

# Victim Navigators

Supporting victims of human trafficking and ensuring prosecution of traffickers,  
United Kingdom

Modern slavery is a devastating and growing crime in the United Kingdom (UK). Victims are traumatized and without any support structures. The Victim Navigators (VNs) are specialists who work in partnership with police to help victims understand their rights and choices, access appropriate care, and empower them to support prosecution of traffickers. VNs train the police to better identify and support victims of trafficking and slavery.

## The problem

In 2019, the report “It Still Happens Here” revealed that there are more than 100,000 victims of trafficking in the UK<sup>1</sup>. In 2019, over 4,500 children were identified by UK authorities as potential victims of trafficking; an increase of 45% from the previous year (National Referral Mechanism), with criminal activity being the most common exploitation type. There is no longer a legal route to the UK for unaccompanied child refugees, pushing more minors into the hands of traffickers. The currently limited support for victims leaves them vulnerable and a target for re-trafficking. Poor victim support has also resulted in a low conviction rate of the organized crime groups responsible.

## The partner

Justice and Care pioneered its approach to fighting slavery and trafficking in India. They have a systemic approach to tackling slavery that involves prosecution, rescue and rehabilitation, and partnering with government to bring about long-term changes in policy and public service response. J&C established operations in Bangladesh in 2017 and the UK in 2018.

## The philanthropic solution

J&C will have 10 VNs in total operating in Essex (3), Surrey (1), West Yorkshire (1), Greater London (1), Greater Manchester (1), East Midlands (2), and Glasgow (1). The VNs will implement the following two main sets of activities:

- Provide holistic support to victims, which will include case-work to victims (e.g. liaison with support services, training front line service providers in trauma-informed care), supported repatriations to country of origin, and guiding victims

- through the prosecution process so they feel empowered to engage with police; and
- Support police investigations into the criminal networks responsible, which will include providing strategic advice at an early stage into modern slavery investigations, advice to live investigations, and specialist training to police forces in best practice victim identification and care.

## The evidence

The Victim Navigator Pilot Program was launched in July 2018 following extensive discussions with national police leaders, forces and leading national stakeholders. The 2020 interim evaluation conducted by St Mary’s University demonstrated the impact that can be made when specialists are embedded into police forces. In the pilot program, so far: strategic advice has been provided to 367 modern slavery investigations, 173 victims have been supported with intensive care plans, with over 82% engaging with police as a result, compared to a 33% engagement rate nationally. In addition, 1,893 Police, Border Force and other stakeholders (doctors, social workers etc) have been trained, with 97% of those surveyed reporting increased knowledge on victim identification and 77% improved knowledge of how to support victims.

## The impact

Regarding victim care and support, the program will:

- Provide care plans to 220 victims per year (20 per VN)
- Support law enforcement in rescuing 90 victims
- Train 2,200 Police, Border Force and other key stakeholders in victim identification and care per year (200 per VN)

Regarding prosecution of traffickers, the program will:

- Ensure that at least 70% of victims supported engage with police investigations and prosecutions
- Support the police in the arrest of an 100 exploiters
- Provide tactical advice to 400 investigations

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/library/it-still-happens-here-fighting-uk-slavery-in-the-2020s>

All programmatic data provided by Justice and Care. The UBS Optimus Foundation is a grant-making foundation that offers UBS clients a platform to use their wealth to drive positive social and environmental change. The Foundation selects programs that improve children's health, education and protection, ones that have the potential to be transformative, scalable and sustainable as well as programs tackling environmental and climate issues.

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