



## Pro-Act UK Pilot Report

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**PROACTIVE IDENTIFICATION AND SUPPORT  
OF VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING FOR LABOUR  
EXPLOITATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**



# 1. Introduction

## Labour exploitation in the UK

Trafficking for labour exploitation is a human rights violation and serious crime pervasive throughout the EU. In the UK, instances of forced labour and human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation have been found in a wide range of economic sectors and activities. According to the National Crime Agency, 2,340 potential victims of human trafficking were encountered by the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in the UK in 2014, one third of whom had been referred as potential victims of labour exploitation.

Both British and foreign workers are subjected to trafficking for labour exploitation in the UK, including men, women and children. In recent years, the majority of the victims of trafficking identified in the UK have been foreign nationals. Prominent countries of origin of victims include Albania, Nigeria, Vietnam, Romania, Slovakia, China and Poland. Cases involving highly vulnerable British men, who were subjected to forced labour within the UK or trafficked to other European countries, have also been reported.

## Policy context

In the past two years, we have seen an increased interest in and awareness of human trafficking for labour exploitation in the UK on the part of the general public and policymakers alike. With the passage of the UK Modern Slavery Act in 2015, new measures have been introduced to address the issue. While the Modern Slavery Act has a strong focus on criminal justice, it has also introduced some victim protection aspects, as well as a new mechanism for Government accountability through the creation of the Office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC). The IASC has been tasked with monitoring the Government's efforts in addressing modern slavery and producing a report to be published annually.

Importantly, the development and passage of the Act has also put the spotlight on modern slavery and opened up the debate on the measures taken by the UK Government to address the issue and the UK's obligations to protect victims of human trafficking and other vulnerable workers against labour exploitation, and to ensure victims of trafficking are adequately supported. As a result of this debate, the Government has undertaken a review of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), and a pilot NRM model is being implemented in certain areas in the UK. These pilots are running in parallel to the Pro-Act strategy pilots.

An area of significant concern in the current policy context is the passage of the new UK Immigration Bill, which is now at the final stages of the legislative process (entering third reading stage at the House of Lords on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April). Changes introduced by the Bill in the areas of labour inspection and immigration control are expected to impact the identification of victims of human trafficking, and will increase the isolation and vulnerability of migrant workers, presumably leading to an increase in forced labour and trafficking for labour exploitation in the UK.

## Pro-Active Identification and Support of Victims of Trafficking for Labour Exploitation (Pro-Act)

### Objectives

A comprehensive response to trafficking for labour exploitation requires pro-active identification of people who have been trafficked and appropriate support for victims, in accordance with State obligations under the EU Trafficking Directive and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (the European Trafficking Convention). Pro-active identification is necessary to ensure the most hidden and vulnerable victims are detected in the full range of labour sectors. Support is important for psychological recovery, for legal redress and to ensure that trafficked persons are able to move forward safely and avoid re-trafficking.

The aim of the Pro-Act project is to improve responses to trafficking for labour exploitation throughout the EU, by developing effective EU-wide strategies for proactive identification and support of victims. The project is centred on engagement with victims of trafficking for labour exploitation and their support providers, seeking to better understand and respond to the needs and experiences of victims. Through this engagement, including primary research, national focus groups and European workshops, the project seeks to build understanding of the needs and experiences of those trafficked for labour exploitation, and develop victim-centred strategies for proactive identification and support that are transferrable across the EU.

### Project partners

The project has five NGO partners based in the Netherlands (FairWork), the UK (FLEX, LAWRS and Migrant Help) and Romania (ADPARE). This national report examines the implementation of the pilot strategies in the UK by the UK partners and the results obtained, and seeks to capture the reflections and lessons learned from the pilots in the UK. Each of the UK partners have specific and complementary expertise in different areas including service provision, research, capacity building and policy development.

**Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX)** is based in the UK and supports government and civil society to take effective action against labour exploitation. FLEX works to prevent labour abuses, protect the rights of trafficked persons and promote best practice responses to human trafficking for labour exploitation by undertaking victim-centred research, awareness raising, advocacy and training.

As an organisation supporting Latin American migrant women subjected to exploitation and discrimination in the UK, the **Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS)** comes into contact with victims of trafficking for labour exploitation. LAWRS engages with over 4,800 Latin American women every year, providing frontline services including advice on immigration, welfare, employment and family law; casework on homelessness, housing, money and debts; support and advocacy to survivors of VAWG; and counselling and psychotherapy. The work of LAWRS is focused on the provision of inclusive, gender-sensitive support and on the effective engagement with and participation of the Latin American community in the UK.

**Migrant Help** is a service provider offering practical care and support to vulnerable migrants across the UK. Migrant Help is one of the official service providers under the UK NRM, and as part of this contract, provides support to adult male and female survivors (and their dependents) of all forms of modern day slavery, including labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, forced criminality and other forms of human trafficking. Services provided by Migrant Help include safe accommodation and material assistance (including clothing, meals and other basic necessities), access to healthcare, access to substance misuse support, psychological support and mental health services, legal aid, advice, asylum help, and other services.

## Project structure and timeline

The primary output of the Pro-Act Project is the development of **strategies for proactive identification and support for victims of trafficking for labour exploitation**, designed for their implementation across the EU.

In an initial phase of the project, research was conducted and data was collated and analysed by Pro-Act partners in order to identify key gaps and potential strategies for improvement of identification and support for victims of trafficking for labour exploitation. These draft strategies were discussed at the Pro-Act European workshop on 2-3 July 2015.

Drawing on the research findings and EU-wide consultation, five strategies were finally proposed for the pilot to be implemented by Pro-Act partners.<sup>1</sup> The pilot phase of the project took place between August 2015 and February 2016. As part of the pilot, the five proposed strategies have been triaged by project partners.<sup>2</sup>

In this report we examine the results of the implementation of the proposed strategies in the UK. The final strategies will be published following the analysis of the results of this pilot phase in each of the Pro-Act partner countries, and the discussion and revision of the strategies at the second European Workshop to be held in London in April 2016.

## UK pilot monitoring & evaluation

In the UK, the pilot strategies have been implemented by the Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) and Migrant Help, with assistance from Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX). The monitoring and evaluation of the pilots in the UK has been carried out by FLEX with the collaboration of LAWRS and Migrant Help.

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<sup>1</sup> Considerations in drafting these strategies include:

- a) The relevance and salience of identified gaps in each of the project countries;
- b) The ability to tailor strategies to the national context;
- c) The length of the pilot period and ability to achieve measurable outcomes in that period;
- d) The resources available to partners during the pilot period; and
- e) The extent to which strategies rely on external stakeholders for their implementation and success.

<sup>2</sup> Not every strategy has been piloted by every project partner or in every country.

In order to facilitate the collection of data and overall monitoring process, FLEX developed a monitoring framework including project aims, outcomes, relevant activities and indicators. This framework was negotiated and agreed upon by project partners.

LAWRS and Migrant Help have periodically reported on their implementation of the relevant strategies, and continuously discussed the pilot activities and the progress made with the rest of the project partners throughout the pilot period. As part of strategies 1 (improved identification) and 3 (empowering support), and with the purpose of identifying any potential patterns, LAWRS have recorded information about the experiences of trafficking victims, any indicators displayed as well as the needs expressed. Migrant Help has also collected hard data on the results obtained by potential victims of trafficking using their services on various areas of interest to the project both prior to the pilots and as part of the pilot implementation. The information gathered includes quantitative data on the take up of counselling services by trafficked persons, as well as the range of legal routes pursued by trafficked persons and the results of any claims.

FLEX has collected and analysed this input to extract information about the activities carried out and the results obtained through the pilot implementation. To supplement this information, primary data has been collected by FLEX through one-to-one semi-structured interviews with service users during the pilot phase of the project (people who have been trafficked).<sup>3</sup> The continuous engagement with victims of trafficking throughout the project seeks to ensure their views on their needs, the support received and any areas for improvement, are accurately represented and taken into account for the development of the final strategies.

## Pilot strategies for proactive identification and support for victims of trafficking for labour exploitation

The following five pilot strategies have been implemented by Pro-Act Project partners:

- **Strategy 1 — Access to information, improved detection and remedies:** Strategy 1 focused on increased awareness of rights and remedies among victims of trafficking, as an avenue to enhanced detection and support.

As part of strategy 1, project partners set out to:

- a) Produce and disseminate information about labour rights and remedies to potential victims of trafficking for labour exploitation that:
  - i. Offered concrete solutions to common violations;
  - ii. Provided avenues for support to claim rights; and
  - iii. Was available in an understandable format and languages.
- b) Introduce or expand 'peer education' programmes, based on a common 'peer education' format, as a means of improving detection.

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<sup>3</sup> Individual interviews with trafficked persons were exclusively conducted in person.

- **Strategy 2 — Improve access to expert legal counselling and redress:** Strategy 2 was aimed at improving access to legal rights and redress for victims of trafficking for labour exploitation through increased awareness of victims' legal rights and enhanced access to expert legal counselling.

The activities proposed in the framework of strategy 2 included:

- a) Producing and disseminating information about legal rights and avenues for legal redress to trafficked persons in appropriate formats;
  - b) Providing frontline workers with training on avenues for legal redress, legal information and signposting trafficked persons to specialist counselling;
  - c) Nurturing networks of specialist lawyers to facilitate the pooling of resources such as sharing case law and best practice, strengthen remedies and widen legal expertise; and
  - d) Working with specialist lawyers to provide training to lawyers in rights-based approaches to legal counselling for trafficked persons, to ensure more victims of trafficking receive high quality legal assistance.
- **Strategy 3 — Empowering support based on the needs of trafficked persons:** Strategy 3 was designed to ensure that the support received by victims of trafficking for labour exploitation is empowering, that it engages victims as partners in the process of assistance, and it meets their individual needs.

The pilot activities designed under this strategy include the development and implementation of:

- a) Needs and risk assessments that are gender sensitive and take into account the particular support needs of victims of trafficking for labour exploitation. Under strategy 3, these needs assessments are to be carried out upon entry to support systems and re-evaluated throughout support; and
  - b) A protocol that clearly sets out the terms of assistance programmes, ensures that victims are aware of the support to which they are entitled and establishes duties and obligations on the part of all parties.
- **Strategy 4 — Tailored and diverse psychological assistance:** Strategy 4 focused on the delivery of tailored psychological support in a way that is understandable, relevant and valuable to trafficked persons and that respects their safety and integrity, with the objective of improving the take up and impact of psychological support on victims of trafficking for labour exploitation.

As part of strategy 4, implementing partners have undertaken to:

- a) Ensure comprehensive psychological needs assessments are conducted for all trafficked persons;
- b) Adopt new methods of introducing trafficked persons to the concept of psychological support that highlights its value;

- c) Prepare a support framework according to need that includes a range of psychological support methods for use at different stages of therapy, including: psychotherapy, family counselling, group therapy befriending, coping techniques, well-being information;
- d) Continuously evaluate counselling outcomes based on a trusted evaluation framework; and
- e) Apply standards for ethical and effective interpretation during therapy sessions.

➤ **Strategy 5 — Supporting access to benefits and appropriate employment:** Strategy 5 aimed to empower trafficked persons to enter employment that respects their rights and meets their needs, through the provision of tailored employability assistance and support accessing benefits.

Three key activities were proposed under strategy 5:

- a) Supporting trafficked persons to enter appropriate employment by establishing an employability map of services to meet their needs, including:
  - i. CV workshops;
  - ii. Skill focused volunteer placements; and
  - iii. IT and English classes
- b) Working with local and national government agencies to ensure that trafficked persons are assigned a single welfare support case-worker to facilitate access to benefits and employment; and
- c) Developing an employment empowerment programme that aims to build trafficked persons' self-esteem to seek employment.

## 2. Pilot implementation by UK project partners

In the UK, the pilot strategies have been implemented by LAWRS and Migrant Help, with assistance from FLEX. As part of the project, LAWRS has piloted all of the five aforementioned pilot strategies, while Migrant Help has implemented pilot strategies 2, 3 and 4. The monitoring and evaluation of the pilots in the UK has been carried out by FLEX.

### Pilot activities and outcomes

#### Strategy 1 – Access to information, improved detection and remedies

LAWRS piloted this strategy in the UK with assistance from FLEX. As part of the pilot, LAWRS developed and carried out the following activities:

- **Targeted training of staff and volunteers:** FLEX delivered training on human trafficking for labour exploitation, key indicators of trafficking and identification of victims, as well as the legal remedies available to victims of trafficking for labour exploitation, to 17 staff members, 4 cultural mediators and 2 volunteers at LAWRS. The training was designed to provide staff and volunteers with the tools to better understand the issue and to increase their ability to identify and effectively support victims of trafficking.

- **Production and dissemination of information booklet on employment rights in Spanish and Portuguese:** the lack of knowledge of the English language was identified in the research as one of the greatest barriers faced by Latin American migrant women. To address this crucial need for information on labour rights and entitlements in their own language, an accessible information booklet, available in Spanish and Portuguese, has been produced by LAWRS. The booklet has been disseminated among the Latin American community and via social media and through the LAWRS website. It has also been distributed and promoted at LAWRS' drop in service, workshops, and community events. LAWRS carried out 9 visits to different places of gathering of the Latin American community, distributing 61 booklets on labour rights. 77 copies of the booklet were also distributed at LAWRS' drop-in service.

As a result of the dissemination of this information, LAWRS has seen an increase in requests for assistance with employment matters. LAWRS' legal surgery on employment rights runs every week and the appointments are fully booked every week. Through this service, 123 cases of labour exploitation have been identified.

- **Production and dissemination of a specific information leaflet about trafficking for labour exploitation in Spanish and Portuguese:** the leaflet was designed to be accessible and easily understandable by potential victims and community members. LAWRS reported that working in partnership proved particularly useful for the design of these flyers, as it allowed LAWRS to benefit from FairWork's expertise and their previous experiences designing and disseminating similar informative flyers. The leaflet was disseminated at places where the Latin American community gathers — including Latin American markets, shopping centres, Latin American businesses and community centres — as well as via social media and through LAWRS' website. LAWRS carried out 9 visits to different places of gathering of the Latin American community, distributing 200 leaflets. 163 flyers were also distributed at LAWRS' drop-in service.

LAWRS has distributed 500 informative flyers about human trafficking and 150 booklets or guides on labour rights. The section of the website about the ProAct project has also received 9,104 visits between September 2015 and March 2016. This information was also distributed through social media, with guidance provided by FairWork on developing social media strategies and safety guidelines. Due to the short period of time for the implementation of the pilot, it is not possible to fully ascertain the impact of the dissemination via social media channels, but this information is expected to have reached at least LAWRS' 1,349 Facebook followers.

- **Talks for community members providing information about human trafficking and labour rights:** LAWRS has organised talks about labour exploitation and trafficking for labour exploitation as part of their drop in sessions, with the purpose of raising awareness with the women that access those services. A total of 162 women attended these talks.
- **Recruitment and training of volunteers:** 6 members of LAWRS' staff acted as cultural mediators throughout the project. Additionally, LAWRS recruited 5 volunteers with the same cultural background as potential victims, to conduct outreach work and act as peer educators or "cultural mediators" in reaching different sections of the Latin American community in the UK. LAWRS has developed an in-house training programme for cultural mediators, facilitated by FLEX and LAWRS,

focused on the identification and support of victims of human trafficking. In addition to their outreach and community engagement activities, four of these mediators have been specifically assigned to client support, five mediators have provided interpreting services, and one mediator has provided assistance to a solicitor who collaborates with LAWRS providing employment advice at weekly sessions.

- **Community members were approached and informed about human trafficking and labour exploitation:** cultural mediators participated in this engagement with community members, disseminating information about trafficking for labour exploitation and labour rights and raising awareness in the community. As part of this information campaign LAWRS visited churches, Latin American restaurants, and places where Latin American people gather.

123 cases of labour exploitation were identified by LAWRS through the implementation of the pilot phase of the project. LAWRS found indicators of trafficking in some of these cases, and in four cases, LAWRS found evidence of abuse amounting to trafficking for labour exploitation. LAWRS has recorded the information regarding identified cases of labour exploitation and of human trafficking for labour exploitation, in order to analyse the factors affecting victims of trafficking as well as any patterns or gaps.

## **Strategy 2 – Improve access to expert legal counselling and redress**

This strategy was piloted in the UK both by LAWRS and by Migrant Help. Strategy 2 involved:

- **Provision of one to one advice and casework support in Spanish and Portuguese for victims (LAWRS):** In all of the 123 cases of labour exploitation identified by LAWRS, LAWRS provided the victims with information about their rights and available remedies. Clients who were identified as potential victims of trafficking were also provided with more in-depth support and advice about their legal rights, options and remedies. Three of the four potential victims of human trafficking identified decided not to be referred to the NRM, but received support from LAWRS. In the other case, the victim was already receiving support from solicitors, and she accessed LAWRS' support through their counselling and psychotherapy services.
- **Production of a referral map for caseworkers and volunteers on specialist agencies and solicitors for dealing with complex cases (LAWRS):** LAWRS has promoted awareness among employees and service users about referral pathways, including solicitors specialised in trafficking. LAWRS also created a **flowchart explaining the NRM process** to improve awareness among staff and service users. Organisations contacted about specific cases identified during the implementation of the pilot include FLEX, the Anti-Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit (ATLEU), HESTIA, and ITN Solicitors.
- **Legal workshop for front line workers, counsellors and volunteers (peer educators) (LAWRS and Migrant Help):** as part of the training package delivered by FLEX to LAWRS' staff, front line workers, counsellors and volunteers received training on the legal rights of victims of human

trafficking, covering relevant aspects such as legal aid, access to compensation and the legal remedies available to victims.

Migrant Help staff in Dover and Scotland also received training delivered by FLEX, which they reported was beneficial in terms of improving the knowledge and understanding of front line workers about the legal choices available to clients. The training covered legal remedies and avenues for compensation available to victims of trafficking. Migrant Help staff have also been provided with information about the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme, and in Scotland links have been established between Migrant Help and the local Victim Support offices, who can assist Migrant Help and its clients with completing CICA forms to apply for this form of compensation. However, no victims had yet been referred to Victim Support for this service as of April 2016.

LAWRS staff have also participated in a training session provided by law firm Leigh Day on labour rights in March 2016. 4 cultural mediators, 13 staff members and 13 volunteers attended this training.

- **Dissemination of information on legal rights and entitlements** (Migrant Help and LAWRS): Migrant Help has provided its clients with information about their legal options, as well as the Anti-Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit (ATLEU) phone line.<sup>4</sup> While most of Migrant Help's service users interviewed by FLEX showed some understanding of the concept of asylum and leave to remain, as well as a basic understanding of these processes, awareness of other legal remedies such as access to compensation was limited. Almost all of the victims interviewed by FLEX reported knowing nothing, or very little about compensation, and a number of service users stated they had not been told about it and never thought about it because they didn't know what it was or how it worked.

As part of the pilot, FLEX has also produced a booklet on the legal rights of victims of trafficking. The booklet has been translated to 12 different languages, and 1,200 copies of the booklet are to be disseminated by Migrant Help and LAWRS to their service users.

No compensation claims have been recorded as having been filed as a direct result of the pilot. This, however, does not mean that victims who received information about their right to compensation will not seek to make these claims in the future, as in the immediate period after their escape from the trafficking situation, victims tend to be concerned with legal aspects related to immigration status, asylum, access to accommodation and welfare, and therefore these urgent needs tend to be prioritised. Furthermore, two victims of trafficking being supported by Migrant Help in Scotland approached their solicitor to seek compensation. However, the compensation claims were not pursued as the cases were historic.

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<sup>4</sup> ATLEU is a charity providing legal representation to victims of trafficking and labour exploitation. ATLEU delivers a specialized service to victims, including advice to victims on their immigration status and assistance applying for asylum or other forms of lawful residence; securing safe accommodation, financial support and treatment from local authorities, the Home Office or other statutory bodies; and obtaining compensation.

### Strategy 3 – Empowering support based on the needs of trafficked persons

In their role as service providers, LAWRS and Migrant Help have adapted their activities with the aim of providing more effective and empowering support to victims of trafficking for labour exploitation, based on their specific needs and context. In the context of the pilot, both organisations have reviewed and updated their processes and set up new protocols for the provision of support to victims of trafficking for labour exploitation. As a result:

- LAWRS and Migrant Help have **developed improved risk assessment processes**: Migrant Help worked in partnership with ADPARE (Romania) to develop a new risk assessment process. The new risk assessment focuses on the safety and wellbeing of the client, and is designed to flag up key information that had not previously been considered by Migrant Help, including about the victim’s relationship to the trafficker, and whether the victim remained in contact with the trafficker or with other potential victims of human trafficking, or other people they might be afraid of.

Migrant Help has implemented the new risk assessments at their Dover and Scotland services. The risk assessment has been used by Migrant Help as a baseline to report relevant information to the authorities (police, UKHTC, Home Office, the SA in Dover’s case), when necessary. For example, if a potential victim wants to return to their trafficker / community / country of origin, Migrant Help will report this information to the Police and the Home Office and inform about the possible risks associated. Similarly, Migrant Help uses this assessment to identify any risks of self harm or mental health issues, to ensure a GP is contacted and the client receives appropriate care. In Dover, the risk assessment has also been used to strengthen the case for the transfer of clients to a different area when there are risk factors present.

Migrant Help has also worked in **partnership with ADPARE** to facilitate support upon return to Romania, to ensure that any Romanian clients who decided to return to their country of origin were **returning under safe conditions**, and to minimize the risk of victimisation upon return and re-trafficking.

- Migrant Help also carried out **needs assessments** with trafficked persons upon entry to Migrant Help support, and re-evaluated these needs throughout the provision of support. A follow-up mid-way needs assessment was carried out half way through the reflection period, and an exit support plan was also developed to capture the final clients’ needs and the actions taken to address them.

Migrant Help’s findings from this continuous needs assessment process show that the main needs for clients at the initial stage of the support are accommodation, financial support, medical and legal assistance. These are considered to be urgent or basic needs that need to be fulfilled before more advanced support can be offered. Mid-way support plans were focused on future plans, building confidence and personal development — such as participation in ESOL classes, volunteer opportunities and local activities. Tailored exit support plans were developed jointly by Migrant

Help case workers and the victim of trafficking concerned. The exit plan considers the long-term needs of clients, and accordingly seeks to ensure any necessary referrals to relevant agencies are appropriately made by Migrant Help staff, as well as empowering clients and promoting independent living. Clients were required to sign an exit form and were provided with a copy of their personalised exit plan to facilitate the transition and ensure they are aware of the next steps.

In the case of two men who were trafficked to the UK for the purpose of exploitation in sports training and competition, Migrant Help recognised their needs as athletes and the importance of training and exercise for their mental and physical recovery. Migrant Help provided both victims with access to gym membership and training facilities. Both clients found this to be helpful in dealing with the anxiety and psychological distress caused by their experience:

*"[Speaking about training] it makes me feel good [...] We can't just sit there watching TV, we are athletes we are used to gym-ing."*

*"We are not good, but as we go there we can at least try and forget things and be trying to do something. Better than [...] sitting in the room like this, too much thinking, like I'm going crazy."*

- **A welcome / care pack** was provided by Migrant Help to clients in their native language, setting out the terms of the support / care programme. The care pack includes a welcome letter outlining the responsibilities and duties of Migrant Help towards clients, and informing clients about the rules they were required to adhere to. To facilitate client awareness of the NRM process, Migrant Help developed a visual aid – the **trafficking journey leaflet** – explaining the different stages of making a trafficking claim in simple terms. The leaflet represents the journey and stages of making a trafficking claim, as well as the clients' entitlements at every stage of this journey.

The victims of human trafficking supported by Migrant Help and interviewed by FLEX were generally happy with the accommodation provided. In general, victims were aware of their right to complain if they didn't like something or if they needed something that wasn't being provided.<sup>5</sup> They also knew that they could speak to their caseworkers about this. However, victims also expressed some confusion about their entitlements:

*"I don't know what to expect so I can't know what can I ask. We have been told that we have to stay here 45 days and after these 45 days we will receive another letter to see if we can stay another 2 weeks. But we get some paper then we can go to doctors for glasses, teeth, things like these. But I don't know."*

*"I'm not sure about services available but I want to learn English because now I stay at home doing nothing and without English I can't do anything."*

Most of the victims interviewed by FLEX didn't know what the NRM was, but understood that they were entitled to 45 days of support.

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<sup>5</sup> One of the victims interviewed by FLEX expressed feeling like they had no one to talk to if they had issues with the accommodation provided.

Victims were also generally reluctant to make any complaints, stating that they “wouldn’t want to cause any problems”.

- LAWRS has developed **tailored action plans** for the victims of human trafficking identified through their services.
- LAWRS has **produced new referral forms, client record, consent forms and case file forms** to ensure they capture all of the relevant information, and facilitate the proactive identification and support of victims of trafficking for labour exploitation.

LAWRS reported that adapting all of their case file documents and forms, client record, referral forms, and consent forms has made a huge difference in the organisation and in their ability to identify cases and support victims of trafficking for labour exploitation. Before these changes were made, LAWRS’ processes were not structured to respond specifically to the needs of victims of trafficking for labour exploitation and most of their casework was carried out from the perspective of VAWG rather than a trafficking for labour exploitation specific perspective. The new processes, coupled with the training and increased awareness of staff has allowed LAWRS to identify 4 cases of trafficking and 123 cases of labour exploitation.

Victims of human trafficking have continued to express their desire for support that facilitates their integration in the UK throughout the pilot implementation. Victims have particularly expressed their need for English language lessons and have signalled delays or difficulties in accessing these classes:

*“In general it’s good. It’s just I haven’t been accepted into any English class. And it has been a long time. [...] I heard that they are trying to find me a class but I’m not sure if there was something available to me yet.”*

Similarly, victims have expressed their desire to find long-term solutions for themselves, and in some cases their dependants.

*“I just wish I can find permanent accommodation so three of us can stay together [referring to her child and her partner].”*

Access to adequate accommodation continues to be a key concern for victims of human trafficking. Victims’ needs in terms of accommodation should be a part of needs assessments and the provision of adequate accommodation tailored to victims’ circumstances and personal needs should be a central aspect of service provision under the NRM. One victim interviewed by FLEX rejected National Asylum Support System (NASS) accommodation offered to her, due to the fear of dispersal to a different region of the country and of starting over again after working to overcome psychological difficulties and forge relationships of trust with others. Commenting on this, the victims’ psychological counsellor, interviewed by FLEX said:

*“Something we spoke about this week is her feeling safe in the environment and feeling secure to come outside and not be isolated. Before she kept the curtains drawn, didn’t communicate with people. She is also now starting to integrate with a mother and toddler group [...], and she is building up her confidence, her reassurance that it’s ok, even if she is still looks at the back of her [...] and the environment is safe for her. So that’s the fear of being dispersed to another area, which would have quite a devastating impact on her psychological state in terms of post-traumatic stress presentations.”*

#### **Strategy 4 – Tailored and diverse psychological assistance**

- LAWRS provides general counselling to vulnerable Latin American women in the UK. As part of this strategy, LAWRS carried out **an initial psychological assessment** of the potential victims identified, in order to identify and address their specific needs.
- As part of the pilot, LAWRS **prioritised access to counselling** for victims of trafficking for labour exploitation, providing **one to one psychotherapy and counselling sessions** conducted in victims’ native language (Spanish/Portuguese). The 4 victims of trafficking identified during the pilot period were offered one to one counselling sessions. Two of these victims decided to receive counselling. At the time of the report, the provision of counselling was still ongoing: one victim had received 2 counselling sessions, and the other victim had received 11 sessions. These victims also participated in other therapeutic activities provided by LAWRS, including workshops on healing and yoga.
- Migrant Help and LAWRS worked to **inform victims about the benefits and purpose of counselling**: clients’ understanding of and attitudes towards counselling was identified as a key barrier to the provision of this service during the research phase of the project. In its work with victims of trafficking, LAWRS highlighted the value of counselling and psychological support in healing trauma and enabling the recovery processes.

As part of Migrant Help’s induction process, information was provided and victims were encouraged to disclose any needs during their Mental Health Assessment Interviews. Emphasis was made on reaching Migrant Help’s clients in the Dover area, given that the research showed that the intake of counselling among this client group had been particularly low prior to the pilot — only 11.5%<sup>6</sup> of victims supported, compared to 80.7%<sup>7</sup> of the clients supported by Migrant Help in Scotland. As a result of these findings, and to ensure that Migrant Help provides a similar service in Dover, Migrant Help re-examined its practices and the methods used for approaching clients about counselling at their Dover service. Drawing on its own experiences in Scotland, Migrant Help has developed and now uses new methods to introduce the concept of counselling to clients, raise awareness of its benefits and address any potential social misconceptions about counselling. One victim interviewed by FLEX reported feeling encouraged by staff to get psychological support:

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<sup>6</sup> Percentage of all victims supported by Migrant Help in Dover between January and August 2015.

<sup>7</sup> Percentage of all victims supported by Migrant Help in Scotland between January and August 2015.

*“Yes, that [counselling] has helped me. In China nobody cares about your life and you never get the help. No one cares, but here I feel hope. They tell me “okay you need to get help”.*

- **Improved access to counselling (Migrant Help):** In Scotland, Migrant Help works closely with the charity Crisis, which provides counselling sessions to its clients. Through this model, Migrant Help facilitates 6 weekly counselling sessions for each client with the possibility to extend the number of sessions depending on the client’s needs. Counselling is provided on site and members of staff are available to discuss any concerns with the clients after or prior to sessions. Pro-Act research showed that counselling take-up was relatively high in the Migrant Help services in Scotland, even prior to the pilot implementation (80.7% of all victims supported by Migrant Help in Scotland between January and August 2015 were receiving counselling services).

One of the main constraints on Migrant’s Help ability to provide counselling identified by the research was the limited availability of funding for counselling services through the NRM system in England. Until recently, victims could access up to 6 sessions of counselling under the NRM system in England. However, the provision of funding for these sessions has been recently suspended by the main contractor responsible for the delivery of NRM support, which means that sub-contractors are no longer receiving funding from the main contractor for the provision of psychological counselling.

Access to counselling was restricted during the pilot period, and waiting periods were long, as the sessions had to be approved by the main contractor (Salvation Army) after a comprehensive needs assessment. FLEX understands that funding for private counselling has been withdrawn as of April 2016. As a result, subcontractors under the NRM system will now have to provide counselling at their own loss or will have to resort to partner organisations with funding to provide these services. This situation is worrying, as most charities providing psychological support to vulnerable adults in the UK are overstretched for funding, and there are particular gaps in the provision of support to vulnerable males, who incidentally are the largest group currently not accessing counselling. Access to counselling services through the National Health Service (NHS) is also not suitable for victims of trafficking, given the long waitlists for these services and the lack of prioritisation of victims of trafficking.

Victims often have to wait for long periods of time to access counselling. For female victims, this is compounded by difficulties in finding available female psychologists and interpreters. One of the victims who received outreach counselling through the new referral model implemented in Dover described her experience to FLEX:

*“In the beginning I ask my doctor [about counselling]. He offered me wellbeing services, I did two sessions with them, but by phone, not in person, because I was waiting for a female psychologist and a female interpreter, but I don't know what happened with them... so I ask Migrant Help and they referred me here [to the Refugee Council counselling services in Luton].”*

Through the pilot, a local counselling centre in Dover and an outreach counselling centre in Luton (provided by the Refugee Council) have been sourced to ensure a swift response to clients’ needs, which has allowed Migrant Help to receive quick responses to referrals made and to arrange

appointments for clients promptly. This new model implemented in Dover has been well received by Migrant Help staff and clients alike, due to the reduced amount of paperwork required to obtain consent from the main contractor in England under the NRM (Salvation Army), and reduced waiting times and ability to provide clients with counselling sessions promptly.

During the pilot period, Migrant Help provided counselling to two male victims of forced labour, who received 6 counselling sessions through Migrant Help's local counselling centre in Dover. One female victim of domestic servitude also received two counselling sessions through the same service, and was later referred to more suitable local therapy sessions when she relocated to a different area.

Outreach therapy was also offered to victims by Migrant Help and provided by the Refugee Council Therapeutic Services in Luton. FLEX facilitated the contact between the Refugee Council and Migrant Help. The liaison between the local counselling provider in Dover and the outreach counsellor at the Refugee Council has also helped to establish the foundation for future partnerships. Two female victims were referred to this service, and have both received over 10 therapy sessions. Both these clients reported feeling depressed, upset, and had disturbed sleeping patterns before taking up counselling. From the feedback forms collected by Migrant Help it can be seen that these clients have started to rebuild their lives and trust others, they have gained a better understanding of their symptoms and their anxiety levels have decreased. This was confirmed through interviews conducted by FLEX with both victims receiving counselling support from the Refugee Council:

*"I feel very good about this support. It is helping, somehow, because now I can trust, I start to trust other people, which for me is a very good thing because I am starting to get better, to feel more confident, and I am still hoping that everything is going to be fine after those sessions. So I am feeling very good about the sessions."*

The implementation of the pilot strategies has improved access to counselling among Migrant Help service users to some degree. In Scotland, there has been a 7% increase in the number of victims accessing counselling during the pilot period. However, the increase in access to counselling by victims supported by Migrant Help in Dover has been of just 2%, which is insufficient to show significant improvement. This is likely due to the short period covered by the pilot and therefore the limited availability of data. Moreover, some of the new processes and partnerships were developed during the pilot implementation stage and we could therefore expect to see more significant quantitative results in time.

On the other hand, the qualitative data collected shows that the experience of the pilots with improved access to counselling has generally been very positive. More victims of human trafficking have accessed counselling, and those who have, have reported feeling better, more confident and less anxious. The caseworkers and counsellors working with victims have also reported improvements in the mood and levels of anxiety of victims, and have highlighted the importance of access to these services for victim recovery. Moreover, access to counselling can help prevent further isolation, the development of other pathologies and deepening of psychological trauma. When asked if there was anyone else she could talk to, one victim said:

*“Other than her [the counsellor]? No. Even my friends they don’t know exactly my story. I never told them.”*

Another victim said:

*“I can only speak to her [the counsellor]. I don't have any other person. [...] Counselling is really helpful. I talk to her, I feel relieved [...] I come here and talk, I feel more happy and better. Like yesterday, I was just crying too loud and coming today I feel better.”*

However, clients also reported that more sessions — more than the 6 maximum number of sessions provided by Migrant Help —<sup>8</sup> would be helpful. When asked whether they would like to receive more counselling support, one victim said:

*“Yes, I think so. The health from mental health consultants would help me feel happier, safer... and that helps.”*

Another victim said:

*“We would like but our counselling, the program is finished. When we see the counselling, it helps us because it was advising us, telling us do this. But we still have this thing in our heart that can’t go away, like me I don’t sleep, bad dreams always whenever I try. ‘Cos I fight through hard life, when I’ve had to wash our plates in the shower, many things many things I have had to forget, I don’t even feel like eating [...] More counselling is better.”*

The importance of forging supportive relationships with each other was also highlighted throughout the interviews conducted by FLEX, with a number of victims saying they felt like they could seek support from their friends — referring to other victims staying at the same accommodation, or partner — who had also been exploited alongside the victim. One interviewee who was receiving outreach support, and was therefore not being accommodated with other victims of trafficking said that she would have liked to be part of some form of peer support system:

*“There are a lot of women who have the same experience just like me. And I feel very sorry, but I need to speak sometimes with them, to contact. Not to share how exactly happened, my story, but our experiences ... to have support.”*

Lack of funding also affects the quality of the support provided; because victims only get support for 45 days, counsellors are forced to work quickly to stabilise victims and do not have enough time to fully address their problems. Due to the limited amount of time and sessions counsellors can complete with victims, they are forced to focus on providing victims with coping mechanisms, and cannot address the underlying trauma through psychotherapy sessions. At the end of the 45 days, victims are left without psychological support and are often not ready to deal with their trauma and mental health needs on their own.

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<sup>8</sup> The number of sessions received by victims receiving psychological assistance provided by the Refugee Council in partnership with Migrant Help is not limited, and depends on each client’s specific needs.

## Strategy 5 – Supporting access to benefits and appropriate employment

As part of their work supporting and advising victims, LAWRS provided employment support to the victims of trafficking identified. Of the four victims identified, two victims attended employability sessions, and one victim was referred to English lessons provided externally.

Victims supported by Migrant Help have continued to express their need for support finding appropriate and decent employment that empowers them to live independently and move on with their lives.

One victim told FLEX:

*“I would like to have a proper full time job where I wouldn’t be forced to work, I would do it just because I enjoy it.”*

In the case of non-European victims, this aspect is complicated by immigration considerations and the difficulties they face in obtaining discretionary leave to remain on the grounds of a trafficking claim. One victim facing this issue said:

*“What I want is if they can help me and give me a visa and [...] a job I am not a lazy person. [...] What I always loved to do is helping people. The less privileged, the handicapped, the sick. I was saying to myself that if I could get a visa I could go to college and maybe do that...”*

Another victim waiting to hear from the Home Office on her trafficking claim and her asylum application told FLEX:

*“I did the college when I was back in [X]. And I never worked as a teacher, because I study to be a teacher. And I’d like to study here, to get a job, teaching. To be normal. [...] For now I am ok, but she is growing up [referring to her child] and I don’t know if I can support her financially.”*

*“When I gave the big interview, the officer, he asked me “apart of what happened to you, why do you want to stay here?” He was the first one to give me this question, and I said because I want to give her, to my daughter, the life that I didn’t have in [X]. To be free. First of all to be free, free for everything. Free to think, free to choose what you want.”*

### 3. Reflections and recommendations

The results of the pilot show that in general terms, a stronger focus on achieving positive long-term outcomes for victims of trafficking is required. The current support available under the NRM system is highly limited and forces service providers and victims alike to focus their energies on meeting the most urgent, basic needs of victims of trafficking in the short period of time provided (45 days). As a result, there is a significant risk that the overall system might be failing victims of trafficking, who are still highly vulnerable to exploitation and re-trafficking when they leave the support.

The lack of post-NRM support or follow up, and consequently of official data regarding long-term outcomes, including long-term access to key legal entitlements for victims of human trafficking — i.e. compensation, safe accommodation — makes it impossible to assess whether the support currently available to victims of trafficking is adequate to ensure their protection from further victimisation. However, service providers, migrant community organisations and charities working with vulnerable adults (i.e. refugees, homeless persons) report significant obstacles supporting victims in the longer term, and express their fears and anxiety for the future of this highly vulnerable client group.

#### Recommendations to Government:

- ✓ **The ongoing review of identification and support under the NRM system should take into account the findings of the Pro-Act pilot and the voices of victims.**
- ✓ **Amend the NRM contract to ensure prompt & comprehensive access to counselling for all victims of human trafficking:**
  - **Access to psychological support under the NRM must be provided promptly to all victims who request it without the requirement of an initial psychological assessment.** Paperwork and processes acting as a barrier to access must be revised and updated to ensure the timely provision of psychological support.
  - **The support contract under the NRM must ensure that needs-based counselling is sufficiently funded,** and that victims receive comprehensive integrative **psychotherapy sessions** rather than merely coping therapy.
  - **Funding for psychological support must be available beyond the 45-day period, and must be tailored individual victims' ongoing needs,** to ensure victims and counsellors can continue to work together towards victims' full mental recovery.
  - **Uptake of counselling and positive long-term mental health outcomes for victims should be included as key performance indicators (KPIs) for subcontractors under the NRM.**

- ✓ **Improve access to legal remedies** for victims of trafficking for labour exploitation:
  - **Ensure victims promptly receive information about their legal rights and entitlements at the point of identification.** Government agencies coming into contact with victims of human trafficking should be prepared to provide this information (i.e. must be adequately trained and have easily understandable materials for dissemination among any potential victims).
  
- ✓ **Ensure support provision is victim-centred and tailored to victims' specific needs:**
  - **Fund post-support reintegration programme: the lack of any post-NRM support system** means that often victims lose contact with the referrals made or cannot complete the steps put in place by service providers as part of their move-on plans on their own. Beyond the formal assistance currently offered during the 45 day 'reflection and recovery period', ongoing support is needed to achieve long-term recovery and guard against further vulnerability.
  - **The length of the support entitlement under the NRM (45 days) is arbitrary and not long enough. Ensure extensions are promptly granted** to victims of trafficking requiring support for longer periods of time under the NRM.
  - **Under the NRM contract, comprehensive needs assessments should be carried out covering at least: mental and general health needs, access to legal support, access to accommodation and welfare, integration and employability.** Outcomes should be monitored before exit from the NRM system to ensure needs have been met, and extensions should be granted for victims who haven't had their most basic needs met (i.e. access to adequate accommodation).
  - **Long-term outcomes for victims should be included as key performance indicators (KPIs) for subcontractors under the NRM, and monitored as part of a post-support reintegration programme.**

**Recommendations to service providers and community organisations:**

- ✓ **Provide information on employment rights tailored to different work sectors and migrant communities:** the use of cultural mediators can help bridge distances with local communities and assist in the dissemination of information and development of trusting relationships and partnerships for the identification and support of victims of trafficking.
  
- ✓ **Ensure support provision is victim-centred and empowering for victims of trafficking:**
  - Provide trafficking victims with **ongoing information about their rights and entitlements:** ensure the provision of support is informed, that victims can give informed consent and are aware that they can withdraw their consent at any time.

- Help trafficked persons to understand how to complain, and place a priority on creating and enabling an environment where victims know what they are entitled to and feel like they can complain if their needs are not being met.
- **Carry out comprehensive needs assessments covering at least: mental and general health needs, access to legal support, access to accommodation and welfare, integration and employability. Use the ongoing needs assessments to monitor outcomes** before the clients leave the service to ensure needs have been met. Where possible, support should be continued if it is considered that an individual victim's needs have not been met by the service.
- ✓ **Improve access to legal remedies** for victims of trafficking for labour exploitation:
  - **Provide information and assistance to access legal remedies.** Ensure staff members are aware of the full range of legal options to victims of trafficking and are trained to pass on this information to service users. Provide written information in victims' native language and preferably accompanied by visual aid, to make complex legal concepts more accessible, and ensure victims have materials they can later refer to and ask questions about.
  - **Ensure victims have access to the full range of legal assistance required.** Set up networks and develop relationships with lawyers — including immigration, employment, civil and criminal specialists — to facilitate access to expert legal assistance for service users.
- ✓ **Provide integration & employment support:**
  - Develop robust models of ongoing support and assistance with move-on options that promote victims' long-term integration and access to decent jobs.
- ✓ **Provide access to counselling for all victims of trafficking:**
  - **Provide psychological support tailored to victims' needs.** Counselling must be aimed at long term positive mental health outcomes, and not limited to a specific number of sessions or to offering coping mechanisms for victims. Psychological support must include integrative psychotherapy, and victims should receive as many sessions as deemed necessary. Termination of the support must be agreed upon by the mental health professional providing support and the individual victim themselves.
  - **Develop partnerships with other organisations providing counselling services to vulnerable adults.** Working in partnership with others — i.e. other NGOs and mental health clinics or independent professionals — to develop new models for psychological support can help ensure victims have timely access to the support they need. This strategy can prove particularly useful where victims are receiving outreach support, and

working in partnership with local organisations can facilitate access to counselling locally for victims.



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