

Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Modern Slavery](#), HC 1460

Tuesday 6 November 2018

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 6 November 2018.

[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Yvette Cooper (Chair); Stuart C. McDonald; Alex Norris.

Questions 69–143

Witnesses

[I](#): Witness A, victim of modern slavery, Witness B, victim of modern slavery, Witness C, sister of a victim of modern slavery, Witness D, mother of a victim of modern slavery, Witness E, supporting Witness A, and Witness F, supporting Witness B.

Note: This evidence has been redacted by the Committee. “[***]” represents redacted text.

[II](#): Major Kathy Betteridge, Director of Anti-Trafficking and Modern Slavery, The Salvation Army, Lara Bundock, CEO, Snowdrop Project, Garry Smith, Chief Executive, The Medaille Trust, and Stephen Rimmer, Director for Impact and Learning, Barnardo’s

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Barnardo’s](#)
- [Medaille Trust](#)
- [The Salvation Army](#)

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Witness A, victim of modern slavery, Witness B, victim of modern slavery, Witness C, sister of a victim of modern slavery, Witness D, mother of a victim of modern slavery, Witness E, supporting Witness A, and Witness F, supporting Witness B.

Q69 **Chair:** May I welcome all of you? Thank you so much for coming to talk to us. We really appreciate it. As you know, the Home Affairs Committee has started an inquiry into modern slavery; we have only just started it. Stuart and Alex are other members of the Committee; I am Yvette and I chair the Committee. This is Elizabeth, the Clerk to the Committee.

Obviously this is all just in private. There are no cameras or live filming of the evidence session, as there would be normally. What we were proposing was that although we want to record the things that you say, so that we can use them, it will be completely anonymised, so there will be no reference to you, unless there is something that you want to say on the record and that would obviously not be anonymous.

We really just want to hear your stories and your experiences, particularly what you think needs to change—what you think about the support that either you or your family received or didn't receive, or what you think should change about it. But if there is anything that we are asking questions about that you don't want to talk about at all, just say so or just shake your head. We do not want to ask anything that you are not comfortable talking about, so we will be very much guided by you about what you want to tell us. To be honest, we are here to hear from you, not to put our questions.

We wanted to start by hearing any thoughts from you, based on your experiences, about either anything that you thought was particularly helpful in terms of the support you got, or anything that you found was missing or just did not work at all. Witness D, would you like to start?

Witness D: There are lots of things that weren't in place when we found [name]—the help from the police, which was really non-existent. We found him ourselves, [location]. He has now been home [over five years].

He has still not had any compensation from CICA. That went into them in [date]. We had an offer of just over [£15-25,000] for him for those [10-15] years, which, to me, is just an insult for what he has been through. How they can offer that, I don't know; so perhaps CICA have got to look at what their payments are for what a person has been through. As I look at it, [name] has lost the chance of having a wife and some children. How do you cost that out?

He was treated badly. His injuries—there was a [operation] that he had to have. There were just so many things. The way that the police treated us when we found him: they were just, literally, "Take him home." He



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wasn't taken anywhere to be checked over; they never even asked us who we were, really. They never asked for any identification. We could have been anybody. So they were a bit lax in that.

When we got him home, you've got police in and out, in and out—some of them believing his story, some of them not. To try and get any help, I'm having to phone people, I'm having to rant and rave at people, just to get noticed. When you go to your doctor, they look at you as if you're off another planet, because they don't believe you've just said, "My son's been held as a slave for [10-15] years." They just look at you: "You're off this planet, you don't know what you're talking about." They should not be treating somebody like that, after what they've been through; they should have a bit of compassion. I would have thought that they'd have just had him straight to the hospital, checked over to make sure he was okay, but it took us weeks and weeks and weeks. It was months before he had [health condition] operated on and removed. So there have been lots of things.

Even now, there are times when—he's plodding along nicely, but something affects him and he sort of goes backwards to like when we brought him back home. He's got these [***] traits that he's picked up and he sort of just goes to pieces. To try to get somebody to counsel him is really hard. It took me another six months, this year, to get a psychologist to see him—only to be told, "He's only got me till Christmas and then I've got to move on." He couldn't say that [name] would have someone else in his place, so I've got to wait and see what happens up till Christmas—and then, have I got to start fighting again, to get something else for [name]? My life is basically fighting to get something for [name] and it is hard work.

Q70 Chair: After you went to find [name], how long was it from that point to him first getting any counselling or support?

Witness D: It seemed ages. The Salvation Army came to our home for about four visits, but he'd been home for 14 months when someone came. It was 14 months before someone came to see him. [Name] would have to go to see his psychologist in London and [relatives] had to take him down and stay the night with him. To get help, it was like you were asking for the earth. You're saying, "He's been treated badly, he's been held as a slave, he's had no money—I want some help."

The Monday after we got him home, I phoned someone and they said "We can't help you. You've got to phone somebody else." Basically, I'm on all the time, even to get him assessed. We found out, two years after we got him home, that he is autistic and has got mild learning difficulties, and he is vulnerable. It took me 18 months to fight to get somebody to see him. Like I said, my life is fighting for [name]. I look at it: he's [age; 40-50], and I am thinking, "I shouldn't have to be doing this." But I am a mum, just an ordinary mum, and I do it because he's my firstborn, and I've got [number] other children as well.



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Q71 **Chair:** It's amazing what you are doing for him.

Witness D: I take him out, I take him shopping every week. I am always saying, "Are you all right?". He says, "Yes, I'm fine," but that's [name].

Q72 **Chair:** If you imagine what you would have wanted to happen in an ideal world, what sort of support do you think should have happened?

Witness D: From day one, I would have liked him to have been checked over and I would have liked someone to have counselled him, to talk to him. I don't know what's going on up there and he never talks about it. He's got a psychologist coming in and speaking to him and he will talk to them because they are just a neutral person, but we don't know what's gone on. We only know what the police told us went on, but we have never been told. I just wanted him to have as much help as he could. He's struggled enough and he's been put on, he's been hit, all sorts, and you think it's not fair. You don't treat human beings like they've treated him and others like him.

They do need a lot of support when they come home. They have got to acclimatise; they've got to get used to their family. He hadn't seen [number] of his nephews. They were [ages; 5-15 years] when he came home and he had never seen them. It's like a stranger. When he came home, we only had one person at a time to come and see him because we didn't want to overcrowd him.

You need a lot of help and it is hard to get. You will find that Witness C has found it exactly the same with her brother. It is hard to get help for them. That is what I would like: help, someone to go in. He lives on his own, but we see him regularly, so someone to go in and sit with him or help him cook a meal. He lives on the same food every week. I try my hardest to say, "[Name], don't keep eating that, you're going to make yourself ill." But if someone was there, if only for an hour a day, to say, "Look, [name], we're going to cook this tonight for your evening meal and this is what I want you to get when you go shopping with your mum." You can't get this help, you just can't get it. That is what they need: help and support.

We support him. We are quite a big family: he's got [siblings] and he's got nieces and nephews and in-laws and aunties and uncles. We shouldn't really have to be helping him as much as we do. I am [65-75], my husband is [65-75]. We are retired, but we work so much harder now because we are always watching for [name]. We are looking after his finances, anything. I am literally living his life for him and trying to keep him on the straight and narrow and not to get in with people who could, perhaps, take him back where he started.

Q73 **Chair:** When you first found [name], did the police or others talk about modern slavery at that time?

Witness D: No, but it was funny because when [name] was missing, we used to get the odd phone call on a mobile—usually the number was



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withheld—and you could talk to him and you knew somebody was telling him what to say. He had been missing for about 18 months or two years and my husband kept saying “[name], I am confident he is being held against his will.” The times we told the police this and they would say, “Oh no, he has chosen another lifestyle, he doesn’t want to be at home. He has fallen out with his parents.” Every time he spoke to us, you could hear someone. We have had him tell us he is living [location; abroad]—he has never been there—that he was married with a daughter, and it was all what he was being told to tell us. They know what they are doing. They know how to mould them, what to tell them. They told him we were dead so he wouldn’t worry about family. For the last four years of him being missing, we hadn’t heard from him, so we were then presuming that he might be dead. We didn’t know, but I wasn’t going to give up searching for him—and it was lucky I didn’t.

When we got to [location held], my youngest [child], who had taken us down to [location], said, “Mum, just phone the police and ask them to come and help us getting him out”—we’d been told it was, like, Travellers—“and we don’t want any trouble, so just ring the police.” They sent four officers in.

It was all very calm, but it wouldn’t have been if I’d had my way, because my [child] just said, “Mum, just calm down. You don’t know what could happen with these sort of people.” We looked around, and I took photographs of where [child] had been, which the police didn’t do—that was something else they messed up on. When my [child] showed me where [child] had been living and where [child] was expected to wash, you know, you can’t believe that someone would treat a human being like that. It was absolutely disgusting.

But he has pulled through it, and he tries his hardest to block it out. But, like I said, he never talks to us about what he has been through, or what he thinks of them. The only time that he has said what he thinks of them is when the man was given four and a half years. [Name] said, “Why has he only got that when I did [10-15]?” I said, “That’s the way the law is.” They were only charged for the servitude from 2010, was it—before the 2015 one—so they only got sentenced on three years, instead of all the years previous to that. We then found out that his perpetrator was released after 22 months—where’s the justice in that?

Q74 **Chair:** And did they tell you? Were you or [name] told when the perpetrator was released?

Witness D: No. It was only because we had stayed friends with the one police officer who was with [local] police. He had since retired, and he rang us one morning and said, “I have only just found out myself, but he has been released.” He had done 22 months.

Q75 **Chair:** That’s really hard. Thank you.

Witness D: It is hard, but we’ll get through it.



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Q76 **Chair:** I think you have provided amazing support.

Witness D: What can you do? It's your child, isn't it—it doesn't matter how old they are, they are still your child. You can only help them as much as is physically possible.

Q77 **Chair:** Witness C, was your experience of support similar, or lack of?

Witness C: It is very different from Witness D's. I have to say that I hold the [local] police in absolute awe. Just to give everyone the background, they were tipped off by a priest in [location] who was harbouring some of the victims from beatings. I have to say, the police went in there and left absolutely no stone unturned. My brother was the [20-30]-year slave of the [name] family, who were successfully prosecuted [date]. So my experience with the actual police and that kind of thing was very positive, I have to say. To get that conviction—the trial and the different aspects of the court case were a year—just proves what a fantastic job they really have done. So a very different experience there.

The aftercare has been pretty hard. The same as with Witness D, it is just fighting for everything. I was particularly alarmed to go for jobseeker's—that's what it is called, forgive me—with my brother to get him registered near his family, and I was absolutely appalled to see that someone had actually written his CV on a computer, with all his trafficked sites, offering referees.

Q78 **Chair:** Seriously?

Witness C: Yes. So I went in there with a nicely written letter and handed it to the lady. She read it, and it was very much, "Computer says no. There's nothing I can do about that." I said, "There is, because actually if you were to get him an interview and someone sent for a reference, you have just completely blown where he lives." He was a witness in a major trial and, unfortunately—let's be honest—these people, these perpetrators, are particularly nasty pieces of work. The police had concerns that there would be repercussions for the evidence giving. That was quite scary. Somebody had actually sat there and typed that for him. It was only when he did not have a copy, and I said I would retype it for him, that I saw it and thought, "What?".

Q79 **Chair:** So what did they do? Did they remove the references?

Witness C: In the end, I had to get the police involved, because they really were not listening to me. The police actually contacted them and basically said, "There's no way you can have this CV." I sent the CV to the police and as a consequence they actually found another trafficking site, so some good came out of it. That was quite bad.

I then had problems housing him. I went to the local authority to try to get him on the housing list and get housing benefit. He was living with me. I was told that he could not be housed in [location] because he had not been a resident there for three or more years. I know that is a local



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policy, but obviously under the terms of the Modern Slavery Act he really did have a right to be resettled there.

I then said, "Is there any chance that I can claim a little bit of rent for him, because he is not working and I think it's going to be a long haul?". They said, "Well, we'll consider it, but we want to come and inspect your house for council tax purposes." I had a spare bedroom, so they wanted to come and reassess my house. As it turned out, we had had a small extension since our last council tax review, so I really did not want that. Once [name] had moved out, I was going to be poorer. I thought that was an appalling attitude, when it was only a few quid for his electric, washing and food. I thought that was actually quite unsympathetic.

There has been a lack of understanding from professionals. A learning disabilities job champion rang me up and said, "I'm really having trouble engaging your brother in voluntary work." I said, "Well, [name], think about it like this. What you are asking him to do is go and work for nothing. He has done that for [20-30] years. You are not going to get him to do something for nothing." He said, "Oh, I hadn't thought of it like that," and I thought, "But why haven't you?". There is no individuality. If you have a learning disability, they seem to be reading from a book rather than assessing you as a whole. That has been quite detrimental to [name].

He was made alcoholic by the perpetrators, and he still has alcohol issues. That said, he did a fantastic gardening job for my next-door neighbour, who then took him home on his [motorcycle]—the look on his face will stay with me forever. He is very capable of work, and he did not drink alcohol that day, which is interesting. It is about somebody giving him a chance, even if it is just on minimum wage, but those opportunities seem to be very scarce.

What else can I tell you? There are all sorts of problems with trying to navigate the system. I was told by CICA that it could not accept his compensation claim because I did not have power of attorney. I thought, "Well, my brother hasn't grown up with technology. He's been imprisoned for [20-30] years of his life, since before mobile phones were even in circulation." I found that a bit harsh. I do not see the problem with assisting somebody to do an online application.

The CICA form is not fit for purpose, as you are probably aware. There isn't really any room on it to mark the type of victim someone is. If they have a physical injury, it is very obvious, but with a psychological injury it is not. Again—bless them—the [location] police actually filled out the CICA forms for all [number] victims. That was probably above and beyond the call of duty, but obviously the other victims had stumbling blocks too and did not have family to help.

Just on a last note, as you probably know my brother had convictions that weren't overturned. Initially, in fact, we didn't know he had them, and I have still got to investigate two more that have come to light. As a



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consequence, [location] police can ensure that for any further victims, any historic crimes are noted, because they are very specific, such as stealing. One of them was actually an animal cruelty case, where my brother was asked to [***]. He refused, bless him; he took it to the vet and he actually got imprisoned for [time; 0-6 months].

That is really important as well, because if he'd had better opportunities and didn't have the alcohol and the learning disability issues, trying to get work would be difficult having those convictions, and I think that is an important point as well. They are very often made to commit crimes, probably because these people have done a lot themselves and they don't want to go to prison.

Chair: Yes. Thank you for talking about that.

Witness C: It's been tough.

Q80 **Chair:** Incredibly tough, but the support that you have given your brother is so important.

Witness C: It's the least I can do after what he's been through. But the shock of finding him—I don't know if you know the story, but I was actually rung at work, completely randomly, to ask me whether my brother had ever been registered as a patient at my surgery.

Chair: Gosh!

Witness C: When they gave the name and date of birth, to say that I nearly collapsed on the floor is an understatement. I said, "Actually, I'm his sister," not knowing—

Chair: That was without knowing—

Witness C: It was just random. They were just ringing all the GP surgeries in the area.

Q81 **Chair:** Oh my goodness. It must have been an incredible shock.

Witness C: Horrendous shock. I think the police officer was more shocked than I was, but—[Laughter.] You couldn't write that, could you? I think that was definitely meant to be.

Q82 **Chair:** I'm glad the police have been so responsive—

Witness C: They have been so wonderful.

Q83 **Chair:** Witness B, can I ask you about your experience of the support that you had? What was helpful for you and what wasn't helpful?

Witness B: My employer brought me here from [country; abroad] in [year]. I ran away after 12 weeks. I came here with a private household visa. But when I came here, my salary was—there was two months when they didn't pay me. I was not properly fed; if they had no leftover food, I had nothing to eat for the following day.



And then I was physically hit—[...]

Q84 **Chair:** Take any time that you want to. There is no need to tell us anything that is distressing at all. We are in your hands—so, whatever you want to tell us, or not tell us.

Witness B: Then I ran away, because I was so scared for my life, because they threatened me already. I was so scared to go back with them to [country; abroad], so I ran away and I tried to seek help. Then I met the [charity organisation] and from there, they started to help me. They referred me to [charity organisation] and they started to process my papers.

I received a positive reasonable grounds and I was under the national referral mechanism. But I did not have the right to work. So, as a mother— I have [number] children. I'm a single mum. [***]. I am the breadwinner of the family. Working overseas is our family's bread and butter. I was supporting a [sibling] [***]. So all my family is really depending on me.

Being in the system is really quite hard. It is not much different from working with abusive employers. I am free to go out. I don't need to fear that the police or immigration will chase me or deport me because I am in the NRM. But what will my life be? If I can only have the support coming from the Hestia award of £35 a week, that's only £5 a day. How can I budget with £5 a day—for my transport, for my food, thinking of my [number] children back home and the [***] with £35 a week? If I gave you £5 and told you, "Budget it for yourself," can you budget it for yourself?

I don't think the NRM is really applicable for domestic workers because we are workers; we are fit to work. We came here with a private household visa and then all of a sudden, we are in the system. We seek help and at least we feel that our struggle will be finished. We are still in this situation that we really struggle a lot. It is not me; it is not helpful for domestic workers.

There is not much support, like psychologists. It's hard. For most of us, there are no psychologists. We can't go to a GP, even if we are registered with Doctors of the World. We go to a GP, we present the letter from Doctors of the World and they will not register us. It is not enough. They will ask for this paper and that paper. How can we get those documents to present to them?

Q85 **Chair:** Where are you living? How are you managing at the moment?

Witness B: With the help of the [charity organisation], with Witness F. If not with this community, even if I am in the system, I might get suicidal since they started on my papers. Sometimes I was just thinking "Why did I sort out my papers? Why can I not just work?"

Q86 **Chair:** What have they told you at the moment in the NRM? What are



you waiting for and what stage are you at?

Witness B: I am waiting for the conclusive grounds. It has been two years. I am in the system for two years without the right to work. If they give me negative decision, they will send me back home. What will happen to me? I did not have a right to work. I did not even save for my children. If they give me positive conclusive grounds, do you think within two years I could be stable? Do you think? Within two years?

I was just saying, I don't think NRM is really for us domestic workers. We are workers; we can work. This is what I want: just for us to be allowed to work, just like any other workers.

Q87 **Chair:** I am so sorry that you are in this situation. Have they given you any clue as to how long it might take?

Witness B: Last time, when I spoke with the modern slavery unit in the Home Office, I asked them. According to their letters, it's only a minimum of 45 days. I have already been in the system for more than a year. Until when will I wait? I can't tell my children "Stop schooling first. Let's wait for the final decision. Don't eat first."

Be in my situation. That is why I am always challenging everyone. Be in my shoes, so that you can feel and you can see how I struggle.

Q88 **Chair:** How old did you say your children are?

Witness B: My children are [ages]. I left [country; abroad] [number] years ago.

Q89 **Chair:** Are they studying in school?

Witness B: They are studying, but it is so hard for me because I am sending the money I get from Hestia to my children—£35 a week—and I depend on the help of this community and the help of other friends. I have been in that situation for two years.

There was a time when Hestia stopped my allowance for almost a year, when they found out that I stayed with Witness F in [location]. Hestia called me up and said, "Sorry, but we need to stop your support," and right from that moment they stopped it. I did not get anything for almost a year. It was just earlier this year that Hestia called me again to bring back my support.¹

Q90 **Chair:** What reason did they give for taking your support away?

Witness B: They said that they were only supporting victims inside London, and by that time I was staying with Witness F in [location], because I had no place where I could stay. When they found out, right at that moment they stopped it. They only returned it when I came back to London and asked my friend in [location] if I could stay there. The only

¹ **Please note:** Hestia's formal response ([MSA0141](#))



time they gave it back to me was when Witness F sorted it out with the Salvation Army.

But I cannot live just with the help of community and the help of friends, because the reason I went overseas was to work, earn and support my family, not to be a dependant of any kind or to accept any support from any country or from any friends.

Q91 **Chair:** Witness F, is there anything you want to add?

Witness F: Witness B is one of many domestic workers who came here and had their passport taken by their employer, so when they escaped they had nothing. When we found Witness B, her visa had run out already, so she is one of those who—*[Interruption.]*

Chair: We can ignore the bell—let's just wait for it to stop ringing. Sorry, it is a bit of an occupational hazard here. It goes at random times, and often we have to run off suddenly and vote, but today we don't have to.

Witness F: Witness B is one of those whose visa had already run out before she went into the system, so that stopped her right to work on an overseas domestic worker visa. It makes it harder, because of the very long process—two years is really a very long process, and she could not do anything about that. Of course, if you have family back home to support, it makes it harder.

Let me begin with day one from when we rescue them. I don't know how they found me—maybe through word of mouth. Basically, they would call us, call me, and then explain the situation in their household. Then I explain what will be the situation after six months: they are going to lose their right to work and their right to remain. If they pass the national referral mechanism, they could keep that right, but they need to apply before their visa expires. It could be a little bit better compared with their previous experience.

From day one, we shelter them, we provide whatever they need—food, clothes, travel allowance to wherever they go—we refer them to NRM, and we help them to find a job, if they can find one. My experience of providing them with interviews is that most employers will not really accept their six-month visa, because as a domestic worker, they need a long-term relationship, because it is a family—they work for families with children, who need nannies able to provide long service. The six-month visa is a turn-off for employers.

Yes, they could find another employer, but of course that might be an abusive one—abusive in that such employers know that they can abuse them. Also, there is little salary, and they know that they shouldn't be paying tax and NI.

But for those who pass the national referral mechanism, with a right to work—they can show that they come with a right to work—employers mostly say, "What is this? We want a proper visa." It is a problem. The



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agency usually won't accept them because of that. I try to talk to agencies, just because I see so much abuse of domestic workers because of this direct referral. If people go through an agency, they are more protected, so I try to talk to agencies: "Look, this is the situation now. They clearly have this right to work. Will you accept them?"

It doesn't help that people are not really protected. An agency could prepare a contract that says that their national insurance and tax needs to be paid, with their salary set, and their annual leave and days off in the contract. [charity organisation] has also provided a contract, asking people to take it with them when they go to interview. But again, it is a slave-and-master relationship that is always visible for domestic workers.

What is really worrying to me, is that those who apply under the national referral mechanism and get "reasonable grounds" stop and do not continue their case. They reported, and I asked them why—"You are there already. If you stop it, then your life is stopped, because your visa and leave to remain are in that." But I think they find it really hard to go for all these interviews—so many interviews. Most employers, especially abusive ones, won't allow them to go. If they also have a caseworker who does not really understand their situation, that is added pressure.

I have also received complaints about Hestia, which tells people—threatens them—that if they fail to go to an appointment, they might be reported to the police. That is not really helpful.

Q92 **Chair:** Really? They report it to the police.

Witness F: Yes—reported to the police as missing persons if they fail to go, or they have already refused to go. That is not right. Yes, there may be those rules, but Hestia know that people are not missing because they are talking to them. They just maybe couldn't attend, or refused to continue. They need to find out.

Chair: Where was that message coming from?

Witness F: It is coming from our members.

Q93 **Chair:** Sorry, who is it that was saying they have to go to the police?

Witness F: The caseworker from Hestia. They say it is the rule of Hestia, and I say, "But you know they are not missing?". They know.²

Q94 **Chair:** Witness B, in your case, you haven't tried to get alternative work yet, have you?

Witness F: She is not allowed yet.

Q95 **Chair:** Had you thought of going back to [country]? Had you thought of other things?

² **Please note:** Hestia's formal response ([MSA0141](#))



Witness B: If I go back to [country] I will apply for overseas work again and my experience might happen to me again. Our country is a poor country. In our country, we have age discrimination. You can only get a good job if you are newly graduated and until you are 27 or 28. If your age is 30, 40, you'd better find it in other countries, you'd better go abroad. There is no job for you. That is our situation.

Q96 **Chair:** Thank you so much for telling us your experiences. I am so sorry you are in this difficult situation. Is there no provision to get any other financial support in any way?

Witness F: No. Basically, even our shelter [***]. Sometimes it is full and when we struggle, the organisation struggles.

Witness B: We are only depending on the contribution of the members—the help from their own pocket.

Q97 **Chair:** I'm so sorry about what you are facing.

Witness C: Yvette, can I say something to Witness B? Did you say you couldn't get a GP?

Witness B: Yes, even if you are registered in Doctors of the World, yes. It is really hard to go to the GP. Doctors of the World will tell us, "Go here to this GP and register there," but there are situations. Most of us can't just go and register in a GP. Their GP refused them to be registered, even if they have the letter from—

Witness C: They are not allowed to refuse you. Even if they know you are an illegal asylum seeker, they are not allowed to refuse you GP services.

Witness F: I sent two of them yesterday to register, but because they don't have the passport, they didn't recognise them.

Witness C: They cannot refuse.

Witness F: That is a major problem, but another problem in the NRM when they are there is the shortage of solicitors. They need a solicitor and it takes time to have a solicitor. Also, because there are those who have the right to work and they are earning some money and they need to declare that, they need to make sure they don't really have money for legal aid. That's the fact. Of course, their salary is for their family, so they couldn't really afford to pay a solicitor. There are so many problems that many of them are not able to get a solicitor. It takes time, it's been very long. I am trying my best to find some other way out.

The need for therapy and psychologists is a very big problem. We are trying to apply for funding, but up to now, we haven't really found it. There is only Helen Bamber. I was able to refer Witness B and another one to Helen Bamber, but there are so many of them and there is only Helen Bamber, and they couldn't take them all. There is so much



shortage of that and they do need it. They are traumatised. They need counselling, therapy.

- Q98 **Chair:** If you will let us, you can give us the details of anyone who has not been able to register with a GP and we will pursue that directly, just to see if we can make sure that—actually, the GP registration can be done through the Home Office and directly as well. If you give the details to Simon of anybody who has had that difficulty, and we will also pursue directly the issue of the financial support. I am so sorry you are in this situation.

Witness A, is there anything you want to tell us either about the support you had or didn't have, or what helped and what didn't help?

Witness A: For me, there were big gaps in the aftercare. The Salvation Army and the 45 days was helpful, but it wasn't enough. After the experiences, the aftercare for medical stuff wasn't helpful. We were only helped informally.

- Q99 **Chair:** In an ideal world, what kind of support would you have had? What did you feel you needed in terms of support that you didn't get?

Witness A: Prior to going into the NRM, there were a lot of missed opportunities. Before the Salvation Army, there were a lot of opportunities for various agencies to identify the trafficking and they hadn't identified it from a young age. It was only when I got to the Salvation Army that they identified it as trafficking. Once I left the Salvation Army, I was to have surgery for some of the injuries from the experiences, and in the hospital, with the doctors and the care received, there was nothing tailored for survivors.

Even though the injuries were as a result of human trafficking, the way it was done was quite re-traumatising and there wasn't any emotional support for any of those things. The only thing I could do was contact the Salvation Army back and say that even though I was out of their system, could they help me. There were no services; it was only because they had stepped up to do that. There were no services you could contact, or if people haven't got the support of their families, someone to advocate on your behalf.

- Q100 **Chair:** Did the Salvation Army then provide follow-on support after that?

Witness A: Yes. It was through emailing Witness E and saying, "This is the situation that I am in. I was in hospital for six months after the surgery and this is what the doctors are saying." When you are in that situation, you are having to repeat to each different doctor why you are there and the symptoms, or when you see your notes, the language used could oppress you further. It was, "Injury as a result of being a sex worker," but you are saying, "I wasn't". Also, because of the fact that I was British, they would often say, "So where were you trafficked?". So straight away you would think that they are not understanding. Also, with things like counselling, yes there is counselling, but it is six sessions.



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Your first question is, "How can those six or 12 sessions undo [5-15 years] of being trafficked?". There is not anything tailored specifically for survivors of modern slavery and if there is, it is ridiculously expensive and isn't realistic.

Q101 Chair: Are there organisations or agencies that could have either spotted things earlier or could have done things earlier? Is it a lack of training or understanding? Are you thinking of the police, schools—what sort of organisations?

Witness A: In my case specifically, it was children's services and the police and also trips to A&E. There were obvious signs: for example, waiting in triage, being under the age of 18, with older men. There were people who were already on the sex offenders register. [***], there were injuries to the face, to the body. It wasn't until an off-duty police officer had found me doused in petrol that they said, "Okay, something's wrong."

On one occasion the police found me naked and said, "Are you a prostitute? Get in the back of the van. Here's a jacket and we'll drop you back,"—back to the hands of the perpetrators. I was put in domestic violence refuges and then told that I did not fit the criteria because there was more than one perpetrator. I had given up thinking that there was any—I didn't understand. I wasn't fitting any criteria. As soon as I reached 18, it was no longer CSE or trafficking. There's notes that clearly stated, "This person's been trafficked," but nothing was done. When I turned 18, I was told by the police that it was a lifestyle choice because I had access to a mobile phone.

Each time you'd go in and get different surgery for your face, and because I wasn't given a statement you're then labelled as not wanting to engage with the police. It wasn't until I'd called the Salvation Army—I just thought that they played instruments—and after I'd explained and they got the referral and I was taken to the safehouse that they said, "Yes, this is tailored for this person." My only complaint was that 45 days was not enough. It's been [number] years and even now support is still needed for ongoing medical stuff.

If I hadn't had the informal relationships—they can't do that for every person. I would say I was one of the lucky ones, because I can still say, "I have had disappointment and this is what the doctor's saying. Can you help? Can you advise me on what this means and some of the procedures?". If I hadn't had that in the six-month stay in hospital,[***]—people would say, "Why do victims end up back in the hands of the traffickers?"—I would probably be either dead or back in trafficking.

Q102 Chair: You have shown incredible bravery and strength in coming through this. What sort of support are you getting now?



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Witness A: Again, there isn't an organisation that is supporting. I was desperate to work, I didn't have references, and again it was through the Salvation Army, who said that I could go into their offices and do some admin work so that I could just get a reference, rather than going for a job interview and saying, "Actually, I haven't got a reference." "Why haven't you got a reference?" Because the only references would have been from my traffickers. I know that isn't for everyone, and that was done through the relationships that had been built on. That was an informal thing. If it hadn't been for that, I wouldn't have been able to find work. There isn't support now, but again, with the medical stuff and with counselling, it is through the Salvation Army.

Q103 **Chair:** If you had one thing—the top thing—that you would change in order to be able to help other people or more people, what would it be?

Witness A: There's a focus on statistics. What you often read about modern slavery is the hype and it's all about statistics and how many people they've rescued. When you're rescued, that is only the start of the journey to freedom. I didn't know I was being trafficked. I didn't know that trafficking happened here, and even up to this day people are saying, "Which country were you trafficked from? How can you be a British citizen and be trafficked?". The only organisation that I felt understood that was the Salvation Army. I would say to focus more on the aftercare and knowing that that is the start for that survivor, once they are identified, rather than to focus on ticking boxes.

Q104 **Alex Norris:** Witness C, I just wondered whether your brother went through the national referral mechanism.

Witness C: Yes, he did. I can't tell you much of his journey through that, but I echo what Witness A said: the Salvation Army has been exceptional. They clothed him. He had nothing. They have been a marvellous organisation and they certainly offered my mum and me some counselling sessions, which were probably worth quite a lot of money in real terms. We were really grateful for that. That being said, having the counselling at the beginning was probably a bit soon, but that was our choice. They are a very good organisation. I certainly think they lead the way so far and if it hadn't been for them, my brother would be quite stuck.

Q105 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Did [name] go through the national referral mechanism?

Witness D: No.

Q106 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Did anyone sit you down and discuss your options and what the pros and cons were?

Witness D: It was a bit manic when we got him home. We had found him in [location] and brought him back home to [location]. Then you had the [local] police coming in and we never had anything like that—nothing was offered to us at all.



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Q107 **Stuart C. McDonald:** It seems the police didn't really treat this as an incident of trafficking.

Witness D: I think it caught them off guard. They were not aware that slavery goes on and I know [name] case got a big story down in [location] and there were a lot more cases following [name] through. When it came to trial, we were told, "We want a conviction because there are others coming and if we can get your conviction, we will then get them." We had pressure put on us: we were asked would we accept his plea of guilty if [***] was let off. I didn't want that but, as head of the family, it was my husband's decision and he said, "If it is going to get a conviction and it is going to help you, we will do that." I must admit I didn't want that to happen. I wanted it to go to a jury and I wanted to see them both sent down.

Q108 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Witness F, can I clarify a couple of things with you? When Witness B managed to find you, you said her visa had already expired. Is that right?

Witness F: It expired, yes.

Q109 **Stuart C. McDonald:** If the visa hadn't expired already, is it the case that they only have the remainder of that six-month visa to find work, or is there an option to apply for some sort of extension as an overseas domestic worker?

Witness F: No, there is only a right to change employer within six months. They are not allowed to renew the visa. It is really tight; meeting it is really hard. If they are allowed to renew the visa, that will make it better. The right to renew the visa is much needed. It is really difficult. When they hear that we do not have the passport, [charity organisation] will help them get the record from the Home Office—a copy of the visa. It takes time. By the time they receive it, the visa has already expired. Most of them have no passport—only a few of them, you can count only one. In these three months of July, August and September, we rescued 78 of them. It is really hard when you have 78 and only two of them can access psychologists, therapists and counselling. Also, quite a few of them have no legal representative. There is a shortage of solicitors.

Can I also ask a question? There is also a massive problem about those who didn't pass the national referral mechanism. They are there and we just don't know what to do with them. The problems just keep accumulating and they are there. What are we going to do with them? That is my question. Maybe you need to look at that as well.

I was contacted by the police in [location]. They called me and asked about this domestic worker who had been reported. She's not receiving her salary. She asked what help and support we could give, so I said, "This is what we are doing. When we have them, we shelter them. We provide their basic needs to survive and try to help them find a job. Whether or not they pass the national referral mechanism is another



question.” They said, “That’s why I don’t really advise anyone to leave their employer, because the NRM doesn’t guarantee that they’re going to pass.” Sometimes people ask me the question, “Do we need to be raped, beaten or starved to death to access protection?”. To me, that is the NRM. What about those who are not receiving a salary? There are so many of them. Is that not called abuse? We are in this country and they are given terms and conditions and told that all employment rights apply to them, only to be in this situation.

The right to renew is very important. That will give them time to find new employment. They could find better employment and a respectful employer if they have that ability to renew their visa. But at the moment many of them fall out of the system. They are there and we don’t know the solution to that problem, because we are stuck in this situation to do with the tied visa system.

I also don’t know what’s going to happen to those who stop the NRM. I see the importance of community, the comfort of love, the value of caring, because that’s what we are—we provide love and care to families, children and the elderly. Also, in terms of how the caseworkers train, it is about at least having some heart. It is not just about all these policies and saying, “This is what we need to follow.”

Q110 **Chair:** Is there anything any of you want to raise with us before we finish?

Witness D: I don’t mind helping as much as I can. I try to make people where I live aware of slavery and trafficking. I try my best and I’ve got a [***] for it as well. I try my best and I just hope the Government is going to get on to these perpetrators and do something with them, because they do not deserve to live on this earth, the way they treat people.

Witness C: The depressing thing for me is that my brother’s been rescued for [number] years now and the chances of his compensation coming through in the next few years are quite slim. To be absolutely brutal with you, I think he will be dead before he gets it, because his health is quite poor. I find that quite depressing.

Q111 **Chair:** Have they given you any sense of a timetable?

Witness C: He said it could be years. It’s partially going through CICA and partially we are waiting for a proceeds of crime hearing, which has been delayed by one year already. I find that depressing, because although I buy things for my brother, and the family as a whole buy him clothes and things, I can’t afford to give him a nice home or treat him to a nice holiday. I’d love to be able to, but I can’t. It’s just the little things in life, like his own TV. He’s got that actually, but it’s about the small things in life that he deserves. I find that quite depressing.

Witness D: Like I say, our compensation has been going on. It went to the solicitors in [date] and it’s nearly [number] years on. To be given an



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offer of [£15-25,000] is just beyond me. They really need to have a look at it. Modern slavery has got to be high up there with the injuries. They have had mental trauma. That is an absolute insult. To take £50 off it as a deduction for a medical—really?

Q112 **Chair:** Witness B or Witness A, are there any final points you want to add?

Witness A: We really hope the Government take aftercare seriously and that services such as the Salvation Army can expand in terms of the aftercare. Even though it might have been four, five or six years after that person has been identified, there is not a time period for the repercussions of what they have gone through.

Q113 **Chair:** You never know when it's going to come up and you need help and support.

Witness B: For me, once a domestic worker enters the NRM, it is quite strange for me because our perpetrators, the employers who brought us here, can still go back and forth from the country. They are not banned. I see that the Government are still tolerating them although they already have the record that I worked for that employer. They are in the system, but there is no investigation.

Witness F: I find that with stop and search, quite a few of them never know that they have a form of visa and what situation they are in actually if they are arrested. Is there any investigation with other victims of modern slavery and trafficking who are not immediately deported? We do receive some women being arrested and deported, especially these last few weeks.

Chair: The reason we are immensely grateful for your time and for talking to us, and are hugely respectful of the strength you have shown through your experiences as well, is partly because we wanted to hear from you at the beginning of the inquiry. This was in order to have the questions and challenges that we can put to all of the agencies—to the Government, to the police, to the NHS—and all the bits of the system that we need to work properly and effectively to support you through the most unimaginable experiences and to make sure the system is working, rather than just having, as you said Witness A, too many gaps for people to fall through with such serious consequences.

Thank you and please keep in touch with us. If something suddenly occurs to you that you think you should have told us and which you want to send to us as well, by all means, please do. Thank you.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Major Kathy Betteridge, Lara Bundock, Garry Smith and Stephen Rimmer.



Q114 **Chair:** Can I welcome everybody to our evidence session for the Home Affairs Select Committee's inquiry into modern slavery? We are very grateful to the panel for your time this afternoon.

Could I ask each of you to introduce yourselves and tell us briefly the work you or your organisation does on tackling modern slavery? Major Betteridge?

Major Betteridge: I am Major Kathy Betteridge, the Director for Anti-Trafficking and Modern Slavery from the Salvation Army. We are the prime contractor for the Government. I have been in this role since July; before that, I was in Scotland where I worked on the trafficking agenda as well.

Lara Bundock: I am Lara Bundock, the CEO and founder of the Snowdrop Project. We are a charity based in South Yorkshire. We provide long-term support to adult survivors of trafficking. We provide support in the NRM that is therapeutic, and then we provide support outside the NRM that is case work advocacy and therapeutic support.

Stephen Rimmer: I am Stephen Rimmer, the Director of Impact and Learning at Barnardo's. Within that, I am responsible for the National Counter Trafficking Service that we run, and that includes the provision of independent child trafficking advocates. I am also responsible for our three strategic priority areas, which are relevant in the wider context of the Committee, around child sexual abuse and exploitation, children in and leaving care, and mental health and wellbeing.

Garry Smith: Hello. I am Garry Smith, the CEO of the Medaille Trust. The trust is a charity that was formed in 2006. We operate nine safe houses across England for victims of modern slavery, 110 beds under contract and six other beds that are available for pre-NRM use. We do awareness raising around various communities, primarily within the Catholic Church but also outside, and we co-operate with law enforcement authorities, producing a monthly intelligence summary, holding an annual law enforcement conference, and supporting the police when they are doing planned raids.

Q115 **Chair:** Thank you very much. As an opening question, what do you think is working best in the current system and what do you think is working worst?

Major Betteridge: What is working well: we are working very well in partnership. Within the contract there are 12 subcontractors and we are working well with the subcontractors, so the provision of service is good in that respect. Some of the issues or challenges that we are facing are around the length of time it is taking for decisions to be made within the system—the conclusive grounds decision. That is proving difficult and causing more anxiety for a victim who is in the service.



We are also finding that there is greater awareness, so that is a really positive experience. With the Modern Slavery Act, there is definitely a better understanding of the issues of trafficking and modern slavery. On the other side of that, we are finding sometimes there is also a lack of understanding and a lack of clear identification of a victim. That is sometimes within some of the public sector, so the local authorities are doing very well but there may be a lack of understanding of where the modern slavery agenda sits within a local authority area. Therefore, as a first responder, there is perhaps not the information there for them.

We work very well with the police. We have a number of key contacts and we find that they inform us if there is a raid that is going to take place, so we have good connections there, but again, there are some police forces where there may not be such a good understanding of how to identify a victim. Also, there are areas of difficulty around standardising the training for first responders. Although there is a number of first responders who can give that support and start to help a victim enter the service, there are key services—the NHS being one—where frontline people who come into contact with a victim, whether in A&E or in a doctor's practice or surgery, are not able to refer a victim into the service. What happens is they contact us and we do that for them, but it is another hurdle that a victim could do without.

Lara Bundock: I agree with one of the first points that Kathy made. I will do positives first.

In terms of positives, talking about the support side of things, a few years ago the DWP did a review and, in terms of providing support, one of the positive things we found is that the DWP did seem to take that seriously. It allocated points of contact within regions and the DWP, and that certainly changed the ability of our support workers to be able to talk to somebody directly in the DWP on behalf of survivors, so navigating the system within the DWP has certainly improved. I think that is a real positive in terms of taking a review and then moving forward.

One of the other things that I think is a real positive is seeing the movement of the Trafficking Survivor Care Standards. Moving forwards, one of the difficulties in the sector at the moment is it is a bit of a postcode lottery. There are varying standards of support throughout, both inside and outside the NRM, and I think having some kind of standardisation from the Trafficking Survivor Care Standards is a real positive.

The Modern Slavery Helpline was a massive step forward. When we are doing training and providing that kind of insight, a lot of questions are around, "What if I have concerns and I need to talk to somebody?" So that is a real positive in providing a direct place that people can phone and call in.

In terms of the long-term side, programmes such as Bright Futures, which are being put into place by organisations such as the Co-Op and



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which bring together corporate organisations to start thinking about their responsibility, are really positive. However, some of those things are hindered because for us one of the major difficulties is the fact that a positive conclusive grounds decision does not really hold weight. Also, as Kathy was saying, the decisions take too long to make.

We support people therapeutically who are in the NRM, and some of the people we have been supporting have been waiting for three years for an NRM decision. For a person who has been through a trafficking experience, where control has been taken away from their life, and where they have been promised something over and over again and that has not come through, and then to come out of that situation and have that repeated, where you are told a decision is going to be made about this and you wait six months, eight months, a year, two years, three years—at that point, when do we expect them to start trusting us?

The problem with not having a conclusive grounds decision and then it not really holding weight, there are two elements to that that I would suggest need addressing. One is that a positive conclusive grounds decision does not entitle somebody to any more support. Currently we are putting funding into supporting potential victims in the identification period, but we are not putting support into recovery. The two parts of that are the difficulties with immigration and with providing support.

In my mind, the ideal would be to have the conclusive grounds mean that a person could have at least 12 months of support afterwards to recover, and it would be 12 months discretionary leave. One or other of those two things potentially could be passed and it would be a step in the right direction, but if we are really looking at how to reduce the chance of further harm or re-trafficking, both of those need to be passed through. I know Lord McColl's Bill is currently pushing that forward.

Let me give a couple of examples. If we were to pass discretionary leave without the support attached to it, we have two examples of that happening. There were two girls that we ended up supporting later on. They were 18 at the time; they both stood on the stand against their traffickers and, brilliantly, the traffickers went down with high sentences. The girls then got put in front of the media and they had no support following. They had discretionary leave, but no support. It was about a year later that they happened to find us and we then started to put in support.

In that year's period of time they had not been able to obtain housing. As a result of that, they had ended up in abusive and exploitative relationships and had both become pregnant. We then had to get involved and remove them from that situation as much as possible and put in support. That is now possible and they have come out and they have received compensation, which is really positive.

In another instance, a gentleman went on the stand against his traffickers. It took two and a half years to get to the point where he could



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take the stand against his traffickers following a conclusive grounds decision. During that period of time, he said to us, "If I wasn't being supported right now, I wouldn't think about going and giving evidence against my traffickers." As a result of that, the traffickers got 43 years in total. His evidence was key to getting those convictions. If he had just been given discretionary leave and not support, that evidence would not have been given.

On the flip side—if we were to just give 12 months' support and not give discretionary leave—one of the people that we support, a British girl, has given us a long statement that is on our website, and one of the things she says is, "If you are not going to give us long-term support, you may as well not have rescued us at all."

The things that we see at that point, if discretionary leave is at the discretion of somebody to give, we have had two people who were trafficked together; they came from a very small country. They were brought over, trafficked into this country at the same time in the same place, and they both received a positive conclusive grounds decision. One received discretionary leave almost immediately and the other one did not—we don't know why. She then had to appeal and it got to the upper tier tribunal.

The person who had received almost automatic discretionary leave was able to get housing and was able to move on and start doing education. Her stability increased very quickly and her mental health improved very quickly. The other person became suicidal and had difficulties moving on with her life. Everything started to fall apart and she was living on a very small amount.

For me, we are seeing huge disparity in what happens after a conclusive grounds decision because there is no co-ordination of what is going on afterwards. For somebody who is being given that letter that says, "Yes, we believe you," there is not anything following that that would then mean some kind of stable and realistic recovery.

Stephen Rimmer: In terms of what works well, I agree with a lot of what has already been said. From a Barnardo's perspective, around children and young people suffering harm around trafficking and at risk of trafficking, we would say pretty unequivocally that the model in statutory and operational terms is proving its worth. It has obviously been subject to an independent evaluation and there will be further assessments from Bedfordshire University.

We are proud that, notwithstanding all the challenges around process and different agencies and so on, we have been able to demonstrate a model that puts the relationship of the advocate with the child and young person at risk of trafficking at the heart of taking significant steps to reduce those risks. This is going to be subject to further evaluation, but we estimate at least in 60% of the cases that we deal with, there has been a positive impact of some sort under the current review.



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We do not have a neat data formula to it, but we have had 425 live cases to address since the full model got underway in Wales, Greater Manchester and Hampshire in January 2017, we would say that a positive impact has been seen in at least 60% of cases—at least 200 highly vulnerable children and young people. We believe that this model, led by our fantastic advocates but obviously contingent on support from a whole range of agencies and the Home Office in driving the relationship forward, is a really sound model and we are proud of what has been achieved.

In terms of what is not working, I would strongly reinforce what Lara was saying about the absence of any seriously joined-up process that builds in risks around trafficking at the heart of the safeguarding machinery in this country. It is still a separate, add-on element.

We are quite stunned, when we train multi-agency professionals around what we are doing in those areas—and these are people who at least have some interest to come to the training from different agencies, not just social services and the police but others as well—probably in most cases, because we ask them each time, only about 20% of those professionals have even heard of the NRM. That is a self-selecting cohort that is engaging with the issues but even at that level there is lack of awareness. I think we would all recognise that the NRM is the foundation for getting a consistent approach and a properly understood sense of the risk and what we are going to do about it.

You then translate that into what we do beyond the identification of those at risk and the options that we would be keen to see addressed much more systematically, for example, around therapeutic interventions. As in the adult system, I am sure, almost all the cases that we are dealing with involve trauma and other deeply embedded issues that children and young people are coming to terms with. You cannot just see a collection of frontline professionals from different agencies parading past and think anything other than a rational response from those children and young people will be, “Why should I trust any of you? I am just seeing one well-meaning professional after another.”

Therefore, although we are happy to talk, if we get a moment, about what we are doing in particular areas, particularly the West Midlands, to bring together those agencies in a more strategic and operational sense, to identify risk, tackle the most difficult cases together, and address some of the issues around delays—which again I strongly agree with Lara about—that still feels very sub-optimal, and that includes even at the point of conclusion.

We have had some great cases where ICTA has gone overseas with the individual to conclude the process, to be absolutely satisfied that the child or young person has been properly put into an environment that is going to support them moving forward, to ones where literally the local authority has just moved the individual back overseas and that is the last we have heard of it. From that breadth of intervention—it is such an



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obvious point but I will labour it—the key point is: you have a system that is either owned by a collection of agencies that recognise the high risk and high harm that trafficking can cause, or you have an add-on to all sorts of busy professionals' day jobs.

Garry Smith: To add to what my colleagues have said, I think the things that have gone well: awareness has gone up massively in the last few years since the Modern Slavery Act came in. We are seeing many more people being aware of that, which we were not a few years ago.

The second thing that I would say that is going better now is our relationship with the law enforcement authorities. Certainly, the relationships that we have built up with local police forces around where our safe houses are have been really good and we are seeing a lot more mutual respect coming through now. That has been a really positive thing, as the police get to understand the role of the voluntary sector in supporting victims and the voluntary sector get to understand how to help the police best to do their job. That is going much better now.

Thirdly, I think there is a greater awareness in businesses. Like colleagues previously, I want to praise the work of the Co-Op in the Bright Futures initiative. We are a Bright Futures partner and we are grateful to them for championing the cause among businesses. In the Bright Futures meetings that I have been present at, I have seen within the business community many companies coming forward to say, "We want to help. We want to give survivors jobs. Once they are through their trauma and they have been supported, we will give them supported employment." That is a really positive thing.

On the flip side, the first thing that I would say is not going well is the length of time it is taking to get a conclusive grounds decision. It is way too slow. To add to that, it is not just the length of time that it is taking; it is the lack of communication during that process. These are difficult times for the victims that we are supporting, and they are asking their support workers, "When will I get my decision? What is the news?" Whereas previously we were encouraged to ring up the caseworkers and say, "Look, how is it going? Any idea how long it might take? We won't hold you to it, but just give us some idea so that we can support the victim," we are now told, "Please don't ring us. Just don't ring us." We have to wait until the letter drops on the mat before we know we can advise the client. That is not very helpful.

The other thing is the pending reduction in subsistence rates. That is going to cause a lot of problems next year and beyond. What it is going to mean is that victims are at a huge risk of being exploited again as they seek perhaps to top up what little money they are going to be given. Many of them got into this position in the first place because someone said, "Look, do you want a job? Cash in hand? We'll look after you." Potentially to put them in the same position again is going to be hugely damaging, and we have some serious concerns about that.



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Thirdly, and again probably not a surprise to the members of the Committee, is the lack of joined up thinking between Government Departments, particularly with regards to UKVI and the asylum system. To give some examples: we have two of our safe houses in Manchester, one in Merseyside, and clients are given appointments to report at Lunar House in Croydon at 9.15 am, which means that they have to be up at 4.00 am; they have to get an expensive train ticket, which is reimbursed through the Government, but at great expense, and they have to report, perhaps, with a support worker. An expensive return from Manchester to London at peak hours is about £390, I think, on the train for a victim and a support worker. It does not make sense to us. If they have medical or mobility issues they can report to Liverpool and it is £12 return, but other clients are just told, "No, it is 9.15 am. It is Croydon. Get on with it."

Also, with regard to NASS accommodation, if we have clients who are moving on to NASS accommodation there is a lack of choice of area. That means that people, once we have them settled in an area and perhaps they have linked up with a church or some other faith organisation or support network around them, are suddenly driven to another part of the country again. This is just reinforcing bad memories from perhaps their trafficking experience. We think there could be a lot more talking between agencies to say, "Look, can we help here? Can we put someone a little bit closer to where their support networks are?"

Access to services is still a problem, particularly, from our perspective, mental health services. We think there could be some kind of fast track, as Stephen said, with child victims. We have the same with adult victims with regards to things like PTSD, and we need them to get into mental health services quickly. Where that happens it is good and it helps the victim with regard to their journey of recovery, but in some areas that is a lot more difficult.

The final thing that is not working for us so well at the moment is with regard to repatriation. The voluntary return scheme works well and is great and we have good relationships there, but outside that, it is a lot trickier. As an example, just last week we had some new victims; they had only been in the UK a couple of weeks and, if you put yourself in the shoes of someone that has been tricked into an exploitative situation, maybe you could be of the mindset—not everyone is but you could be—that "I got done here. I just want to go home now." That is a really difficult thing to do. There isn't a great mechanism to send people home. Therefore, unless charities like ourselves dip into our bank accounts and provide plane or bus tickets to get people home, generally they are stuck in the system when they do not want to be stuck in the system. That seems a bit of a shame when that bed could be freed up for other victims. There are a few things that just do not seem to be quite joined up at the moment.

Lara Bundock: Can I back up what Garry said about the subsistence cuts? That is a huge concern, because some of it has already started to



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come into play. Among the people we are supporting through therapeutic support when they are in the NRM, we saw a decline in the number of people who were able to attend their appointments because they were not able to afford to come. When they did come the counsellors were reporting, for example, that one of the people they were supporting was not able to go to a college open day, which she was booked on to, because of the cuts in subsistence.

I have heard that the reasoning behind it is that the lengthening of the 45 days afterwards needs to be funded. To take that money away from victims in order to do that is appalling. In my mind, there are definitely better ways of looking at savings—for example, as we have all mentioned, if decisions were made far more efficiently and effectively within the NRM. Instead of taking three years let's say they took a year—even that is quite long—so less money would have to be paid out to keep people within that system while the decision is pending because we have to be able to deliver the Article 12 rights.

If it was far more efficient and effective in the decision making, there would be more money freed up in order to spend on the recovery section afterwards, rather than essentially what feels like punishing the victims and taking away some of their subsistence in order to fund the bit afterwards. That is the reasoning that is currently being given for subsistence cuts.

Q116 **Chair:** How many people are already affected by the cuts to subsistence?

Lara Bundock: I do not know the numbers. I can go away and try to find out.

Q117 **Chair:** Given everything that you have all said about the current NRM system, what is the point in an NRM system and the conclusive grounds system if it is doing so little, or taking a very long time to not deliver anything?

Stephen Rimmer: From a Barnardo's perspective, we have some hopeful expectation of the review process that is underway—we have been part of the group to assess how to make it fit for purpose for children and young people. We have made a long series of recommendations, that the basic framework for the NRM can be improved upon and it can be made more efficient. Obviously it has been digitised, and there are other opportunities to develop it. In our view, as long as it is connected to the core operating models of the agencies that should be directly playing into it, it is fundamentally a framework that can be made to work much more effectively.

Q118 **Chair:** It is adding something? Putting aside the lengths of time, I am interested in what currently it is adding to the support that victims and survivors need.

Major Betteridge: Under the ECAT provisions, it is providing some medical and support care, legal advice, interpreting services, safe



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accommodation and a number of support services. It is providing support, so in that respect it is good, and I believe some of the reforms that are coming in will also improve the processing system.

Lara Bundock: I agree with the point about, when we are talking about the NRM and coming across a potential victim and there is a potential issue of consent as well—making sure that it is explained properly to somebody. I think there is increasing awareness that that does need to happen. One of the biggest benefits is that, if you have come across a person who is currently at risk, destitute and there is no other path for them, if they do agree to go into the NRM at least they are then coming under the Article 12 rights. That means they are entitled to safe and secure accommodation and to a good standard of living.

Where there is disparity in that is where you have somebody who is in, say, asylum accommodation. What we know of the accommodation that they get through the NRM, it is a good standard there, but when they are in NASS accommodation, there are people who we are talking to who have rats in their accommodation; they have heating that breaks down; they have freezers and fridges that break down. The G4S policy around those type of things is, "We have to deal with it in either 34 or 45 days." I cannot remember what the period is; I will have to go and check for you. But our caseworkers find that, when they are asking for those things to be fixed, the response is, "It has not been 35 days so we still have a period of time to do that."

We have people who are in the NRM and who are technically entitled to Article 12 rights who I would say are not in accommodation that provides a good standard of living. You have disparity, depending on whether they are in the asylum system in NASS accommodation, or whether they were destitute and have gone to one of the safe houses. At least that is one of the positives, in that there is then a place for people to go to if they are destitute and they are at risk.

Stephen Rimmer: Can I have a second go? In the context of children and young people, in a significant number of the cases that we get involved in with ICTA support, the NRM is the trigger that enables the local authority and some of the other agencies to recognise that there is an issue there, because previously they have not.

We have particular cases—to take one example, a teenage girl is accompanied by a supposed uncle, who has been interrogated by the local authority in terms of the information available. It was not until the combination of the ICTA and the NRM process that made that clearly an exploitation case, and not a straightforward familial case.

Until and unless all sorts of trafficking and exploitation issues are automatically embedded into the risk assessment, the professional curiosity and the ways in which such agencies operate, the NRM is our best bet, frankly, to try to bring at least some focus to bear. As I say, it is not perfect but it is a foundation that we want to build on.



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Q119 **Chair:** Other than the cut in support, do you think that all of the changes that the Government are proposing and announced 12 months ago are the right thing to do, and are you seeing any of them happening in practice or being implemented yet?

Garry Smith: The length of time that we have to work with people after the conclusive grounds decision is to be welcomed. You would expect us to say we want it to go further, but it is a step in the right direction, so that is certainly a good thing and I would support that.

Q120 **Chair:** Have you seen any sign of it starting to happen yet, or it being implemented?

Garry Smith: No, it is not being implemented until February or March.

Major Betteridge: There is also the pre-NRM, so the three days of support that will be available will be good as well. Again, if somebody becomes destitute or even if they are not, they are reliant on the local authority to house them or some other organisation, there will be a three-day period where they can be in a safe place before they make the decision as to whether they want to go into the system, so that will be good as well.

Lara Bundock: Of the reforms that are coming, as Garry said, I definitely commend the lengthening of time from 14 days to 45 days and the two days to nine days. My history was working in one of the Government safe houses before setting up Snowdrop, and I cannot tell you how stressful it is—my background is as a social worker—to be looking after a person and getting a letter, either positive or negative, and having to tell that person either, “I have two days left to get you out of this place,” or, “I have 14 days”. It is not enough time to be able to put that in place, so that lengthening is highly welcomed. Also, from the perspective of an organisation that provides support beyond it, that handover process can be a lot better when you have that length of time, rather than it being rushed. I agree with that.

The other ones that are welcome are some of the electronic databases. One of the problems that we have at the moment is there is not enough intelligent data, so we do not know what is working. In my mind, it needs to go beyond that. We need to look at what the outcomes are for people beyond the NRM, and at the moment it stops. The electronic system is a step in the right direction, because it means that a first responder will have to know what they are doing in order to be able to put in a first responder form.

There are a couple of the other ones that are coming in—for example, the six months drop-in support. Although it is a step in the right direction, from what we have seen in Snowdrop, when we provide support beyond the NRM—just to give you a snapshot of the type of cases that we see, 80% of the people who come to us have ongoing or new legal issues, 45% have either little or no English whatsoever, 100% still have



symptoms of PTSD, 15% have complex life-controlling mental health issues, such as psychoses, dissociative disorders, early onset Alzheimer's and that type of thing—if you simply add those three things together, it is going to be quite difficult for somebody to be able to access drop-in services. Although it is beneficial for those who are potentially on the lower end of complexity, that will not be sufficient for somebody who has more complex needs, who needs much more intensive intervention.

I think the early three days is positive. I have concerns about the fact that people may be moved multiple times to access a place of safety and then a safe house, and then moved out after that, potentially repeating the pattern of trafficking and movement.

Stephen Rimmer: We would quite like to push the implementation of the NRM to a mandatory reporting regime for first responders. We are conscious of all the responsibilities placed on frontline professionals. Barnardo's itself has to juggle all sorts of things in all sorts of contexts. We think that a mandatory reporting regime will make it more actionable and more manageable for busy, frontline professionals than just one thing that is floating about, depending on whether you have had the training or not.

We are also quite keen to emphasise, within the development of the NRM, how important criminal exploitation is as a category in its own right. As you will know, at the moment it is sucked in within labour exploitation. From our own up-to-date figures, out of those 425 cases in all our work last year, the biggest single exploitation type—142 cases in our own terms, but not what it is called within NRM—is criminal exploitation.

Q121 **Alex Norris:** Looking at the victim care contract, as opposed to the contractor, how well has that matched up against what victims have needed over the last three and a half years? It is probably best to start with you, Major Betteridge.

Major Betteridge: The needs of the victims are very varied. As a victim comes into care, there is an initial assessment taken of that particular victim and then their needs are identified, whether it is to go to a safe house or to have some outreach support. There is always the need for one-to-one support from either an outreach or a safe house. For outreach support, there is sufficient but we need more of that. With the reforms coming through, we are going to need more safe accommodation, so there is going to be the need for more beds to be available.

There have been some concerns with regards the legal aid support. What we are finding is that to identify a solicitor who has knowledge and understanding of modern slavery is an issue. Some solicitors do not want to take on board some of these cases because they are very complex and they do not have the capacity, so they are sometimes reluctant to take them on.



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The other area of concern that we are aware of is around the geographical differences. Again, depending on where a victim might be placed or if they are in the asylum system, they might move on to NASS accommodation, so that legal support could alter or change and then there is disruption to that support.

What we have encouraged within our contract is for our subcontractors to make local links with legal firms. I believe that has happened in many cases. On the positive side, we have had solicitors come and offer pro bono support, which is good.

Garry Smith: We are a subcontractor to the Salvation Army, so I endorse what Kathy said. Our safe houses are split around England—we operate only in England. We have some in the north and some in the south and a couple in London. We do experience geographical differences for everything really, and legal aid support is tricky in some areas. As you would expect, London is well served but, therefore, we have to have clients travelling up to London to access legal aid.

Mental health services are a problem, as I said previously, so to get people into good-quality statutory mental health provision quickly is not always easy. We do have some good links in some areas but other areas are a little bit patchier.

Generally, the contract has worked okay and we are working well, and I guess, as we have been doing it for quite a while, as has the Salvation Army, you learn to live with the constraints of it. One of the things that has been slightly tricky, with regards to the subsistence, is having to pay the first £10 of any travel costs at the moment. That changes in February or March next year, but obviously the subsistence goes down dramatically after that anyway. They will not have to pay the first £10 out of their £37.75 a week for every journey they make, but they are hit in other areas. Generally it has worked well and we have a good relationship with our colleagues at the Salvation Army.

Q122 **Alex Norris:** Pushing this forward, with regards to 2020 and the next iteration of the contract, what does the Government need to add or subtract?

Major Betteridge: Could I highlight within that the difficulty that we experience with regards to accessing the victims or potential victims who are in prison? There is an area of support there that is probably lacking, in that the Prison Service does not really recognise the first responder. It sees the Home Office as being the first responder—which it is—but when our Salvation Army first responders go in it is very difficult to access a potential victim in prison. So we would like the Prison Service to be aware of the signs of trafficking and that it could well have a potential victim in remand.

One of the difficulties we have—perhaps this could be looked at again in the next contract—is around the Prison Service allowing somebody to



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come in under legal visits. Obviously a victim who has possibly been trafficked requires longer than just an hour; they require further time to talk. Also visits can change because of the regime of the prison, so as a victim is waiting to go, something happens and the prison is in lockdown and everything changes.

There is a lack of flexibility and a lack of communication or understanding between Departments, so again we would like to see some clearer understanding between the MoJ and the Home Office, or just an understanding from the Prison Service, so that there is less of a trauma attached to a victim who is incarcerated.

Garry Smith: With regard to adding in from 2020, there is still a lot of uncertainty around that at the moment. We had the first supplier open day last Friday, so we were given the first window into what it might look like but, until the contract documentation comes out next spring—as I believe it will do—then we do not know.

Some of the things that are being talked about are positive but the devil is going to be in the detail. Things like the drop-in centres could be good, but how well funded will they be? Will they be 24/7 drop-in centres, or will people be told, “You can report in on a Wednesday afternoon at 3.30 pm for an hour in this church hall, and that is your drop-in centre locally”? We do not know what the detail is.

Similarly around the places of safety, the pre-NRM beds, we do not know too much about what level of support will be provided and how extensive the provision will be under that contract. Until we know a little bit more about that, it is going to be quite tricky.

We endorse those things coming in, provided they are sufficiently funded, and we will work within whatever system we have to. We hope that they will be adequately resourced. I think what the Government need to do more than anything is put adequate resources into these systems, so that they can operate quickly.

The other thing that they could do is that, as we have the NRM reforms coming in and we have the new electronic system that I am sure will be the answer to everybody’s prayers—as most electronic systems are—they really need to resource the decision making a lot better than it is now. As we said, the system is clogged up because of the lack of decision.

We understand that it is difficult for some of these decisions. Where the exploitation took place before people arrived in the UK, as I understand quite a decent percentage do, it is quite a difficult thing to investigate—a lot more difficult than if they did a raid on a brothel or a farm last week. We understand that is difficult, but it does need resourcing properly so that decisions can be made, and quicker decisions will be more beneficial all round.



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Lara talked about the trauma associated with conclusive grounds decision and the length of time after that, so it is great that we are going to have longer. Part of that is caused because people have settled and grown roots in a safe house because they have been here for a long time. They got settled and suddenly it is, "Right, you have to leave. We have to get you out." If the decision-making process is quicker, even though it is going up from 45 to 90 days, there will be less opportunity for them to put down permanent roots than if they were there for one, two or even three years, and then we have a longer period.

A lot of the devil is in the detail, but if it is adequately resourced, or better resourced than it is at the moment, then some of these problems will go away.

Q123 Alex Norris: Major Betteridge, last week when we had a panel in front of us I was talking about non-disclosure agreements and was not able to quite get as much clarity as I was hoping for. From a Salvation Army point of view, with your relationship and contract with the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, have they ever asked you to sign a non-disclosure agreement?

Major Betteridge: No. It is a misconception in the victim care sector that we cannot disclose information. Under the contract—under any Government contract, as you can imagine—there is information and data that belong to the Home Office; that is its data, but our experience has been that when we speak to the Home Office and request to use that information, we have been given the go ahead to do so. For example, one of our subcontractors, Hestia, wanted to write a report around the care for male victims, and the Home Office endorsed that and allowed that to happen, so, no, there is not.

Q124 Alex Norris: Then, similarly, in your relationship with your subcontractors, you do not oblige them to sign non-disclosure agreements?

Major Betteridge: No.

Q125 Alex Norris: With regards to the supplier open day, was the Salvation Army part of that? The first one was last Friday.

Major Betteridge: Yes.

Q126 Alex Norris: Did they make you sign a non-disclosure agreement at that?

Major Betteridge: I did not attend that, I'm afraid, so I cannot comment on that.

Garry Smith: Yes, you did have to sign one.

Q127 Alex Norris: Did they say at the time why that was?

Garry Smith: That was not really made clear. We were just told if we wanted to attend, we would have to sign a non-disclosure agreement.



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Q128 **Alex Norris:** Sign it or don't come, basically?

Garry Smith: Yes.

Lara Bundock: We did not attend, but a couple of other organisations that I know who wanted to attend were told that they needed to sign one of these. They asked why and were told, "That is just the due process," which I think at the early stages is very bizarre.

Garry Smith: I did attend. To my mind, there was nothing shared there that you would not want out in the open just to help the process really. There was no commercially sensitive information—there couldn't be, because we were effectively with our competitors there. It was a strange thing to ask, but I wanted to be around the table so I signed it.

Q129 **Alex Norris:** From the Salvation Army point of view, Major Betteridge, how do you quality control your subcontractors?

Major Betteridge: We were very pleased with the introduction of the care standards from the Human Trafficking Foundation, because there has been a need for quality of care to be monitored. We were in the early stages of our contract before those standards came in. We have a number of contracts with external providers. We have Lifehouse accommodation, hostels and care homes that we provide services with. We have an internal monitoring system where we make sure that the systems of safeguarding and the quality of care meet the care inspectorate's requirements.

Within that framework, as the contract was initially developed, we would make sure that those standards were instigated, but what was very apparent was that there was not a standardised care standard package, which with the standards that have now been produced and the recent revision of them is very welcome. We currently monitor our subcontractors. We have regular feedback from them, so that they are aware of their obligations and requirements under the contract. We have that feedback from them, but it is not just how the service is delivered; it is also feedback from the clients themselves. They can feed into that monitoring process. Initially, when they come into the service they are asked to give feedback—so after a week of the service and then towards the 35 days—so that we are constantly ensuring that the accommodation and the care are adequate.

Q130 **Alex Norris:** Thank you. Looking at first responders then. A first responder could obviously be from a range of different organisations—the clue is in the name. Would you have standard confidence depending on which organisation—if it is local authority, if it is police, if it was the NHS—as to how good and how reliable that first contact would be? I see some shaking heads and some wry smiles.

Stephen Rimmer: Certainly, in Barnado's experience across different agencies in different parts of the country, it is very varied indeed. There are some parts of the country, certainly in terms of our pilots, where you



have at least the makings of a common framework at operational level. Greater Manchester is developing a complex safeguarding hub, for instance. We would say there is a greater likelihood—it is not inevitable—of a more consistent approach and an understanding of the NRM and an understanding about who to dock into, but it is still very contingent on all sorts of variable factors that are quite difficult to predict and navigate through.

Q131 Alex Norris: What would remedy this?

Stephen Rimmer: As I was suggesting to the Chair, we feel that a mandatory reporting system would help responders, because it is just one element of too many bits of the jigsaw at the moment.

Lara Bundock: One of the major issues in first responding is that any employee within the local authority is a first responder. We do a lot of training, particularly with social workers. I was telling people on the panel outside that I will go and do training with social workers and often say, "Does anybody know what a first responder is?" and then there will be silence, or people might say it is to do with first aid. Then I will say, "Does anyone in here think they might be one?" Usually, nobody thinks they are, and then I have to take them through the training.

That is a major issue, in that every employee within the local authority is currently a first responder. The other side is that within, I think, the NHS there could be select people who would be really helpful to be first responders. That is more what it should come down to and this electronic system is a fantastic opening for this to happen, so there are more designated people where they are most likely to come into contact with victims of trafficking, whether that is people who are employed by A&E, midwifery services or GP practices, but somebody who is, again, potentially designated.

When I was training GPs recently, they kind of shot back at me in terms of saying, "We have 10 minutes with somebody, and if we pick up on signs, you are telling me that at that point what I would need to do—even when I think that person is at risk right then—is work out how to contact either the Modern Slavery Helpline or a local authority member within the district, or call up the Salvation Army 24-hour helpline, and try to get that person referred. When I am looking at the fact that I have 10 minutes with that person, what should I do?"

The GP said to me, "What we would probably end up doing is telling them to go to A&E and hope that A&E manages to pick up on it. We might try to write a quick note to the A&E Department to say, 'Please, can you try to get this person referred in?'" But if in the period of time after they leave the GP practice to go to A&E, the trafficker is there, the chances that they are going to end up at A&E is quite low.

Also, it is a matter of looking intelligently at the restrictions that certain roles have—like a GP service, where they only have 10 minutes—and



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thinking around, "Okay, if somebody does walk through the door, how do we help the health service to identify a good way of getting somebody referred in?"

Major Betteridge: I endorse and agree with everything Lara says. The NHS is one area of concern but, as I said before, the Prison Service is too. There are a number of key agencies and statutory bodies that need to be considered to be first responders, and to have some standardisation across the training so that there is equity in that. What we have found sometimes, as forms are sent in and returned to us, it can appear to be a bit of a cut and paste job, which is inadequate for a victim who has been telling their story and had difficulties doing so because of the trauma, and then the information may not be adequately transferred on to the form.

Sadly, there have been cases where you can tell it is a cut and paste because the name has not been changed from somebody else's evidence. There are difficulties there, but if we can somehow standardise and provide adequate training, which enables somebody to clearly identify the signs of trafficking and therefore ask the right questions and clearly indicate what it is, so that when the form does go to the competent bodies, as it will do, they can clearly pick up those signs and quickly give an answer to that victim.

Garry Smith: Could I add a supplementary point to that, Chair? When the Home Office reviewed the pilot NRM project, in October 2017, it mentioned having slavery safeguarding leads, SSLs, and certainly in the evaluation of the pilot, that was viewed positively. Learning from that would help in all of these organisations. I just wanted to add that.

Q132 **Stuart C. McDonald:** If we take a step back for a minute—it may be that I am over-analysing and being paranoid or whatever—is there a problem with the institutional framework in that, at the heart of it, in so many respects, you have the Home Office, which at one and the same time is responsible for making decisions on conclusive grounds, making decisions about people's immigration status and meeting the net migration target—and, indeed, also contracting to competent authorities and other organisations? Doesn't that potentially give rise to all sorts of conflicts of interest? Are they real or imagined?

Major Betteridge: I would say, yes, there are difficulties there. Sometimes in our experience—I am sure the rest of the panel might have evidence as well—victims or potential victims choose not to enter the NRM system because they do not feel confident with the approach that we will be taking to the decision. Again, they may have been tricked by the traffickers—that has come through—so they do not trust this body to help them.

There is a fear of a victim being deported if they do enter the system, but it is very fine line between the competent authorities, the Home Office, making a decision and then there is also this victim who feels, "Well, am I



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going to have a fair decision made?" because it also the first responder. There is a dual role there and they conflict.

Lara Bundock: Yes, I think there is a massive problem with that. One example of where the immigration status of a person is becoming front and foremost, rather than the needs of a victim, is the post-NRM pilots that are happening through the local authorities. I am so glad that there are some pilots happening on how to give support to people beyond the NRM. I was sadly discouraged by the fact that the referral criteria into those pilots is that you must have just received a positive conclusive grounds decision, and also have recourse to public funds.

When I challenged the Home Office on its thinking behind that and why it was doing that, the Home Office response to me was, "Most people leave the NRM with recourse to public funds," to which I replied, "No, they don't." They do not—most of them do not leave the NRM with recourse to public funds. I then created a resource to help understand the complexity of situations that people are in at the point at which they leave the NRM.

The reason support is being given just to somebody with recourse to public funds, is they are forgetting people who have been correctly identified as victims of trafficking and therefore have needs that are attached to being a victim of human trafficking and yet are not entitled to support because they do not have recourse to public funds. To me, that is a major issue of the fact that we are focusing far more on whether they have recourse to public funds as opposed to asking: what are the needs of this person? I think the fact that the Home Office is so involved in it stops us from looking at the needs of the individual.

Stephen Rimmer: I am mindful—as the Chair knows—with my own background in the Home Office, that I do not want to sound defensive about it as a Department. From a Barnardo's perspective, however, we would say that Government operates in all sorts of contexts around different roles and responsibilities. From our perspective, the issue is not necessarily whether the Home Office itself is accumulating too many of these different functions. It is whether the exercise of those functions is done and carried out in a joined-up way. That obviously extends to other things, like the criminal justice system, the MoJ's role, and others play into that.

From our perspective, if we have a means to demonstrate to the Home Office how, for example, some of the framework around the immigration rules is consistently mucking up the process for trafficked children particularly around the timelines in respect of the NRM, then we will say that loud and clear. I would also say the challenge from our perspective is not just how that plays out at a central Government level.

We have established, funded by the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, a panel for protection of trafficked children across the West Midlands, so that is our attempt as Barnardo's. We are the convening authority for it, which is an interesting role for a charity, given



that everyone else is pretty much a statutory agency. We pulled together the West Midlands Police, the Regional Organised Crime Unit, the NCA, where appropriate, the DWP, Border Force, all the relevant local authorities and youth funding services. It is a panel to assess both at a strategic level what is happening around risks to trafficked children and young people, and also in specific cases—which is where the rubber hits road and where you get into those really difficult conversations about different roles and responsibilities—what we are going to do about a particular case, for example, involving criminal exploitation. The police will say, “First and foremost, we think we are going to prosecute this individual,” and others, including us, may well be saying, “Hang on a minute. First and foremost, this is a young person being exploited.”

Whatever happens at central Government level, however it is configured, if you do not end up with an operating model that brings all those players together—because they all have different and complicated lines of accountability to Government Departments and others, like PCCs—it means you are forever going to end up, from a child and a young person’s perspective, constantly being pushed from pillar to post.

Garry Smith: Can I put a slightly different view to my colleagues? I have been around the sector for quite a while now and remember previous contracts when the Ministry of Justice was tendering for the victim care contract. Then, it was a joint effort between the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice and then it all came under the Home Office.

All I would say is, let’s not keep moving it around because they might just be finding their feet. In terms of conflicts of interest, I guess you could say that, but for some of the things that are not joined up at the moment, it should be within the Home Office power to join them up. I wonder whether moving it outside again might make relationships between Government Departments more difficult than keeping them together.

The one exception, I would say, is I do not think that the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner should sit within the Home Office or under the Home Office’s employment, because I think that hits its independence. Moving that appointment outside the Home Office would be helpful, but everything else—well, I think it has its best chance of working and joining things up if it is all under one Minister and can be joined up together there, rather than competing with another Government Department.

Q133 Stuart C. McDonald: How often do you challenge and appeal negative decisions that are made for your clients? I am getting at two things here: first of all, how often do you then manage to successfully challenge those decisions and, secondly—and I am mindful of what we have just talked about in terms of conflicts of interest—can you guarantee to me that your staff will not feel under any pressure not to rock the boat with the Home Office, given that is where funding will come from?



Major Betteridge: The Salvation Army have our own self-delivery. We are also a subcontractor of the contract, and if there was a victim who had negative conclusive grounds and there was a need to challenge, we would enable and support them to do that. I cannot express just now how often and how successful that has been, but we would be able to look at ways of doing that.

One of the other firms that we have been able to link up with is Hogan Lovells, which has been able to provide that pro bono support so we can look to challenge a decision. I don't know if there is somebody else who has experience of doing it and receiving the information.

Garry Smith: I do not have that information to hand, but I would be very happy to ask our managers and write in to give you information on that.

Stuart C. McDonald: That would be very helpful.

Lara Bundock: Because we sit outside the contract, we take referrals from a number of different subcontractors, post-NRM. We do have two main ones within our area. One of them does not tend to challenge them; the other one has better resources. They are funded through other means and they often use some of that other funding to allow them to do some reconsideration and continue that. We have a lot of referrals that come to us that are negative CG decisions. Because of the amount that we have we cannot take every single one and, also, it would not fit our charitable aims and objectives, but what we do is we triage it and we decide whether or not we believe that there is grounds to challenge it or not. Of our referrals, 75% are positive CG, 25% are negative CG. We will challenge those either through reconsideration requests, or through judicial reviews and working with a solicitor to do that. At the moment, of the ones that we put in for, in either of those routes, 50% have been overturned and 50% are still pending.

Q134 **Stuart C. McDonald:** Is that not hugely concerning if you are saying that one of the subcontractors refers to you almost as a policy choice?

Lara Bundock: They always refer their people who leave to us, it is up to us then whether we accept that negative CG decision or not, and therefore whether we accept the support, because we have to think about capacity, and then we look at whether we think that there has been an error in decision making—so whether the competent authority has followed the guidance or not.

One of the difficulties that we find in the reconsideration requests is that the policy that is currently written is very confusing. If you read the reconsideration policy in one way, it says anybody who is involved in the support journey of a survivor can put in a reconsideration request, and that is us; we would fit in that. Another section says you can only do it if you are a first responder or you are an NRM provider, which we are not.



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We have managed to do reconsideration requests through the other bit of the policy, but we did have one recently turned down and I then spoke to somebody high up within the NRM hub and said, "This is confusing. We have had others go through and we have had our first one come back saying, 'You are not entitled to it.' Please, could you sort out what is going on?" They then did sort that out and we were able to put in the reconsideration request. I then had a longer conversation about the fact that that policy probably needs rewriting to make it clearer, because the people who are operating from that policy don't know which way to agree or not agree on the reconsiderations.

Q135 Stuart C. McDonald: To double check, is legal aid available for victims of trafficking that are trying to challenge decisions?

Lara Bundock: For reconsideration, it is not because a solicitor cannot do reconsideration requests. For judicial reviews, if there is enough weight there then you could apply for it.

Stephen Rimmer: In respect to trafficked children, it is important to stress that the role of ICTAs—the clue is in the title "independent"—is to exercise a challenge function at any point in the process where that is appropriate if in our view it is in the interests of the child or young person. That is all the way through the process if we think that decisions are being taken outwith the interests of the child. That means, even though it sounds potentially about coalescing and ensuring a collective approach to tackling the issues facing a trafficked child, it can be a very lonely and difficult role, because it can be done in the face of institutional resistance or at least inertia.

Q136 Stuart C. McDonald: Can I raise one issue about ICTAs as well? If somebody turns 18 while they have an ICTA—they are still not through the NRM—does that ICTA support immediately stop?

Stephen Rimmer: Yes. In our submission, we are very clear that we want to work out with the Home Office and other players any means of maintaining a transition arrangement that does not mean that that cliff edge happens. That is one of our biggest concerns. It does not necessarily have to mean the ICTA itself continues beyond that individual's age of 18. It could mean a broader set of arrangements around a co-ordinating function that can ensure that transition at least for, say, the first 12 months, because, in the context of vulnerable children issues, you would be looking at 18, 19, 20, 21 and beyond. We are seriously concerned that that cliff edge is a current reality.

Q137 Stuart C. McDonald: On a slightly different legal issue, we have heard evidence about severe difficulties in getting compensation for victims, and someone suggested new, specific civil remedies—a specific tort for example. Do you agree there needs to be new civil remedies available? Any comments? If not, it doesn't matter.

Lara Bundock: We have had a few that have been successful in getting compensation, but that has not been criminal compensation. It has



usually been because there have been failings of either the police or the Home Office or something along those lines. It has not been criminal compensation. The one that we have recently supported through trial, we are going to try to move that forward using the new laws under the Modern Slavery Act to see whether that is successful, but I do not have anything more than this.

Q138 Stuart C. McDonald: A problem has been highlighted as well about victims being criminalised for crimes that they were, in essence, forced to commit. Why is that happening, and what can we do to stop it or resolve it?

Stephen Rimmer: From Barnardo's perspective, it is a huge issue in respect of coercion into criminal activity. As I said previously, even the NRM itself does not really properly reflect that yet in the way in which it is categorised. It is not exactly the same, but I think it is a helpful parallel to think about how language frames the behaviour of agencies—not just statutory agencies but the voluntary sector as well. As we all know, until very recently child sexual exploitation involved very different terminology, which engendered a mindset that there was somehow a level of choice involved in children and young people around sexual exploitation. Again, in the context of other forms of exploitation, when you have no power as a 13, 14, 15 16-year-old, in a context where trafficking obviously renders that sense of control even more in the hands of the perpetrator and the people exploiting those individuals, what you end up doing—whether it is in relation to drugs or gangs or theft or, indeed, sexual exploitation—you are first and foremost, from our perspective, the victim.

As we put in our written evidence, it is a real concern to us that three times as many young people, in terms of the legislation, so far have been identified in the context of perpetrators in this context rather than as victims. Clearly, every case is different but the starting point for us around criminal exploitation and its interaction with trafficking is that has enveloped a child or a young person to the point where it is the genuine reality—it is not a mitigation, let alone an excuse—of their environment that they have no control over their situation. They are being manipulated and clearly, in the context of online and other factors that is actually enabling that control to be even more powerfully exercised, which might be one of the reasons why we think it is a genuine increase in the threat around criminal exploitation, not just that we are getting better collectively at identifying that.

Again, to work out the real tensions about that at an individual level with the prosecuting agencies, social care professionals and others, it is really important that there is a shared understanding about how the vulnerability of children and young people trafficked in those circumstances is going to mean that they are, first and foremost, victims of that process. They literally have no control over what choice they might exercise, because the fear that is being generated about what they



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don't do for that gang or for that individual controlling them is infinitely greater than any risk factors around the system the state might do by contrast.

Q139 Stuart C. McDonald: I will finish with two questions on immigration. First of all, we may be looking at immigration detention and the problems with continued detention of vulnerable people, among whom will be victims of modern slavery. Do you have experience of clients who were detained in immigration detention facilities? Why is that happening and what can be done to stop it?

Major Betteridge: Yes, there are situations. As I have said, there are victims in detention centres. Again, it has happened because of the coercion they have been up against. It is not just young adults but older individuals as well who have been tricked into doing something.

One of the situations that have become very apparent is around substance misuse. We have identified that there are victims who are vulnerable because of their use of substances, and then they are tricked into working or doing something—taking part in a criminal activity—and they are paid by giving them more drugs or more alcohol, so they then become a victim of crime because they have broken the law in some way and they are put into a detention centre or into prison.

Q140 Stuart C. McDonald: Immigration detention centres, in particular? Have you experience of clients who have ended up in immigration detention and how can we fix that? Why is the screening process not stopping that from happening?

Lara Bundock: We have had people who have been in detention centres—when they came out of their experience of trafficking and were put into a detention centre at that point. I think part of that is potentially improved learning. I know it sounds awful, but people don't. That should not be an option for somebody who has been identified as a victim of trafficking, but we see it further on as well when somebody has had a positive decision but has not been granted discretionary leave and they are still pending an asylum claim. We have had people who we are supporting who have a positive decision and have gone to sign on at their local—Vulcan House is in South Yorkshire—and the person will disappear. We have had to get their legal rep involved to get them out. They are being threatened with being sent home and being deported. These are people who are deemed to be positively identified as victims of human trafficking.

Q141 Stuart C. McDonald: In those cases, is the person making the decision to detain them doing that in the knowledge that that person has had a positive conclusive grounds decision, or is it a case of one part of the Home Office not speaking to the other?

Lara Bundock: I cannot give you a strong enough answer on that. I can only take a guess, in that the people who are on the frontline may not have access to that information. That is why we then have to get the



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legal rep involved in order to get them out of that situation—to inform them, “By the way, that person has been positively identified.”

Q142 Stuart C. McDonald: Finally, you were talking about residence permits and discretionary leave that people can get. As I understand it, in 2015 only 12% of confirmed victims with positive conclusive grounds had received such a permit. Does that in any way bear a relationship with a number of your clients who you think would benefit from a period of leave? How have we ended up with just 12%? Is that a reasonable number?

Lara Bundock: No, is the very simple answer to that. It is like I was saying before: we see a marked difference in the people who are given discretionary leave, as a result of a positive decision, and those who are not. The springboard that it gives somebody to gain stability is huge and cannot be overestimated, because usually at that point—especially if it is granted at the point where they are given a positive CG and are immediately given discretionary leave—the transition means that there is no dip in recovery, because we can then work with them to get stable housing; we can start to get them on the benefits system and then get them into education and think about employment. Because, even though it is only 12 months, you can get extensions to that and they are still entitled to all of those things.

It makes doing things like working with the Bright Futures programme, far easier because it means that they can get into employment because they have the right to it, whereas somebody who isn’t granted that—as I said, the number of people where we see a decline in their mental health and their stability, their ability to get out and interact with people is quite significant. The fact that only 12% are given it and you said, “Do you think that is sufficient?” Quite simply, no, I don’t think it is sufficient because it does not give people a chance to recover.

Q143 Stuart C. McDonald: I take it there would be significant support on the panel for Lord McColl’s Bill and an automatic period of 12 months?

All witnesses indicated assent.

Chair: Just a final thing to follow up, it would be helpful, I think, to have any information that you have from your organisations about the proportion of negative decisions that you do challenge and follow up. That would be very helpful. Part of the reason that I am asking this is we have had some evidence sent to us raising concerns about organisations not challenging for fear of losing contracts, for fear of the way in which the Home Office is managing the contracts and so on. It would be quite helpful to get to the bottom of that.

One of the bits of evidence that we were sent—and again I do not know the accuracy of it—was something that included a screenshot of something purporting to be a discussion with a member of staff from the Salvation Army, in which it says, “We do not question the decisions the competent authority make.” It would be helpful, given that, to have some



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more detailed information about in what percentage of cases that decision is challenged and whether that is also the view of all members of staff within the organisation, and whether there is any sort of perception more widely. That would be very helpful.

Thank you very much. I thank all of you for your evidence and also thank you for the support that you are providing to survivors and victims of trafficking and modern slavery across the country. We very much appreciate the services and support that your organisations provide. Thank you very much for your time this afternoon.