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Victim Navigator Pilot Final Evaluation:  
**Executive Summary**  
From Victim to Witness to Survivor

November 2022

# Executive Summary

## Background, Remit and Methodology:

This document presents summary findings from an independent evaluation of the Victim Navigator programme. The evaluation ran from Sep 2018 - June 2022. The Navigator role was designed to improve outcomes for survivors of modern slavery, to improve survivor care as well as enhance survivor engagement with police to facilitate investigations into modern slavery and human trafficking. The Navigator role was to be embedded within police forces, with full access to the details of modern slavery cases, but with independence from the police to enable trust to be built with the survivor. This was a unique feature of the role as most support services sit outside the police. The Navigator would be available to engage survivors from the moment of identification by police, providing trauma-informed and specialist support during the crucial post-rescue period and then providing seamless ongoing coordination between the survivor and the officers investigating their case. At the start of the evaluation, Navigators were in post in two police forces, Kent and Surrey. As of July 2022, it is present in 6 police forces, plus the

East Midlands Special Operations Unit (covering 5 forces) and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority; with 12 Navigators, including a specialist for young people and a specialist focussing on trafficking in relation to organised immigration crime, one National Navigator focussing on joint investigations with overseas forces; and one central European coordinator employed.

The aim of the independent evaluation was to act as a critical friend throughout the lifetime of the pilot, to provide 'action research' and live feedback to Justice and Care, and to independently assess the effectiveness of the model. The research took a mixed methods approach including 72 interviews across police, non-police stakeholders, survivors and Navigators and Justice and Care staff. This was complemented by access to operational meetings and quantitative data from Justice and Care's case management system (CMS), a bespoke system created for the Victim Navigator pilot

## Findings

The evaluation focused on the objectives and outcomes outlined in the theory of change. Through the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data, across a range of sources, the evaluation has found evidence to support the achievement of all seven objectives:

### 1. Help survivors to navigate and secure more effective support post identification, including access to statutory help, support and provision through effective advocacy

According to CMS data, 737 specific 'support needs' of 279 survivors have been met through

the Navigators' casework (2.6 on average per survivor). These support needs range from securing safe accommodation, immigration advice, medical treatment or counselling to retrieving property, providing food and clothing to obtaining compensation. These support needs form part of an individual survivor's safety and support plans, which are agreed and co-created with the survivor and are specific to their current needs, vulnerabilities and aspirations. The evaluation has demonstrated that Navigators are able to support survivors' practical and emotional needs, in a timely way, filling gaps that other

support services cannot provide and acting as a care navigator as well as care provider. CMS data provided evidence that it is not just a quantity of needs being met, but these needs are met in a quality way (as evidenced through a survivor survey and interviews). Several respondents in the survivor survey flagged the transformative nature of the holistic support provided and interviewees stated their well-being had been improved.

### 2. Establish greater trust between survivors, the police and the wider criminal justice process

Survivors, police and non-police stakeholders all independently commented on the level of distrust survivors have of authority and police. This, in part, was due to perpetrators reinforcing this narrative, but also due to previous experiences with police in home countries. Because of Navigators' relationship and partner arrangements with police, they were able to broker better relationships between police and survivors, allaying concerns and often being a friendly face at the point of rescue, throughout the criminal investigation and the prosecution (where applicable). In the survivor survey, individuals highlighted the importance of being treated with compassion and the knock on effect this had on trusting others.

### 3. Foster greater engagement from survivors in information sharing, police investigations and, if relevant, prosecutions – strengthening efforts to bring exploiters to justice

As a result of the trusting relationship outlined above, survivors were more willing, with the support of the Navigator, to talk to police, provide evidence and remain engaged throughout the criminal justice process. The fact that Navigators were also able to provide information to the

"He's done everything for me. Every bit of support I've needed. If it weren't for [the Navigator], I would have been lost honestly." ..... "If I didn't have [the Navigator] I wouldn't have gone through with the case. I wouldn't have had the strength I had to do it because he was there as a prop, you know, he got me all the way through it. I couldn't have done it without him."

(Survivor)

survivors, from the police, supported a greater trusting relationship as police were now viewed as an ally rather than an enemy or someone to be feared. Survivors supported by Navigators have been more willing to assist police investigations and prosecutions - with greater engagement with police resulting in improved investigative outcomes such as numbers of suspects arrested, and the hope that as cases progress to trial, a result of the survivors' evidence and testimony will be more exploiters brought to justice. Data from the CMS revealed that at their latest or final engagement level, 92% of survivors<sup>1</sup> supported by a Navigator were willing to engage on some level with the police, while only 8% were not. Using a comparator sample, Navigator clients were almost five times more likely to engage with supporting a prosecution (39%) than the sample of non-Navigator supported MSHT cases (n=64) from Surrey and Essex (8%). For cases which have progressed to prosecutions, having the support of a Navigator was said to be invaluable by survivors. They were able to assist in practical arrangements such as seeing the court in advance as well as preparing survivors for the ways in which defence barristers often treated them

<sup>1</sup> Of 272 support plan cases where police engagement level was recorded

during cross-examination. A number of survivors said they would not have 'got through' the trial process without the support of the Navigator. Importantly, cases where prosecution took place have resulted in successful convictions. Further victims and perpetrators were also identified through survivors engaging with police.

#### 4. Free up police time and resource to focus on criminal investigations and wider organised crime groups, by managing day-to-day police contact with survivors

Evidence from police officers in all force areas indicates that freeing up police time was a distinguishing feature of the Victim Navigator programme. Detectives' large workloads means they cannot provide the level of contact with survivors that they want or require. Navigators took on responsibilities related to survivor support, ensuring survivors' needs were met, and had regular contact with survivors in relation to their recovery and to keep them engaged with or updated about the criminal investigation. This meant that police officers were able to focus on the criminal investigation and make best use of their expertise and skill set, whilst knowing the survivor was supported.

#### 5. Build relationships, broker support and maintain contact for survivors in source countries, as required

Justice and Care developed a Fast Track Voluntary and Assisted Return package which offered survivors a safe and supported return to their home countries. To date, Navigators have helped repatriate 32 survivors to seven different countries. Navigators played a key role in ensuring survivors were safeguarded and had access to temporary safe accommodation and support services while they made arrangements for their repatriation. For some survivors this required obtaining the necessary travel documents as well as organising

flights and, during the coronavirus pandemic, ensuring that all procedures related to covid were completed. Another significant feature of the repatriation process was the way in which Navigators, with the help of Justice and Care sought local contacts in countries of origin who would be able to meet the survivor on arrival and ensure their safety and act as a source of support.

#### 6. Learn lessons for UK Government and national police/NGO strategies, as well as prove a model that could be promoted and spread

At the start of the independent evaluation the Victim Navigator model was in place in two police forces. Since 2018, the model has been expanded to other forces across the UK. Navigators have contributed to national learning resources to aid the police response, for example Justice and Care's 'Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking: Identifying a Potential Victim, and Initial Response' and 'Modern Slavery/Human Trafficking/Clandestine Entry' guidelines provided to all police vehicles in Essex and Kent. Moreover, in Surrey the Navigator helped push modern slavery up the police force agenda and it has led to additional staffing with a modern slavery remit. The findings from the interim evaluation have also been shared with the UK Government by way of highlighting best practice.

#### 7. To build the capacity of police and other stakeholders to identify and effectively respond to survivors of modern slavery, and to establish effective referral pathways for survivors including into the Victim Navigator programme, through the provision of bespoke training sessions

To date 2,432 police officers and 2,081 other stakeholders have been trained. This has focused on the topic areas of lack of awareness of modern slavery offences, how to identify victims, and forms of support available to survivors including the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Post-

training surveys were distributed to assess the effectiveness of this. Although uptake of the evaluation surveys was small, more than 95% of respondents said that the training had substantially improved their knowledge of how survivors can be encouraged to engage with their investigation and 83% said that the training had substantially improved their confidence in investigating modern slavery.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The value of having a Navigator embedded in a police force affords benefits to survivors themselves, individual officers, teams tackling modern slavery, and, as the project has evolved, the repercussions of this on survivor retention through to successful prosecution outcomes has been borne out. As a result of this evidence, the independent evaluators are able to recommend that the Victim Navigator model be rolled out on a national scale to police forces across the country. However in order for the success and fidelity of the original model to be continued, there are a number of factors that underpin the successful implementation of the Victim Navigator programme that must be considered. We outline the other key factors below that should be adhered to in any national roll out.

#### The importance of working with but not for the police

The fact that Navigators are distinct and unique from other survivor support roles in the area of MSHT in their link to police seems to be one of the most important features of the Pilot.

"He makes a huge difference, he really does. I am pretty sure without him we wouldn't have victims on board with prosecutions but also they would probably still be where they are [in exploitation]. ... He gives people hope."

(Police, West Yorkshire)

They are associated with police but independent. This is a careful balance that needs to be maintained and adds value in a number of ways. Being able to access police records in a timely fashion, without relying on police resources is a fundamental success principle, as this process decision has an impact on Navigators' early engagement with a case.

**Recommendation: Navigators retain their position as an independent, but integrated, staff member working alongside police with access to relevant systems.**

#### Force Readiness - seeing the value of a Navigator

'Force readiness' refers to the police's willingness to utilise the resource of the Navigator and permit them access to information and intelligence. Partnership between Justice and Care and police forces and other enforcement agencies is central to the implementation of the Victim Navigator

programme. The programme has been successful where relations between police and Navigators are based on mutual respect for each other's professional expertise, understanding each other's roles and responsibilities, regular communication and reciprocal information sharing, and trust that they operate in the best interest of the survivor and of the criminal investigation.

**Recommendation:** Navigators are only placed in forces where the force (at both a strategic and operational level) have an intrinsic understanding of the value of this role and are willing to work together, share information and utilise the resource to afford better outcomes for survivors and police investigations. Justice and Care should assess this 'readiness' before placing a Navigator into a force.

#### Meeting Survivors at the Earliest Opportunity

It is key to ensure wherever possible Navigators meet survivors at the earliest stage as the first 48 hours are likely to be crucial for them to reach out to potential victims of modern slavery and to offer support. There is considerable evidence that survivors are distrustful of the police, and thus Navigators, as independent support workers from a charity, have the possibility of building a bridge with survivors. This view was endorsed by police interviewees. Opportunities for Navigators to attend warrants and operations, and meeting survivors as early as possible, should be encouraged.

**Recommendation:** Police forces should agree to Navigators being able to meet survivors at the earliest opportunity, including attending rescue operations where feasible.

#### The breadth of support from Navigators; Agility and Flexibility- a solution focused approach

Navigators are able to be responsive, flexible

and creative in resolving their support needs, and no issue is too great or too small for them to attend to. They are solution focused and problem solving. Survivors gave examples of occasions where both their practical and emotional needs are covered and considered by Navigators. This is particularly important given the length of time that investigations take and the state of 'limbo' survivors are often left in during this time. To this end, the fact that support from the Navigator is open ended and can follow the survivor wherever they go (even if this is international) is incredibly important for continuity of care.

**Recommendation:** Navigators should be able to make autonomous decisions about how to support survivors, with what needs. On expansion, the ability to move quickly and get sign off on funding for clothes, phones etc should not be lost. Navigators should also retain their ability to work with survivors indefinitely.

#### A caring but tenacious nature

Navigators are passionate and dedicated to their role which contributes to its success. Navigators were described as compassionate and friendly, genuinely caring about their work and the welfare of survivors. Further, Navigators are successful at their roles, in part because they have the confidence and tenacity to challenge decisions (e.g. from police) and keep the survivor at the focus of investigations.

**Recommendation:** So far, Justice and Care have recruited successfully to the Navigator roles, looking not only for skills and competencies but personal qualities that make the role a success. This should be retained in expansion attempts.

#### Support from Justice and Care

A further key success factor for the Navigator role, is the level of support and supervision offered by Justice and Care. The intense nature of the role,

which often requires working unsociable hours, travel across the country and internationally, cannot be ignored. The evaluators have been working on the project since 2018 and the level of staff retention speaks volumes to the infrastructure Justice and Care provides, organisationally, around the Navigators. One Navigator commented that he had never felt so valued before in a role.

**Recommendation:** As the team expands, the infrastructure and governance from Justice and Care should be retained to ensure that staff well-being remains a central tenet of the role.

"[The Navigator] has given me my life and self belief back. Nothing is too much trouble and whenever I have needed her she has been there. No one has ever helped me as much in my life."

(Survivor, Survey Respondent)



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