

Large-Scale Modern-day slavery SAR

Lincolnshire SAB ¹

Pen picture

This SAR covers modern slavery operating through an organised crime group within Lincolnshire. The Police investigation started in 2014 and focused on criminal activities, including fraud, theft, assaults and money laundering, with emerging allegations of forced and compulsory labour involving 60 potential victims over several years. The Police launched an “Operation Pottery”, focussing on modern slavery and servitude occurring across two traveller sites.

Case Summary

The exploiters were a family who approached vulnerable men with the promise of work, pay, food and accommodation, and subsequently abused them emotionally, financially, physically and subjected them to forced labour. It was estimated that there were sixty victims, 22 of whom presented evidence that led to the prosecution and prison sentence of their abusers. In total, 16 members of the family were charged with varying offences and 15 were convicted of conspiring to require a person into forced/compulsory labour, conspiracy to defraud, fraud by false representation, theft and assaults. 9 of the defendants received prison sentences ranging between 1-15 years, totalling 79 years. Subsequently a further family member was convicted of assault and conspiracy to require persons to perform forced or compulsory labour and was sentenced to 11 years in prison. The SAR identifies learning to help improve local and national responses to victims of modern slavery.

Lessons:

Risk factors, signs and identification of modern slavery

- Recognising the known risk factors associated with modern slavery and the signs of modern slavery requires professionals to be **vigilant and professionally curious** to give opportunities for disclosure. Professionals and the wider community need to be competent in identifying and acting on all forms of exploitation and abuse, including understanding the specific circumstances that modern slavery presents.
- Public Services can play a vital role in identification of financial exploitation and require **training** to raise their awareness and **good supervision** to offer support for staff.

¹ The RWSAB would like to acknowledge the SAR on Drina prepared by Lincolnshire SAB (Link to full report ([Link to full report](#))).

Victim support/enabling disclosure

- Victims face **barriers to disclosure** and practitioners need to recognise that victims may partially disclose, retract or provide different accounts of their situation. Victims are unlikely to disclose unless they feel safe to do so, have information about viable alternatives and are able to make informed choices to manage their safety.
- There is a **gap in the support** available to victims between the time they consent to a referral through the NRM and prior to a Reasonable Grounds decision being reached. This may risk losing the person's confidence and miss a window of opportunity to intervene.
- **Victims remain highly vulnerable** well beyond the 45-day period of reflection. There is a need to provide coordinated, restorative care in the journey from disclosure through to recovery. Agencies needed to work collectively to share resources and enable smooth transitions, with lead responsibilities flexing through changing needs. Victims experienced disjointed care that in some cases put them at further risk of harm.
- **Supporting individuals to give evidence** requires detailed and sensitive care planning that meets the emotional, intellectual and practical measures required to achieve best evidence and support the victims' well-being. The arrangements led by Police were an excellent example of this.
- Responses to **working with adults who had mental capacity and were resistant to accepting support** were not well developed. The impact of coercion and control was not always considered and weighed when making decisions about risks, consent and proportionate responses.
- It is important for practitioners to recognise the risks associated with using friends and family members as **interpreters**.

Communication and multi-agency working

- The lack of clear **communication points for agencies and members of the public** to share low level or emerging concerns limited the ability to gather intelligence about modern slavery. Multi-agency forums can provide a mechanism to share risks and develop joint solutions to community safety. Such forums were not available or not used by key agencies who were working with people living in risky communities.
- The use of the Reception Centre was of immense value in enabling victims to break free. The meticulous planning provided an exceptional response to victims. Such a large-scale operation would have benefitted from **multi-agency guidance and checklists** to help each agency in delivering the best care to victims.
- The system of **flagging vulnerabilities and known risks** to modern slavery in agency records can improve communication within and between agencies, enabling more effective preventative and protective responses.
- **Gold and Silver Command** provide an effective structure to manage very complex multi-agency responses, provided all agencies ensure their representatives have the necessary knowledge and authority to commit resources. Strategic planning following on from Gold Command is needed to co-ordinate responses and commit resources for the short, medium and longer-term care of victims. This is likely to have provided more robust multi-agency responses to the victims' aftercare.
- A **communications strategy** is required to clarify when information had to be withheld and when information held about the victims could be shared with those delivering care.
- Agencies need to consider the **care and support needs of staff** who are involved in complex and potentially traumatic cases and be mindful of their duty of care through provision of supervision and managerial support.

System Learning

Awareness of Modern Slavery and Competence

Need for a vigilant community and sufficiently trained workforce. Awareness training and staff development should be targeted.

Pathway for Responses to Modern Slavery

Map out the multi-agency pathway for reporting and responding to modern slavery concerns and quality assure the multi-agency contribution at each stage.

Safety and Support at Point of Disclosure

Partnership to agree arrangements for provision of a Place of Safety where adults leaving immediate situations of exploitation can be supported while they decide on whether to enter the NRM and while awaiting a Reasonable Grounds decision. There is a need for case work care and support to those

Effective Information Sharing

Agree the recording systems and processes required to share information regarding an individual's risk of Modern Slavery or their history as a victim, to inform their ongoing care needs. Adapting existing secure information sharing systems such as those used in Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) should be explored.

Coordinated Multi-Agency Restorative Care

Develop a mechanism and coordinate resources so victims of modern slavery are offered coordinated multi-agency care from point of disclosure, through the NRM period of support and beyond the transitions to their longer-term recovery.