators, Regional Coordinators have also been working closely with the NGO Justice and Care and ROCUs on the roll out of a Navigator Hub, where Regional Coordinators will be instrumental in the direction of this resource. Victim Navigators provide specialist care and support, advocacy and close work with investigations into MS.

The MSOICU liaised with the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre to create a questionnaire for officers regarding criminal cases in the NRM and has contributed to the formulation of observations and recommendations.

The MSOICU has assisted police forces and the Home Office in the further roll-out of NRM decision-making pilot areas for child victims of MS. This involved ongoing contact with the initial pilot areas to ascertain best practice and lessons learned in order to inform the process for the second phase of the pilot roll-out. We have liaised extensively with Local Authorities involved in the pilot and have been a point of contact for queries and liaison between authorities and local forces. We also worked closely with the Home Office to offer subject matter expertise on the content of training for forces and local authorities to fully understand the NRM to assist their decision-making.

The MSOICU has produced information and guidance for forces on the implementation of provisions in the Nationality and Borders Act, including public order, reasonable grounds, NRM victim definition and changes to immigration and asylum legislation, particularly around the reasonable grounds decision and 'objective evidence' requirement for NRM referrals.

The unit also reviewed the system of Duty to Notify submissions and identified areas for improvement to better support victims, liaising with the Competent Authorities and United Kingdom Visas and Immigration Department and making recommendations for improvement.

The MSOIC responded to all requests from forces to resolve NRM-related issues and in 2022/23 assisted on over 70 occasions. The unit also assisted the Competent Authorities in resolving time

critical issues, usually, difficulties in seeking information from forces to support the decision-making process. The MSOICU has engaged with the Home Office in workshops and attended bi-monthly meetings with the Competent Authorities to assist with issues arising in police forces.

### **3. To support forces to increase upstream activity and improve the identification of victims to enable safeguarding measures (MS & OIC).**

The MSOICU has continued its work to promote the use of Modern Slavery Victim Liaison Officers and has encouraged forces to explore support from local resources to implement victim support models. The unit has assisted in Project Mandeville, which was developed to improve identification of, and support, for vulnerable victims of exploitation through Marie Stopes International (MSI) clinics nationally.

The unit also helped to coordinate police activity under the Adult Services Website (ASW) Working Group and helped develop the action plan to tackle online sexual exploitation, including reviewing activity from the web scraping tool funding. Effective monitoring of the ASW web scraping tool has identified 536 potential victims of sexual exploitation.

During 2022/23, the MSOICU continued to develop and lead on the national Prosecutions Oversight Group, which is attended by representatives from CPS, Home Office, SCA and other NPCC portfolios including County Lines. It is through this forum that challenges in increasing MS prosecutions are approached, understood, mitigated, and where possible addressed through close partnership working with the agencies involved.

In 2022/23, Regional Coordinators supported and offered expertise and investigative advice to over 370 operations across England and Wales. Through their day-to-day work they have contributed significantly to forces' wider understanding of MS and OIC, thereby ensuring that victims are identified and appropriately safeguarded. The network of Regional Coordinators is paramount in the implementation and drive behind Operation Aidant and other national projects, once again capitalising on their strategic and national understanding of priorities linked to MS and OIC as well as assisting forces in translating these into tangible operational activity and safeguarding of victims on the ground.

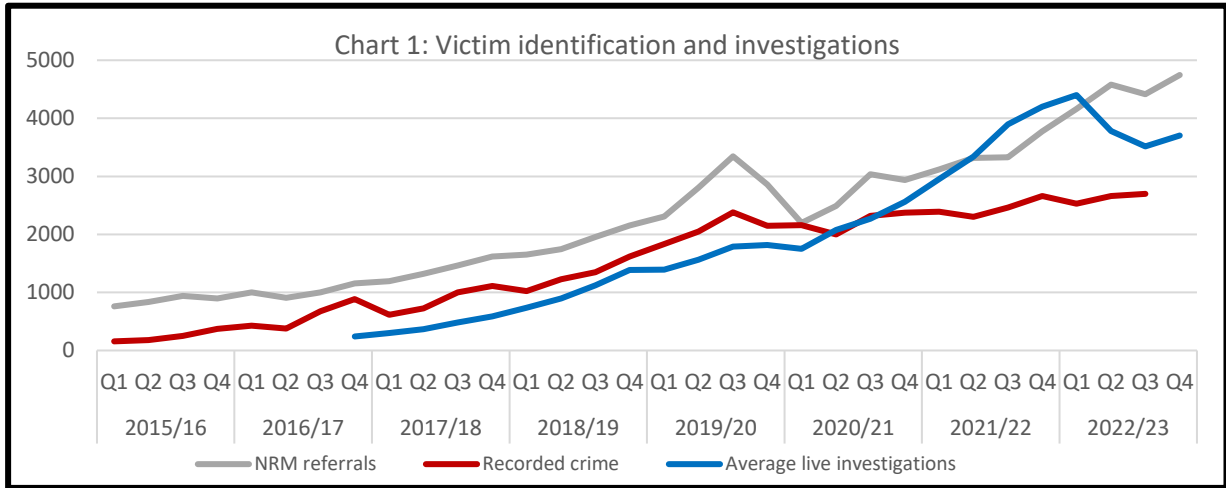
Furthermore, Regional Coordinators contributed significantly to the training of over 4000 staff across policing and partner agencies, such as the SCA, Tackling Organised Exploitation (TOEX), other law enforcement agencies, NGOs, and Local Authorities to address gaps in knowledge and understanding and better identify and safeguard victims. This has contributed not only to an overall rise in MS investigations year on year and an increase in the number and quality of NRMs submitted by police forces; but also, to the development of new partnerships and working relationships, such as with the Human Tissue Authority following cases being identified related to organ removal.

## **6. National metrics and long – term trends**

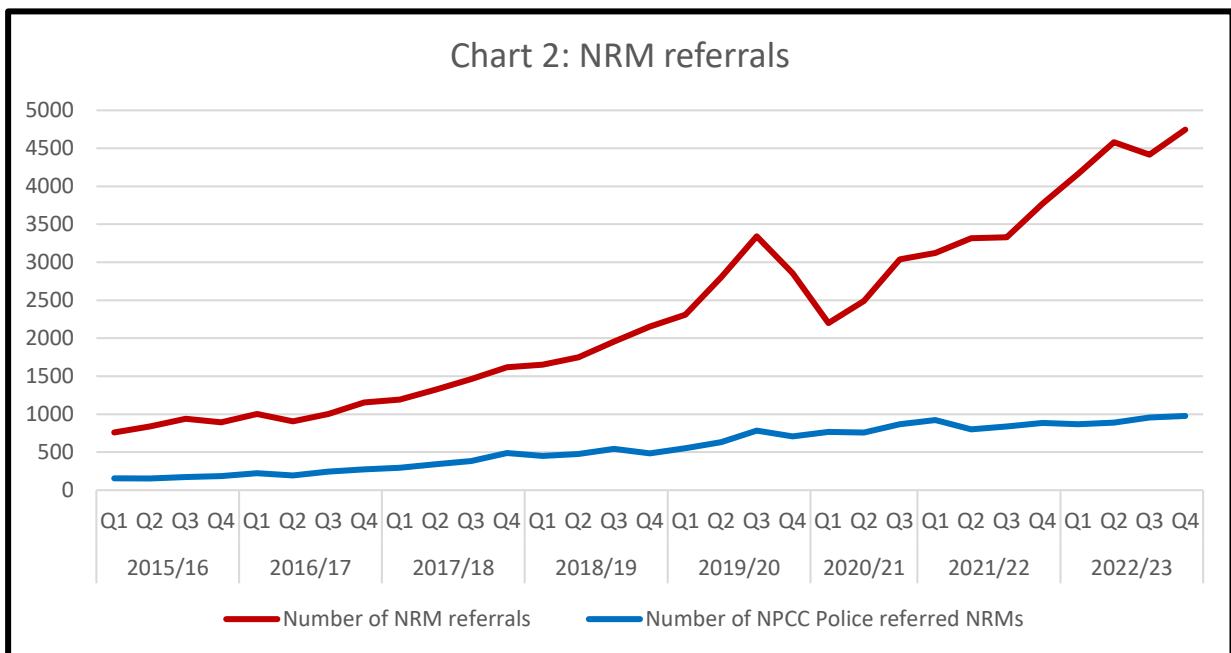
### **Victim identification and investigations**

Referrals into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and police investigations into exploitation and modern slavery (MS) offences have been increasing consistently since 2015. The number of recorded MS crimes on the other hand has increased at a slower pace and remains relatively stable with between 2500 and 2700 crimes recorded per quarter across the last four quarters. This slightly divergent trend is likely a reflection of the increasing proportion of NRMs where the exploitation happened overseas (35-43% per quarter across the last four quarters). These referrals are not captured

as MS crimes and are instead recorded by police forces as MS incidents. Since the Modern Slavery Act was introduced in 2015 there have been almost 47,000 MS crimes recorded within England and Wales. The number of live Modern Slavery investigations reported each month has continued to rise throughout 2022/23 to just over 3700 live investigations.<sup>1</sup>



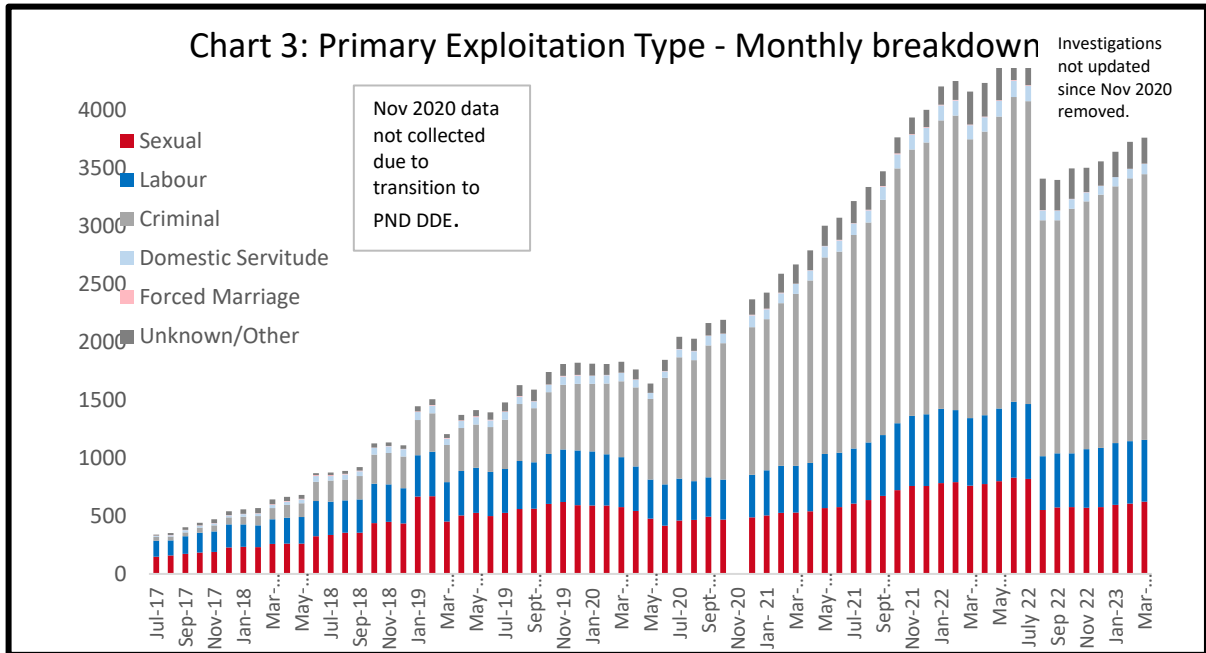
The number of NRM referrals has been steadily increasing, but the number of police referrals has remained largely stable across the past couple of years. There were 17,905 NRM referrals in the 2022/23 which is just over 32% higher than 13,542 in 2021/22. Over the last year, police first responders made almost 21% of all NRM referrals received in 2022/23.



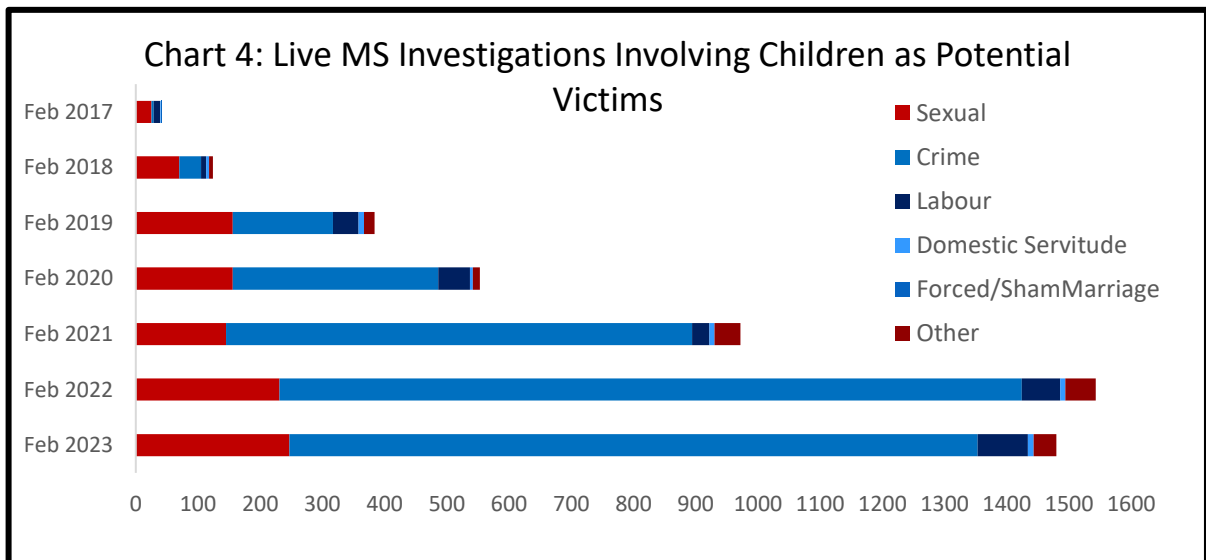
<sup>1</sup> Changes in reporting methodology and data cleaning conducted by MSOICU, resulted in a dip in the average number of live investigations reported for Q2 and Q3 of 2022/23 and lower number of investigations in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22.

### Changes in the type of exploitation

The proportion of investigations that relate to criminal exploitation have been increasing significantly over the last few years (as illustrated in Chart 3) and consistently account for around 60% of MS police investigations recorded via Police National Database Direct Data Entry (PND DDE) system. This rise is primarily due to an increase in the identification and reporting of County Lines investigations involving exploitation.



### Number of Child Victims

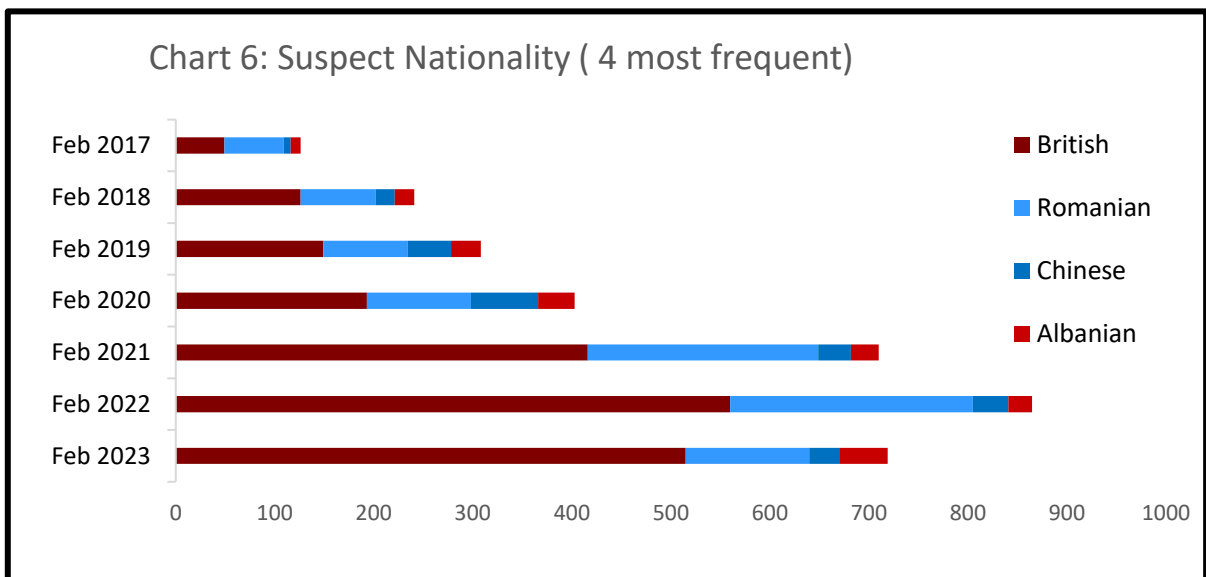
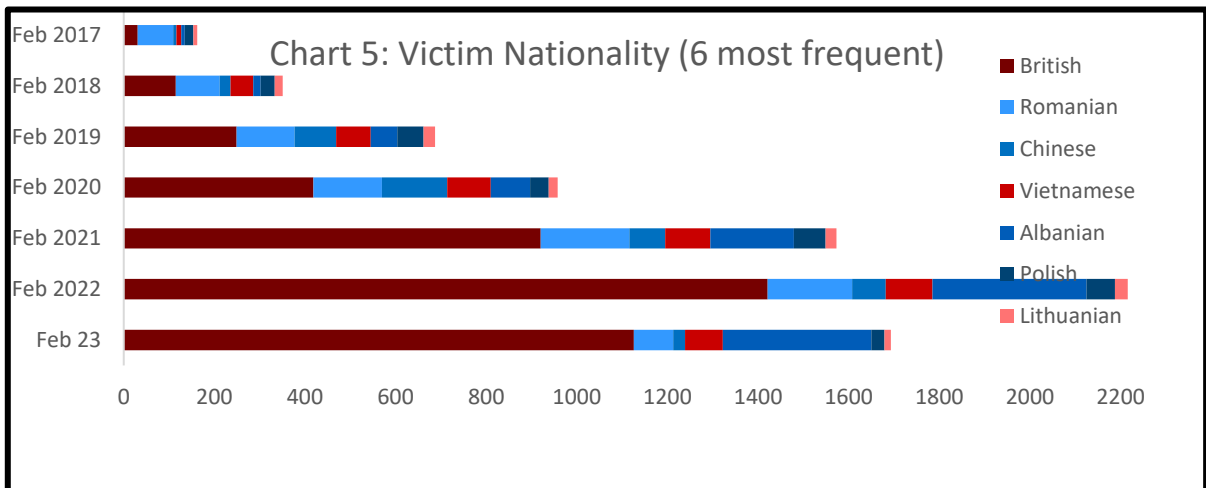


While the overall number of MS live investigations involving children as potential victims has decreased due to the removal of investigations not updated since November 2020, investigations involving children as potential victims now account for 40% of all investigations as of February 2023. This continues to reflect the relative increase in investigations into criminal exploitation, which

predominantly involve children and largely consist of drug-related offending such as County Lines or other models of drug distribution. The programme has worked closely with the National County Lines Coordination Centre (NCLCC) to improve our support to child victims of criminal exploitation, which has found reflection in the increase in the identification of children as potential victims of MS in a County Lines context.

### Victim and suspect nationality

Modern slavery investigations are typically complex and draw both victims and suspects from a range of different nationalities. Often investigators may be working based on limited information from those involved in the offence as either a victim or suspect. Data provided by forces in relation to MS investigations lack nationality information in over 56% of investigations for both suspects and victims. Investigation data shows that British suspects account for just under 59% of suspects where the nationality is known. Similarly, British victims account for over 59% of victims where the nationality is known, both reflective of the relative prevalence of criminal exploitation amongst MS investigations.

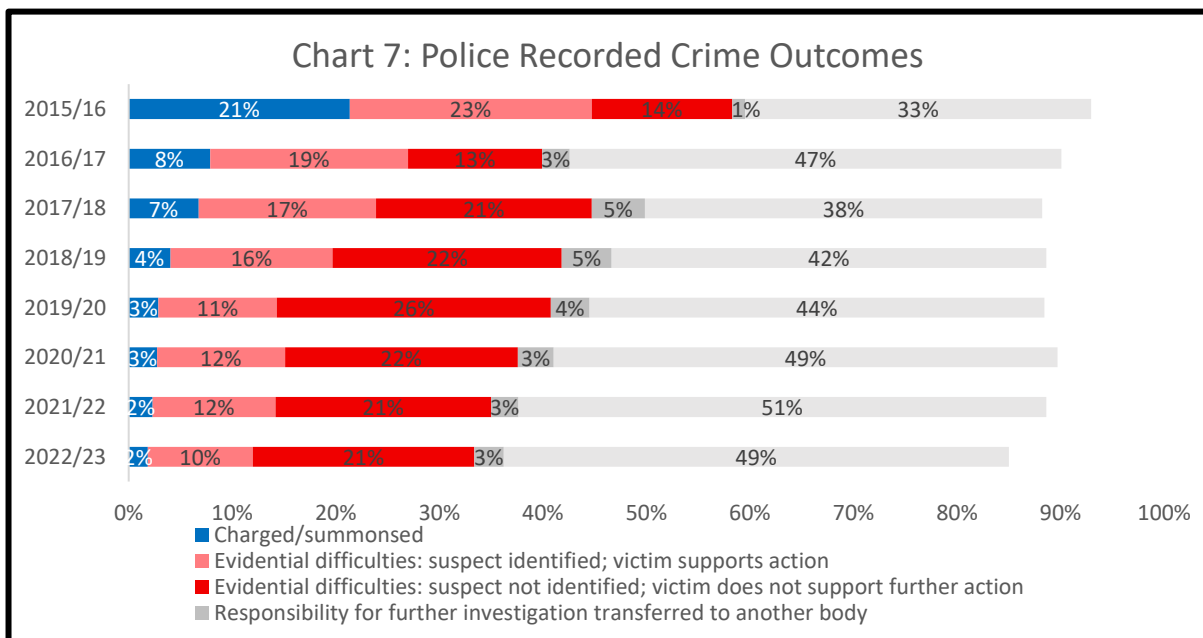




## Modern Slavery criminal justice outcomes

Outcomes for police recorded crimes are recorded based on the year that the offence was recorded. The recording of crime outcomes follows National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS) and the broad principle of one recorded crime (outcome) per victim, rather than suspect. Criminal justice outcomes on the other hand are recorded per suspect. Due to the complexity of investigating MS crimes and the length of time it takes for a case to go from recording to prosecution, there are a large number of cases that have not yet been assigned an outcome and this is higher for the more recent years. The MSOICU have been working closely with forces and the CPS on the number of investigations that are referred to the CPS for charging and subsequently result in a prosecution. Further details on how the programme has supported this work are in [Section 5](#) and [Section 7](#).

There has been a decrease across pre-charging decisions, charging decisions, and convictions to Q3 2022/23 compared to the same time period in the previous year. It is likely that the long-term impacts of Covid and a backlog in cases is now finding reflection in these decreased criminal justice outcome figures, as it is not unusual for cases to await listing for several months to years.



## 7. What else have we delivered?

In addition to the annual deliverables agreed with the Home Office, the MSOICU provides a service to policing and other law enforcement agencies under what can be described as ‘business as usual’. Examples of this include the myriad of forums and meetings the unit contributes to on a regular basis; the numerous and varied training events where presentations are provided at force, regional and national level; and the multiple guidance interventions provided to forces (in person, over the phone or by email) as investigations progress or as new issues emerge.

One example of bespoke training provided by the unit’s North-East Regional Coordinator was a professional development course for the newly appointed TOEX team based at the ROCU. All members of the team were present from both the police and analytical/research sides.



Other examples of the ongoing training provided by the MSOICU during 2022/23 where a collaboration with West Yorkshire Police to train 850+ frontline officers to recognise domestic servitude exploitation; and producing an iLearn package for training and reference, together with an animated video to encourage in community reporting (in Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali).

The unit has also worked with the Education Designated Safeguarding Leads to raise awareness in schools across West Yorkshire. The Regional Coordinator for Yorkshire and Humber provided an input to 165+ staff from across all sections and levels at the Single Competent Authority in relation to concerns around negative RG decisions for cases of domestic servitude.

During 2022/23 the MSOICU was engaged in supporting consultative groups and acting as a SPOC for police forces. The MSOICU sits on the First Responder Forum and has assisted with the MS Victim Care Contract. The MSOICU assists the Home Office in assessing and responding to the recommendations of MS-related reports and judgments and legal judgements. The MSOICU also supported the Home Office with the roll out of the NRM Devolved Decision-Making Pilot for Children, acting as an additional point of contact for the Coordinators in each of the sites.

## 8. Regional Co-ordinators: Maintaining momentum on criminal justice outcomes for Modern Slavery and OIC

These dedicated individuals provide regions and forces with sustained and in-depth understanding and leadership in the MS and OIC threat area. Regional Coordinators can reach 'into' policing at the most local level whilst still able to reach 'up' through the NPCC MS and OIC portfolio into law enforcement partners and other relevant public, private and voluntary sector agencies.

So much of this 'unique selling point' is down to commitment, tenacity and the relationships developed by Regional Coordinators. The team are well respected for the support and specialist knowledge they provide to senior officers, peers, their respective ROCUs and colleagues in a myriad of other agencies. Their support activity to Prevent, Protect and Prepare (Anti-Slavery Partnerships) enhances the opportunities to safeguard victims and achieve an appropriate criminal justice outcome. Collectively the Regional Coordinators provide a lens across law enforcement systems and forces, as well as close working relationships with law enforcement and government partners, which enables them to identify missed opportunities to build an intelligence picture and produce the evidence base for the programme to improve the response of policing to MS and OIC. A small part of their work during 2022/23 is covered in section 4 of this report but they have continuous interactions with forces and partners including peer reviews of investigations and the provision of training.

## 9. Engagement with police and partners

The MSOICU engages with partners and police forces through operational activity, guidance and advice, training and attendance at meetings and forums across the country. At a strategic level, the Unit works closely with the Home Office, National Crime Agency and a wide range of law enforcement

partners to anticipate and inform national strategy, legislation and policy. Amongst many other strategic meetings the unit chairs or participates in, the Prosecution Oversight Group focuses on national performance and seeks contributions and views from attending agencies such as the CPS, the Home Office and Gangmasters' Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) and other NPCC portfolios to improve and develop.

Regional Coordinators are active in providing and facilitating training for forces and partners alike and have strong links to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) within their regions which enables them to work collaboratively to improve the delivery of support to victims of MS and respond to the OIC threat. They have supported a number of active and vibrant partnership working groups and continue to contribute to national forums. All these are useful to discuss challenges, trends and best practice, and are widely attended, giving a varied scope of viewpoints and allowing learning from what's happening in other areas and what NGOs are focusing in on with their upcoming priorities.

The Regional Coordinators work closely with the Police and Crime Commissioners in their regions to support preventative work and support for victims and have supported the Home Office in emerging tasks, such as a deep dive into MS issues by undertaking research, collecting data and promoting the survey of all forces. A typical example of their work is the support provided for the multi-agency task force set up to look into allegations of unsafe working conditions and illegal employer practices in the textiles industry in Leicester.

The MSOICU engaged with the Lived Experience Advisory Panel (LEAP) run by the Human Trafficking Foundation. LEAP offers agencies the opportunity to bring lived experiences into learning and training to help improve understanding, attitudes and to build trust and confidence with victims. Working with LEAP has been a valuable opportunity for the unit to incorporate the victim's voice into our work; capturing the voice of the victim to support improvements in policing. LEAP contributed to the MSOICU update to the national Modern Slavery Investigative Guide by providing invaluable insights to the victimology section with the aim of enhancing engagement with potential victims.

During 2022/23 the MSOICU sought to renew engagement with partners through the national groups and forums available such as the National Network Coordinators Forum chaired by the Human Trafficking Foundation attended by Modern Slavery Partnership Coordinators from across the country, the Human Trafficking Foundation's Advisory Forum attended by large numbers of NGOs, the NCA NGO Group, the National Asylum-Seeking Health Safeguarding Sub-Group (at the Home Office) and the NGO/Worker Liaison Group – chaired by GLAA.

## **10. Look forward to 2023–24**

Organised Immigration Crime remains a priority for the Home Office and law enforcement agencies, including police forces. The work of the Programme will continue to focus on improving the policing response in accordance with the national tasking and associated Home Office-led campaign. The Home Office have allocated funding in 2022/23 for both modern slavery and organised immigration crime and we will continue to exert our influence across both spheres of policing.

There is a growing acceptance that OIC and MS closely correlate with each other, with one often leading to the other; work will continue to identify links and develop ways of dealing with the connected issues.

The MSOICU looks to further engage with the victim's story and develop closer relations with organisations such as the Lived Experience Advisory Panel and aim to collaborate with similar panels in future projects. This will include a cultural resource project, looking at developing a training resource

in the form of webinars for police officers on cultural competencies, such as the Romanian and Roma cultures. Together with the lived experience from survivors, the unit aims to have a comprehensive resource that will assist in the engagement with victims. The work to encourage community reporting in Yorkshire, mentioned in a previous section, will continue in other police forces, as appropriate.

During 2022/23 the unit provided support through operations such as Mandeville. This work will continue with the training of safeguarding leads and the identification of good practice to improve the quality and accuracy of intelligence to police, using appropriate terminology and identifying risk, thereby safeguarding vulnerable females.

Other areas that have the potential to focus some activity for the MSOICU in the coming months are the recent changes to the National Referral Mechanism and the introduction of the Nationality and Borders Act and potentially other areas of legislation. The Programme will support stakeholders and partners in connection with the passage of the Illegal Migration Act 2023 through Parliament to both fully understand the impact on policing and ensure as far as practicable ensure victims of MS continue to be identified and supported.

The Programme vision for 2023-25 is set out below. We will continue to represent policing and partner with the Home Office and our law enforcement stakeholders to embed an improved response to MS and OIC.

