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EVALUATING THE PROVISION OF DISTRIBUTED TECHNOLOGY TO ADULTS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF MODERN SLAVERY

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INTRODUCTION

Funded and supported by the Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC), this project was conducted by researchers from the University of Liverpool together with representatives from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and from Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance (TARA). This research explored two key issues:

1. The ways in which UK organisations support survivors of modern slavery in ways that are mediated by digital technologies, both within and outside the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

2. The views and experiences of survivors in using digital technology to access support and in their everyday lives.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, just as many facets of our everyday life moved online, so did support for adults with lived experience of modern slavery. As a result, use of the internet and digital devices has become increasingly expected when it comes to the ways in which survivors access and receive support from organisations and public services. However, digital inequalities – that is, gaps in terms of digital access, skills, and attitudes – are still prevalent in our society. Such inequalities tend to affect the most vulnerable groups, including survivors of modern slavery who, having experienced forms of exploitation, need support to recover and find their place in society.

This study adopted a mixed methodology based on semi-structured interviews and a Delphi review survey. These were undertaken with a range of stakeholder organisations, followed by semi-structured interviews with survivors. Key findings that emerged from fieldwork suggest that it is essential to provide adults with lived experience of modern slavery with access to digital technologies and the skills, knowledge, and support they need in order to reintegrate into society. Survivors value the internet and digital devices not only for accessing different forms of support but also for undertaking different everyday activities such as communicating with family and friends and studying English. Unfortunately, however, the funding required by organisations for the provision of digital technologies (from smartphones and tablets to laptops) is both limited and inconsistent, as is the monitoring of the support given to survivors. Similarly, when it comes to the digital training offered to survivors, not only is more balance needed between individualised, tailor-made support and formal training, but more emphasis should also be placed on equipping survivors with the awareness of how to stay safe online.

The findings of this project have implications for future studies. We have identified a limited range of work in this area and recommend that more research is needed to support policy and practice. Our major recommendation is that the UK Government and devolved administrations allocate increased consistent funding to organisations working in this area explicitly to support the provision of digital technology *and* opportunities for digital training for survivors. In terms of provision, we recommend that a smartphone, data, and an entry level laptop should be the minimum that is given to survivors as part of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) support package. Finally, this report recommends that the design and use of a centralised online portal, which would include links to external support services, should be explored to facilitate the work of organisations, while also allowing survivors to monitor their own progress as they reintegrate into society.

OVERALL AIMS

The Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy and Evidence Centre (Modern Slavery PEC) called for research proposals to:

- Assess the benefits and drawbacks of the provision of distributed technology on the experience of accessing and delivering online services through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).
- Assess the impact of the provision of distributed technology and related online safety training on wellbeing and recovery and on safeguarding whilst in the NRM and the long-term impact of such provision or withdrawal.
- Explore patterns according to the type of technology, characteristics of individuals in support, and type of service received.
- Consider the situation across the different support provision in the UK (comparing several initiatives including at least one in Scotland and at least two initiatives in England and Wales).

The aims of this study were:

- To identify what day-to-day challenges and best practices look like in the context of how civil society organisations support survivors of modern slavery both online and offline.
- To explore how to best support organisations' day-to-day work both within and outside of the NRM.
- To shed light on the experiences of those affected by modern slavery in ways that relate to their use of digital technologies and account for wider and systemic issues of digital inequalities.
- To provide recommendations for policymakers, organisations and researchers working in this area.

To fulfil the aims above, this study addressed the following research questions:

- Research Question 1: How do organisations that support adults with lived experience of modern slavery across the UK do so using digital technologies?
- Research Question 2: What are the benefits and drawbacks of using digital technologies for supporting adults with lived experience of modern slavery via the NRM?
- Research Question 3: How do adults with lived experience of modern slavery use digital technologies both in general and to access and receive support?

CONTEXT

Modern slavery refers to the recruitment, movement and trafficking of children, women or men through the use of force, coercion and deception for purposes of exploitation, including, for example, criminal, sex or labour exploitation or domestic servitude (Human Trafficking Foundation, 2018; Modern Slavery Act, 2015; Such, Lauent & Salway, 2017). The UK Government has a statutory obligation to identify and support victims of modern slavery. There are a range of statutory and non-statutory organisations and initiatives that can support people with lived experience of modern slavery. However, the extent to which our societies are increasingly mediated by digital technologies can exacerbate inequalities and can limit access to services if these are only delivered online. It is important therefore that those with lived experience of modern slavery are supported to access these services in whatever form these are offered. Digital technologies can provide a range of opportunities, including participation in society, communication with family and friends and, among others, employment. However, they can also contribute to exposure to online harms. When it comes to survivors of modern slavery, this is of particular concern as it is well documented that digital platforms are actively used by traffickers in recruiting, abusing, and re-trafficking people as well as managing their own criminal organisations (O'Brien and Li, 2020; United Nations, 2022).

Literature in this area focuses on the issues that people affected by trafficking face, with Kasper & Chiang (2020; Appendix 3) proposing a framework that maps systemic factors that impact successful reintegration after exploitation. According to them, multiple factors, including survivors' financial and mental health, impact on their ability, and the support they need, to integrate successfully after experiencing different forms of modern slavery.

The NRM is the UK framework for identifying and supporting potential survivors of modern slavery, delivered by organisations offering specialised support services (UK Government, 2022). Potential survivors of modern slavery are referred to the NRM by 'First Responder' organisations, including government bodies such as the police force and sections of the Home Office, as well as specific non-government organisations such as The Salvation Army and Migrant Help. The Home Office then follow a two-stage decision-making process to determine whether individuals will be recognised as victims of modern slavery. Since its introduction in 2009, the NRM has grown considerably. In the years 2018-2021, the number of UK adults going through the NRM nearly doubled (Home Office, 2022c). In 2021, a total of 12,727 NRM referrals were made across the UK, with most referrals taking place in England (90%, i.e., 11,391), followed by Wales (4%, i.e., 479), Scotland (3%, i.e., 419) and Northern Ireland (3%, i.e., 363) (Home Office, 2022c).

Survivors who receive a positive 'reasonable grounds' decision from the Home Office (2022a) are given access to support – such as accommodation, financial and legal aid, and counselling – while awaiting a 'conclusive grounds' decision on their case. The length of time spent waiting for a 'conclusive grounds' decision varies from case to case, with a 'minimum recovery period' of 30 days, which is often longer in reality as the median time exceeds 500 days (Home Office, 2023a). Adults in England and Wales who receive a positive conclusive grounds decision are entitled to 'move on' support for at least a further 45 days via the Modern Slavery Victim Care and Coordination Contract (MSVCC), which was awarded to The Salvation Army (Home Office, 2022a). The Scottish Government funds TARA and Migrant Help to provide support for victims of human trafficking and exploitation in Scotland. In Northern Ireland, those with a positive 'reasonable grounds' decision are also offered up to 45 days of support, while in Scotland this is up to 90 days, and in some cases this extends beyond 90 days if a positive conclusive grounds decision has not been made. A Recovery Needs Assessment is undertaken following a positive conclusive grounds decision to make recommendations for further support (UK Visas and Immigration, 2023). Adults who decide not to enter the NRM may receive support from local authorities and/or NGOs (Home Office, 2023b).

SUPPORT AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

The NRM plays an essential role in the context of facilitating survivors' recovery and reintegration into society. While there are many organisations that provide support to adults with lived experience of modern slavery, they can be divided into those who are First Responders, NGOs contracted and subcontracted to provide specialist support through the NRM, and those who provide support outside the NRM, such as local authorities and other NGOs (Home Office, 2022b).

The support provided through the MSVCC touches on many aspects that are crucial to survivors' process of recovery (including, for example, accommodation in a safe house, financial support, translation services, healthcare, and legal advice) (Athub, 2023). However, while delivery of and access to these services often rely on the use of digital technologies, there is no specific requirement for the provision of these technologies within relevant documentation. In the digital-by-default landscape (Yates et al., 2015), support offered by organisations providing NRM support can be increasingly mediated by the internet and digital devices. Table 1 below lays out the type of support that organisations may be contracted to deliver through the NRM and the ways in which we would expect digital technologies to be potentially used as part of their support services. Despite the extent to which these technologies permeate the experience of survivors in accessing different forms of support, little is known in the literature about such digital provision and whether and how it is currently delivered and the challenges that organisations face. This report addresses this gap in the research.

Table 1: Types of support services provided through the NRM/MSVCC and how they could rely on the use of digital technologies.

Type of NRM/MSVCC support	Examples of potential use of digital technologies by support workers and/or survivors
Emergency accommodation (where needed)	• Emails used as evidence of need for accommodation – e.g., as advised by Athub (2023)
Access to the labour market, vocational training and education	• Online job searches and applications • Signposting to online information about training • Access to online training • Use of laptop or tablet for school-age dependents' homework • School contact for information via apps and/or email, online booking of parent evenings
Information on rights and services	• Access to online information about rights and services (e.g., health, counselling, legal aid, education, submitting claims)
Interpretation and translation services	• Using Google Translate • Searching for and recruiting interpreters
Financial support	• Online information about budgeting • Online banking • Online applications for Government support and benefits (e.g., Universal Credit)
Medical treatment, assistance and counselling	• Use of online platforms (e.g., Zoom) for counselling sessions • Online appointment booking for GP • Online support groups
Access to legal advice	• Searching for and contacting solicitors via email
Travel to appointments	• Searching for information about schedules (train/bus) • Online booking for Uber/taxi • Use of Google Maps

DIGITAL INEQUALITIES

The question of how adults with lived experience of modern slavery use digital technologies and access support services through these technologies is under-researched. This question is important if we are to better support survivors within and outside of the NRM, and in the wider context of tackling issues of digital inequalities. Even though our societies are increasingly digitally mediated, many individuals and groups do not have the same opportunities in terms of benefitting from the use of the internet and digital devices. Digital technologies enable citizens to pursue opportunities for social interaction, entertainment, health, employment, and education, among others. However, gaps in terms of digital access, skills, and attitudes are still prevalent in our societies and are often intertwined with broader socio-economic inequalities and factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and disability (Yates et al., 2015; Yates & Lockley, 2018; Yates et al., 2020; Carmi & Yates, 2020). As in the case of other marginalised groups, survivors of modern slavery are likely to experience different forms of digital inequalities, which could hinder their ability to integrate into society. Ironically, for a group that requires more support than others in terms of digital inclusion, little is known about the challenges that they experience and the ways in which they are digitally excluded.

There are some notable exceptions in the literature that deal with the challenges or benefits of survivors using mobile phone technology. One qualitative UK study conducted in 2013 by Elliott and McCartan found that mobile phone technology was increasingly being used to facilitate human trafficking, (e.g. drug production and distribution, sexual exploitation). By contrast, more recent work by Garbers et al. (2021) and Malpass et al. (2022) explored the ways in which survivors use smartphones and sim cards in their daily lives. Based on interviews with survivors, they argued that suitable technology packages should be included as standard support for survivors within the NRM. However, leaving these studies aside, important gaps in the literature remain, and not just in relation to the views and experiences of survivors and how they use digital technologies, but also in ways that account for the practices of and challenges experienced by organisations supporting survivors.

In the broader context of digital inclusion, the research team has developed an approach to assessing a Minimum Digital Living Standard (MDLS), initially assessed for households with children (Blackwell et al., 2023). Our deliberative group work with members of the public reached a consensus definition of MDLS:

A minimum digital standard of living includes, but is more than, having accessible internet, adequate equipment, and the skills, knowledge, and support people need. It is about being able to communicate, connect, and engage with opportunities safely and with confidence.

Though completed after the interviews were undertaken with stakeholders and adults with experience of modern slavery, the three key components of MDLS (see Figure 1) clearly complement the findings presented later in this report:

- Digital goods and services
- Practical and functional skills
- Understanding and managing digital risk

One of the key findings from MDLS is the fact that access via a mobile phone is not enough. To reach a reasonable level of digital access requires both mobile data and broadband access. Though mobile access with sufficient data is necessary, it is not sufficient to sustain reasonable digital access and opportunities. As we will note in our findings, mobile access is very important but does not provide the full level of access and support needed by survivors.

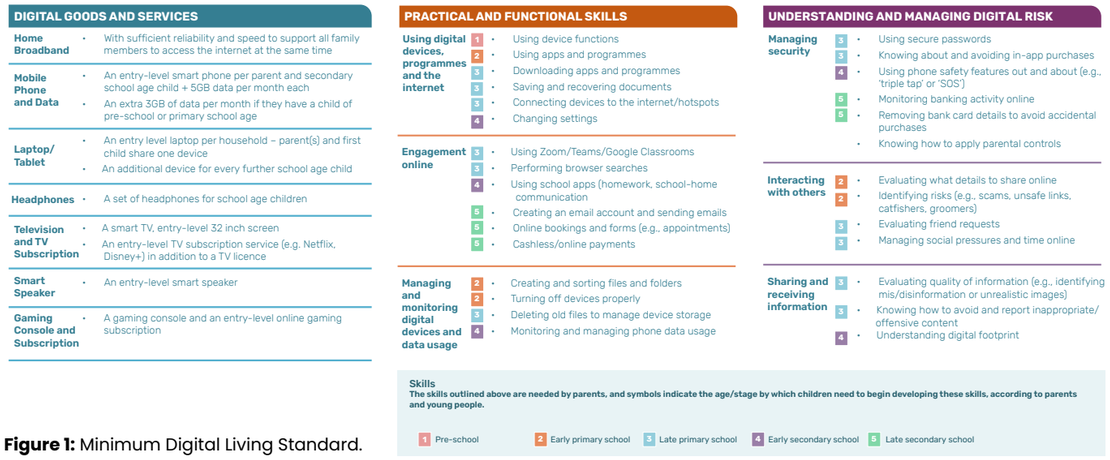

Figure 1: Minimum Digital Living Standard.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study adopted a multi-method approach, with a primary focus on qualitative methods which, given the exploratory nature of this study, were deemed ideal for answering the questions above. The research design and fieldwork for this study were carried out by the research team from the University of Liverpool together with representatives of IOM and TARA. After conducting a review of relevant literature in this area, fieldwork took place across the UK (see Table 2) from July 2022 to February 2023. In terms of data collection, the methods used were:

- Semi-structured interviews, conducted and recorded online via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, with representatives of civil society organisations supporting survivors (Research Question 1, Research Question 2).
- A Delphi review based on the design and administration of an online survey that solicited feedback from organisations about key thematic findings from the interviews (Research Question 1, Research Question 2).
- Semi-structured interviews, conducted and recorded online via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, with adults with lived experience of modern slavery (Research Question 3).

Analysis of the interview data was conducted in the form of thematic analysis using NVivo 20. As for the survey, which was designed and administered using JISC, the data collected was subjected to descriptive statistical analysis (focusing exclusively on frequency of responses) using the platform's own analytics. As the total number of responses was low (eight), percentages were not calculated.

Stakeholder acronym	Location	NRM First Responder: NRM1; Other Support Provider: OSP
S1	England	NRM1
S2	England and Wales	NRM1
S3	England	NRM1
S4	England	OSP
S5	England	NRM1
S6	England	OSP
S7	England	NRM1
S8	Scotland	OSP
S9	Scotland	OSP
S10	Scotland	OSP
S11	Scotland	NRM1
S12	Scotland	OSP
S13	Scotland	OSP
S14	Scotland	OSP
S15	Scotland	OSP
S16	Scotland	NRM1
S17	Northern Ireland	NRM1
S18	England	OSP

Table 2: Stakeholder participants

Participants

The sampling strategy used for recruiting stakeholder organisations was purposive, insofar as we aimed to maximise diversity in terms of location and type of organisations, while also being enhanced by elements of convenience and snowballing sampling based on word of mouth and the use of contacts known to the research team and our partners. We also aimed for diversity in whether the organisations were First Responders and whether or not they deliver NRM support through the MSVCC and services contracted by Scottish Government.

As for recruiting survivors, the sampling strategy was constrained by limited access to this population and the research team's caution in approaching this group via partner organisations (IOM, TARA) in line with ethical considerations. This is why, for these interviews, participants were recruited using a convenience sampling strategy based on the use of contacts known to the partners on this project. Table 2 provides details about the location and type of stakeholder organisations that were interviewed, using acronyms (e.g., S1 – Stakeholder 1) to preserve anonymity.

Stakeholders ranged from law enforcement and local authority umbrella groups to charities supporting people (both within and outside the NRM) who experienced modern slavery and are also claiming asylum, to those that focus more on aiming to influence policy in support of survivors. Stakeholders supported people from a range of backgrounds and genders and also supported people from a range of countries, with one stakeholder working with survivors from 76 nationalities.

The Delphi review survey was distributed to lists of contacts from partner organisations via a link to the online JISC survey platform in an email. The organisations that were invited to complete the survey were all of those which took part in interviews, as well

as other organisations that work in this area. The survey link was sent to 65 organisations. Even though the survey link remained open for five months, and organisations were sent regular reminder emails, response rate was unfortunately lower than expected, as only eight organisations filled out the survey.

As for the survivors who took part in the interviews, we had a total of 11 participants, of whom six were recruited through IOM and five through TARA. These partner organisations were well positioned to recruit on behalf of the research team, considering their work in this area and their involvement in providing survivors both with digital technologies and opportunities for digital training. From 2020 to 2022, IOM (2023), for example, ran the Skills, Training and Reintegration (STAR) programme to support survivors who had been identified through the NRM, with the right to work in the UK, and who could commit to a three-month training programme. All STAR participants had exited the NRM and were receiving post-NRM support from Hestia. The programme helped survivors with their development of employment, digital and life skills. All participants recruited through IOM took this programme (see IOM, 2022 for their final report), and all participants recruited for the study were female. Of the five women interviewed through TARA, four were provided with a smartphone/Mi-Fi/laptop or Chromebook; one was provided with Wi-Fi and a laptop. All five interviewees had participated in an initiative run by TARA and Ashurst which comprised a six-session course covering digital skills and safety.

Fieldwork

Interviews with organisations lasted around one hour, and incorporated questions related to their organisations and the ways in which they support people affected by modern slavery. The interview guide (Appendix 1) was designed in an iterative process between the research team at the University of Liverpool and the partners on the project. Three overarching themes with questions were decided on: 1) context about the organisations and how they use digital technologies and what challenges they experience, 2) the NRM, 3) organisations' views of survivors' experience of using digital technologies. As for the Delphi review survey with stakeholder organisations, the research team administered a survey using JISC online survey tool designed to solicit feedback on initial themes emerging from the stakeholder interviews. Questions outlined key themes and included closed questions asking organisations, using Likert scales, the extent to which they agreed with statements that reflected key themes from the interviews.

Finally, the interviews with survivors lasted around one hour and incorporated questions related to their experiences of using digital technologies both in everyday life and as part of their support journey. The interview guide (Appendix 2) was designed in an iterative process between the research team at the University of Liverpool and the partners on the project. As part of the research team's ethical considerations, there was an emphasis on discussing how to avoid any aspects of interview that might cause distress to the interviewees. The interview guide included notes on such considerations, and a separate distress protocol was put in place to ensure that, should any participant experience distress, this was minimised and dealt with appropriately. Participants were offered an incentive to take part in the research, which was decided in discussion with our partner organisations.

Three overarching themes with questions included: 1) context about survivors' overall use of digital technologies and its importance to them, 2) the NRM, 3) the use of digital technologies to access support.

Ethics

This project was approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Liverpool. All participants were provided with an information sheet about the project prior to interview, and written consent was sought. This information was reiterated verbally and recorded at the start of interviews. All personal information was anonymised during the transcription process. Acronyms are used throughout this report both for survivors (e.g., P1 – Participant 1), with no demographic information collected about this group, and for stakeholder organisations (e.g., S3, S16).

Limitations

This project represents one of the first attempts in this field to capture, through a rich, in-depth methodology, the ways in which survivors and organisations use digital technologies in the context of accessing and providing support respectively. However, it should be emphasised that this was a small-scale project and, as such, results cannot be generalised or applied beyond the UK context.

Due to the nature of the groups targeted in this research, recruitment of participants was necessarily limited, as it had to be mediated by project partners. In terms of the organisations that took part in the study, even though we adopted a purposive sampling strategy, Northern Ireland remained underrepresented as we only had a limited response from this nation. Similarly, the limited response rate for the survey sent to stakeholders represents another limitation of this study. People working in these organisations are often dealing with high-stress crisis management and now are helping their clients during a cost-of-living crisis. This might have been a relevant factor in limiting responses, as participants in this group may have experienced time constraints.

In terms of survivor interviews, there was a lack of gender diversity amongst participants, as all those interviewed were female. This was partly due to the focus of TARA as an organisation that only works with women.

FINDINGS

Based on a mixed methodology, this study aimed to answer the questions of 1) how organisations support survivors using digital technologies, 2) what the benefits and drawbacks of using these technologies are for survivors, and 3) how survivors use such technologies. The overarching themes that emerged from the analysis and triangulation of all the data collected for this study (that is, from the stakeholder interviews, the Delphi review survey and the survivor interviews) include: 1) provision of digital technology and support, 2) benefits of internet use, 3) safeguarding and internet risks, 4) training and skills, 5) building communities and online support networks, 6) building independence, and 7) digital management of information and referrals. The themes are presented in the sections below.

Provision of digital technology and support

In the information age, it is becoming increasingly important for people with experience of modern slavery to have access to technology to access services for recovery, reintegrate successfully into society and have the ongoing support they need. Stakeholders (including both First Responder organisations and Other Support Providers) highlighted the urgent need for survivors to have digital access and the importance of this, particularly since the spread of COVID-19, which is when their support services, from appointments with case workers and solicitors to counselling and training, moved largely online. During interviews, a range of reasons for moving services online were discussed by stakeholders, including accessibility and flexibility. Stakeholders emphasised that digital access is particularly important for the wellbeing of those who have faced exploitation and/or trafficking so they can receive support to take full part in society via activities such as engaging with groups and counselling, connecting with friends and family, and pursuing professional opportunities, as well as being able to use vital health, legal and educational services. Fundamentally, six stakeholders discussed a range of restrictions that can occur due to a lack of digital technology – for example, lack of access to counselling, employment, and the building of a social network. This also came out in the survivor interviews, in which all participants agreed enthusiastically that access to digital technologies and the internet was a crucial part of their lives and that, without it, they could not undertake essential tasks. As shown below:

Interviewer: *How important is it for you to have access to digital devices and why?*
P1: *It is very important, I can do anything [with it]… We don't need to go to the bank or we don't need to go to the GP because we can email them… It's making my life easy.*

Stakeholder organisations also discussed access to devices and the different features of devices. Findings from the survey suggest that organisations think that smartphones are the most comfortable device for survivors to use, followed by tablets and then laptops. However, both survivors and stakeholder organisations agreed during the interviews that this depends on the purpose for which survivors intend to use their devices. **S1** (NRM First Responder), for example, remarked that laptops are most useful for accessing Microsoft Office applications as well as educational content and job applications online. **S1** added that smartphones, by contrast, can be cumbersome for engaging with support services, such as online counselling, because of their features, with the screen being smaller, while survivors emphasised that they are useful for using maps and translation.

Awareness of the features of digital devices and how comfortably these can be used by survivors is paramount in the context of providing survivors with such devices. However, the issue at present is the lack of consistency amongst organisations and their technology provision, which applies to both NRM First Responders and Other Support Providers. For example **S7**, an NRM First Responder from England, spoke of providing laptops or smartphones and data packages to survivors, while **S3**, also an NRM First Responder based in England, discussed having provided survivors with data packages, smartphones, and tablets, but not laptops. By contrast, while a few organisations may only provide survivors with a basic phone (which would allow survivors to only make phone calls and send and receive text messages), **S5**, another NRM First Responder from England, commented in their interview about having given laptops to survivors, but this was through an internal application process, with two thirds of applicants being successful.

What is more, the funding needed for the provision of technology is equally inconsistent, with organisations often either relying on donations or undertaking their own fundraising, which is not guaranteed. External funding can come from a range of organisations and, during the COVID-19 period, the Home Office, provided a number of organisations in England and Wales with funding with the aim of supporting a larger number of survivors to access technology where services had become remote (e.g., if counselling services could not be provided face-to-face) (**S2**). In Scotland, several stakeholders mentioned the *Connecting Scotland* programme, which, as commented by **S8**, was led by the Scottish Government to provide funding to organisations supporting survivors in their use of digital technologies:

Because the majority of people that we work with are already linked in with a support organisation, we found that the Scottish Government gave a lot of money for people to be given smartphones, data for the year… all that came in quickly, because those organisations needed to be able to see their clients.

What is more, **S14** from Scotland added that the Scottish Government were also able to quickly allocate funds during COVID-19 that were diverted from travel funds. However, moving forward there were questions about whether funding for digital technology would continue to be forthcoming now that COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted. Relatedly, **S12**, also from Scotland, emphasised that 'funding is definitely the barrier' and that they are forced to resort to other avenues (e.g., technology companies). In addition, **S5** from England discussed, during their interview, how funding is also limited by restrictive criteria, meaning that some applications for funding from organisations may be rejected as it depends upon whether survivors are accessing specific support - for example, specific training, including how to use digital devices. Whereas all the organisations mentioned above are First Responders that are based in England, **S12**, a Scottish Other Support Provider, described giving smartphones to survivors in receipt of their support services delivered through the NRM as standard within their organisation, while providing tablets or laptops when funding was available during COVID-19. At the same time, **S8**, an Other Support Provider from Scotland, also remarked on the problem of a lack of centralised distribution and monitoring of digital technology provision across the UK, with instances of survivors mistakenly being given multiple devices by different organisations. Similarly, a lack of monitoring was also commented upon by **S7** from England (NRM First Responder), as they reported instances of survivors losing or having devices stolen.

While there is often a lack of communication between organisations, a few Scottish stakeholders reported some positive experiences of collaboration. **S8**, for example, discussed the close relationships that organisations have with external agencies such as the Scottish Government as well as the collaborative efforts that exist between those organisations supporting survivors. As shown in the quotation below:

S8: *Our relationships are good with the different organisations to kind of try to work collaboratively like try to work together, sometimes, you know, you are challenging them, but it's kind of par for the course. You just know people understand that. But a lot of the time, we're just trying to kind of work together and do the best for their clients and not trying to work in silos and further separate, you know.*

This is why, during the interviews, it was recommended by many organisations that a baseline minimum digital allowance (see our recommendations below as to what this report suggests such allowance should include) with access to data included should be in place and monitored as part of NRM provision to ensure that their clients are treated equally. This provision would in turn provide survivors with opportunities to move forward and integrate into society. Indeed, stakeholders felt that digital exclusion is an important issue to address in that, without technology (e.g., a smartphone or laptop), survivors are limited as to the support they can receive, for example in terms of contacting solicitors (**S4** from England). **S2**, based both in England and in Wales, explained in their interview that they were not satisfied with the level of digital support provided within the NRM, as 'everyone needs a smartphone'. **S17** from Northern Ireland commented that they provide survivors in the NRM with a basic phone, but one which 'obviously doesn't give you all the things that you need to get on social media'. **S3** and **S4**, NRM First Responders and Other Support Providers respectively that are both based in England, addressed the issue of the lack of Wi-Fi in some of the accommodation of those they support, reiterating the importance of providing funding for data packages and of making improvements in terms of online accessibility. As shown in the quotation below:

S3: *Yeah, it's very important… [we] provide internet data because… Zoom meeting[s are] like…always [online].*

Interviews with survivors revealed this to be another area of inconsistency in provision, as some were provided with broadband/Wi-Fi in their safehouse or hotel accommodation whilst receiving support through the NRM, while some were not. Similarly, while most who were provided with technology were able to keep any devices they received, this was not consistent across the board. Some survivors indicated that they had entered safe accommodation with their own device, with varying levels of support and training offered, once it was established they had access, in terms of how to use it. This issue was also raised in stakeholder interviews. While many organisations considered it necessary that such provision be permanent rather than temporary, most reported that this kind of permanent provision is often hindered by lack of funding, representing a considerable barrier to survivors' integration into society. Such permanent provision of devices on the ground is inconsistent.

Benefits of internet use

During interviews, survivors commented that they use the internet for a range of everyday tasks including learning, paying bills, shopping, entertainment, locating information and communicating with friends and family through social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok). Once they have been granted asylum, this extends to finding employment. Consistently, however, survivors said in interview that they were generally quite reluctant to post content online, using social media platforms mainly for browsing. In addition, most survivors discussed having to share devices with other members of their family, including their children who needed digital access for homework or to watch entertainment.

Particularly important for all participants interviewed is the use of WhatsApp and other applications (e.g., Zoom, FaceTime) to contact teachers of their children as well as their own family and friends. As shown below:

Interviewer: *Do you communicate with your family via technology and using the internet?*
P3: *Yes, when my daughter or my son are off school, I have to call them to find out where they are.*

Survivors often use digital devices also to book healthcare appointments or to engage in leisure activities. These include watching YouTube videos to learn new recipe ideas or to exercise. Most survivors remarked in interview that another advantage of using the internet and applications such as Google Maps is that it enables them to familiarise themselves with their local area and find directions. Many, furthermore, use the internet to either find employment and apply for jobs or to promote and help with their own profession. **P4**, for example, uses Instagram to promote her job as a hairdresser, posting images of hairstyles that she creates, and to locate additional hairstyle ideas. Similarly, **P1** talked about how essential using Google Maps is in her job as a carer, describing how it helps her to be flexible and take her clients to new destinations on their request.

What is more, many participants use digital devices to overcome language barriers. However, limited access to data can be an issue since, as survivors told us, they need to use translation apps, especially when away from home. Many stakeholders commented that not only is a lack of technology an obstacle to integration, but this is compounded by issues of language that undermine communication in general as well as causing difficulty with using internet services, which are almost never provided in languages other than English (see Stone et al., 2020). Alongside translation, it is also vital for survivors to be able to access education to learn English, and many survivors told us that they use the internet to take courses online. In her interview, **P7** remarked that:

I don't know the language, so [the internet] helps me a lot… Without the internet, I wouldn't be able to learn the language, which is a very big barrier socially.

Even though survivors often do their best to overcome communication barriers, it is crucial that interpreters are also made available by organisations when survivors need access to support services. However, involving interpreters in the context of communicating online with survivors can raise its own issues. **S2** from both England and Wales addressed, during their interview, the issue of privacy and the fact that people affected by modern slavery may not always feel comfortable on camera as they feel they 'may be recognised by the interpreter'. **S10** from Scotland explained that for some young people the only space they have in which to conduct online meetings is their bedroom within provided accommodation. She pointed out that this is not a trauma-informed way of working, expecting from young people:

… disclosure of the worst things that have ever happened to them from their bedroom… some children's units didn't have Wi-Fi or only had Wi-Fi… in one room and young people are competing over the space.

Although **S10** is speaking here about children and young people, these are issues that also affect adults.

Safeguarding and internet risks

Safeguarding is a key issue when it comes to survivors' use of digital technologies, as they encounter specific risks that must be accounted for. **S11**, an NRM First Responder provider from Scotland, emphasised this throughout their interview, describing the provision of digital technologies to survivors as a 'double-edged sword' that both offered support and comfort during reintegration but also acted as a potential avenue for re-exploitation:

… they wait until we've got them in accommodation, had them supported, and then they will contact them by whatever means to draw them into the exploitation… you can see phones co-located with exploiters and things like that… it's definitely an enabler.

Stakeholder organisations were generally aware of the safety issues that surround the use of technology, with the main concern being the risk of re-trafficking. Several organisations remarked on the fact that the risks that may be encountered online are explained to survivors when they are given digital devices within their organisations, but this was not reported consistently. **S4** from England felt that they should probably provide survivors with more support in terms of raising survivors' awareness of the risks that digital technologies present. Similarly, as found in the survey, most organisations (five of eight) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that more needs to be done to educate survivors about the risks inherent in using digital technologies, while three respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. During the interviews, some stakeholder organisations indicated that they only provide informal advice in relation to scams, but not re-trafficking. Relatedly, inconsistency among organisations in terms of providing either formal training or informal advice also emerged from the interviews with survivors. Those who had taken part in the Skills, Training and Reintegration (STAR) programme with IOM, which included skills for staying safe online, generally reported being confident when using the internet and a good knowledge of internet safety, while this was less consistent among other participants. For example, **P2**, a STAR participant, described the training she received, listing a range of skills she had acquired which allowed her to 'search up a job… search for if you want to buy something in the supermarket… talk to council… send a message on email… privacy and safety. Don't display your address. Your postcode and don't display and show your password.' **P3** below, however, described relying on the support of friends:

Interviewer: *Do you have any knowledge about internet safety?*
P3: No.
Interviewer: *Okay. So, do you feel safe online?*
P3: *Sometimes they call me on my phone, the police are asking for you. I told my friends. Oh, those people are fraud.*
Interviewer: *So, do your friends help you with this?*
P3: *Yeah, they say don't even answer the call. You really don't know the best thing.*

Safeguarding does not only concern issues of internet safety but is also about ensuring that survivors are given access to safe accommodation, which is a statutory entitlement and may raise concerns about internet safety as well. The provision of accommodation is a complicated area, as survivors' needs are assessed on entry to the NRM and not all will be offered a place in a safe house, e.g., they will be allowed to stay in their current, private accommodation if it is judged appropriate, and provided accommodation varies from safe houses to hotels or asylum support accommodation if they are eligible for this. Unfortunately, sometimes provided accommodation is not appropriate which can leave survivors in a vulnerable position. For example, **S11** from Scotland spoke about the fact that specific circumstances (e.g., high demand on Migrant Help) in Scotland has meant that some survivors have been housed in hotel accommodation rather than in a safe house. This can cause expense and security concerns, due to a lack of on-site care and the possibility of compromised privacy. On entry to provided accommodation, be that a safe house or hotel, if a survivor has a phone, support workers sometimes take it from them to ensure safeguarding (**S6** from England) in terms of preventing potential contact between survivors and perpetrators. Relatedly, **S2**, which is based in both England and Wales, discussed an incident where a survivor was being transported between locations and still had their phone. The survivor made a phone call to their perpetrator in their own language and informed them of their location and where they were going.

However, removal of phones does not happen consistently, and **S12** from Scotland described a reluctance to do this as they could not be sure that the survivor had any other way to contact them. As emphasised during the interview:

So, there's not any other way to contact them, if they didn't have their own device. It's not clear that a safe house has a staff member who can contact… clients are spread throughout the country… the hotel manager doesn't have a duty of care in terms of helping them to liaise with us or having a facility that they can do that. So we don't

have a policy to take [their phone]… we wouldn't have any power to take that away from them. I don't think either would we want to, so we don't work on that policy, we'd work on a policy of empowering people to be safe.

Similarly, among those survivors who told us they were offered accommodation in a safe house, most indicated that they had not had their phones removed upon arrival at accommodation. However, when in a safe house, survivors are often informed of the risks of using digital technologies and given safeguarding advice, for example in terms of avoiding posting on social media or how to change their phone number if traffickers get in touch with them (**S4** from England).

Many stakeholder organisations commented that they have safeguarding procedures in place. For example, there are some organisations that provide, and monitor use of, iPads and laptops within safe houses (**S2** from England and Wales), which provides survivors with some independence. Once in safe accommodation survivors may be provided with technology and made aware of any potential risks (**S2**). However, one of the issues that was raised during the interviews with stakeholders was whether survivors were able to keep the devices after exiting safe accommodation. As captured by the quotation below:

S6: *And […devices] were kind of kept ownership by the safe house, so when the clients moved on, they didn't take the devices with them.*

Consistency among, and the ability of, organisations to provide follow-up support is important to ensure that survivors apply any advice given regarding the risks of technology. Examples include not accepting suspicious friend requests on social media, ensuring that survivors do not post on social media, or are able to manage their privacy settings. It is important that people who were exploited are aware of the risks that may result from sharing their locations online, as it is imperative that safe house locations remain confidential to protect all those housed within. Meanwhile, a less prominent theme from the interviews with organisations included the risk of theft, with one stakeholder stating that they had three cases of stolen laptops. As identified in our Minimum Digital Living Standard research, ensuring individuals and households can understand and manage digital risk is a key component of meeting the minimum standard threshold (see Figure 1).

Training and skills

Just as important as training around internet safety is more general training in terms of survivors' digital skills development. Some survivors, especially at the start of their reintegration journey, may not have the necessary language or digital skills to apply for jobs, communicate with caseworkers or friends and family, or access educational opportunities. Stakeholder organisations discussed training their clients in the use of technology, acknowledging, as mentioned above, that mobile phones are generally easier to use than laptops, which is why training could be more focused on the use of laptops. While some training occurs offline (e.g., through phone calls or face-to-face sessions), many stakeholder organisations emphasised during the interviews that most training has now moved online. It is important therefore that survivors have access to digital devices such as laptops.

Digital skills training needs to allow autonomy for organisations and be tailor-made for survivors' needs, unfortunately this is currently lacking. Some organisations are already offering some structured opportunities for training in digital skills, often in collaboration with partners. **S3** from England, for example, spoke about a programme they are piloting specifically to support survivors with refugee status to claim Universal Credit, with the hope that this can be expanded in the future to also cover internet safety education. Most organisations provide some sort of iterative training on an individually assessed basis. **S2** from England and Wales described how their referral staff explain the risks surrounding use of connected technologies to survivors when they first engage with the service, thus providing informal training that, as discussed above, is crucial to safeguarding. **S6** from England provide both informal support and more formal sessions on, for example, how to avoid scams. Meanwhile, **S4** from England spoke about the effort made to sit down with clients and show them how to use laptops and explained about the difficulty of securing an available private space and/or interpreters.
In short, many organisations are struggling with provision of training as they lack the necessary resources and so provision is informal and provided on an *ad-hoc* basis.
Interviews with survivors indicated that they receive help and support with online skills from several sources, including formal and informal training provided by their supporting organisation, but also from friends and family, or, most often, their children. Those who had received some form of formal training were generally very positive about the experience. One person described how her confidence and skills developed after both the STAR programme (focused on how to stay safe and undertake different activities online including applying for a job, doing online shopping, and sending emails) and another course offered by her children's school that covered internet safety:

P4: *I did the [STAR] course and after the course I begin to be able to familiar to the internet, and everything was quite open and simple to me now to be able to use the internet on my own without getting any help… And I'll go on, do a course as well that this children's school called me how to be safe online. So yes, so that one is quite really helpful as well.*

At the same time, **P5** remarked on having developed her own digital skills by relying on her children, who were taught at school:

Interviewer: *Has anybody helped you to use the internet or to use your laptop?*
P5: *No…nobody helped me, no. If I don't know [something], I will ask my children…if my son is around, sometimes he helps me…he is very good at computers…*
Interviewer: *and where did he learn?*
P5:*…he learned at school.*

Again, as with safeguarding knowledge and skills, the need for basic training and skills clearly maps onto the need for practical and functional skills identified in our Minimum Digital Living Standard research (see Figure 1).

Building communities and online support networks

Stakeholder organisations spoke, during the interviews, of the importance of digital technologies for building communities and keeping in touch with external support – for example, solicitors, support workers and legal aid, Job Centre Plus and the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit of the National Crime Agency, who work directly with people affected by modern slavery. This was also given as a reason for survivors to be provided with a smartphone. In addition, most stakeholders provide a space for survivors to connect with others who have had similar experiences, which in turn helps them to build resilience and move forward.

Some stakeholder organisations felt it was important that survivors be actively encouraged to join support networks both offline and online. For example, **S7** from England offered a network led by adults with lived experience of modern slavery, and **S5**, also from England, coordinated a support group in London that was co-led by a survivor. More generally, survivors are often encouraged to join online support networks to meet others with similar experiences, which in turn can help them better integrate into society. As remarked by **S1** from England:

So, we do try to offer community groups they'd like to join [and] activities during the week to keep them active, keep them busy. You know, a lot of our survivors […talk] about [how] when they're doing other things, they stopped thinking about their experiences.

Similarly, survivors recognised during the interviews that joining online communities is one of the advantages of using the internet as it enables them to interact with people with similar experiences or from a similar background. For example, as **P8** explained:

P8*: I'm in the LGBT group*
Interviewer*: And have you found that useful? Being online?*
P8*: …yeah*
Interviewer*: …and do you meet online?*
P8*: …sometimes online, sometimes it's just face to face*

Building independence

Stakeholders discussed the role of digital technology in helping people affected by modern slavery to move on to independent living and how the lack of such digital technologies can be very limiting to that independence. **S2** from England and Wales emphasised, during their interview, that everyone should have easy access to a smartphone because 'life is so dependent on iPhones'. Digital technology is a portal for accessing, both through and outside the NRM, online resources and services (such as making appointments, counselling and employment) as well as accessing support for community-building, as discussed above. As explained by **S1** from England:

[Not having access to digital technology] is a barrier to independence because it's so annoying if you feel like you have to keep bugging someone like 'oh, I can't do this. Can you make this appointment for me or can you do that, do this?' Oh, yeah, I think it's hugely important for independence … because you can build so many skills, whether you're taking classes online, reading things, you know, accessing groups or Zoom calls online, having that kind of contact with people, and potentially a lot of them will have family in different places.

Finally, access to digital technologies is not only key in helping survivors to initiate and maintain contact with friends and family, but in building confidence, 'soft skills' and connections that can encourage them to move on to other services like education and employment. As remarked by **S12** from Scotland:

we were able to access an iPad for her… That's one of the things that transformed her life, being able to have a video call with her family… she is now looking to go to university… She's just thriving. But it was a big part of her journey.

Digital management of information and referrals

In our increasingly digitally mediated societies, digital systems are crucial for support workers and for efficiency. As emerged from the interviews, stakeholder organisations tend to use case management systems to ensure that all of their clients' details, including information about gender, age and number of dependents, are recorded. This helps them to manage information more effectively. As explained by **S5** from England:

I volunteered previously at The Salvation Army as a First Responder and in my previous job worked with councils. And so I knew it when it was an eight page paper document. And now it's an online system. So my kind of personal experience as a First Responder is that it is so much more efficient, and makes it a lot easier, rather than kind of printing it out, and then having to scan it in and send it off. And, yeah, so I really, really welcomed the move to digital for that.

For those referring potential survivors to the NRM, **S11** from Scotland spoke about the importance of the internet for being able to always access information, and the benefits that follow when gathering data about survivors:
we're all issued with these personal mobile devices… we don't use it as a reporting mechanism… they've got their indicators of trafficking at their fingertips when they need it, it's three o'clock in the morning in a dark place, when they've got nobody to ask that advice and guidance is there for them. And we also signpost them to that huge amount of information online on our internet page.

In England and Wales, adults who public authority representatives think are potential victims, and do not give their consent to be referred into the NRM process, are referred into the Duty to Notify. **S5** from England commented on the convenience of this system. Thanks to investment in digital technologies, the task of sharing information about potential survivors with the Home Office and referring people to either the NRM or the Duty to Notify (depending on consent) is no longer a separate process but is part of the same system.

However, while digital technologies have simplified the ways in which organisations identify potential survivors and make referrals, the survivors themselves involved in this study were often largely unaware of the NRM itself, despite receiving NRM support. This lack of awareness has implications in terms of whether survivors know about their rights and entitlements and are able to provide informed consent. The issue of awareness was raised by stakeholders and reflected in the interviews with survivors themselves. As emphasised by **S5**:

I think there's kind of wider problems with the NRM referral process, survivors' involvement in that, and really understanding what they're signing up to, whether that is paper or online.

Most respondent organisations from the survey (five of eight) agreed or strongly agreed that organisations should involve survivors more in the referral process to the NRM so that survivors better understand what is happening to them, while only three respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. At the same time, when asked specifically about the NRM in interview, most survivors themselves did not know what it is but were aware of the organisation providing them with support and were satisfied with the help that they were given. **S16** from Scotland explained that it is often difficult for survivors to retain information about the NRM and what this involves for them because this information is generally provided to them at the start of their journey, when they have just experienced something

traumatic. As shown below:

You've got to take into consideration the impact of trauma and memory… it could well be that because someone was in a traumatic state, they weren't able to take onboard and retain the information, and it's been lost in the memory.

The impact of trauma on survivors' ability to remember about the NRM suggests that more support is needed to ensure that survivors are more actively involved throughout the process (see recommendations below for how to achieve this).

CONCLUSION

This report presents findings from a research project that, funded by The Modern Slavery PEC, explored the ways in which UK organisations support, both within and outside the NRM, survivors of modern slavery in ways that are mediated by digital technologies, as well as the views and experiences of survivors in using digital technology to access support. Methodologically, this study was based on interviews, and a Delphi review survey, with a range of organisations, followed by interviews with survivors.

What emerged consistently across the data is that stakeholder organisations agreed that adults with lived experience of modern slavery must be provided with digital technology to assist in their recovery and reintegration into society. Similarly, survivors highly value the benefits that come with using digital devices and the internet and use these for a number of everyday activities, including booking medical appointments, studying English, seeking job opportunities, and communicating with family and friends, among others. Unfortunately, however, the provision of digital technology (from smartphone and tablets to laptops) and the funding required by organisations for such provision is both limited and inconsistent, as is the monitoring of the support given to survivors across the different organisations that operate in this area. Similarly, the digital training offered to survivors is generally *ad-hoc* and, while balance is needed between individualised, tailor-made support and formal training, opportunities for developing the digital skills and knowledge of survivors remain limited. Relatedly, more is needed to also equip survivors with an awareness of the risks that come with using the internet and how to stay safe online. Issues of language, online safety, and access to education and resources are not necessarily different to some of the issues that other marginalised groups experience in terms of digital inequalities. However, these findings suggest that for survivors of modern slavery these issues intersect and pertain to multiple and acute vulnerabilities specific to their lived experience, with implications for their mental health and potential to be further exploited.

As a result of the shift to digital since COVID-19, those affected by modern slavery now have access to a wider range of online services. It is important that opportunities for funding, which were more prevalent during the pandemic, are offered to organisations in the post-COVID age so that they continue to provide the support that survivors need in order to reintegrate into society. Digital support for survivors may be provided at different levels – local, regional and/or national. This report's findings suggest that there are inconsistencies in digital support across all levels. Arguably, digital support for survivors could also be provided by organisations promoting digital inclusion more broadly and not just by organisations, such as those covered in this report, which specifically target this group.

Finally, while it was recognised by organisations that there is often a big drop in the support provided once a person is granted a conclusive grounds decision, this study found that digital technologies can help survivors access a range of support services once they exit the NRM, but this can only happen if survivors have both access to and the skills required to use these technologies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the findings of this research, this report provides different recommendations for different stakeholders such as policymakers, civil society organisations, and researchers.

Policymakers

- More opportunities are needed for funding the work and initiatives of civil society organisations supporting survivors. We recommend that the UK Government allocates increased funding to support the provision of digital technology and data by organisations to survivors as well as opportunities for digital training. An avenue to explore for policymakers, in addition to providing more funding, could be the facilitation of donation of recycled digital devices from the private sector (e.g. technology companies) to civil society organisations supporting survivors.
- In terms of provision of digital technologies, we recommend policymakers to implement as part of the NRM, and provide guidance to organisations for, a minimum digital requirement for survivors that would consist of at least one smartphone, one laptop and a data package for survivors. A useful instrument for producing this guidance could be the Minimum Digital Living Standard measure that is currently being developed by the University of Liverpool in partnership with Loughborough University and others (see Blackwell et al., 2023 for further details). As for digital training for survivors, guidance should also be produced and shared with all organisations supporting survivors, including both those that deliver some form of digital training and those who currently do not, with clear emphasis on the type of training required (see recommendations for organisations below for further details). In order to produce such guidance, examples of best practice in terms of digital training programmes offered to survivors should be considered. A starting point could be the STAR programme offered by IOM (2022), as recommended by the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (2022) for providing centralised employment support. Another example of good practice could be the Connecting Scotland programme launched by the Scottish Government (see Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, 2023), which includes a package provision of digital devices and digital skills training. This means that the guidance produced by policymakers should incorporate signposting to existing support services – including, also, Good Things Foundation's national data bank and device bank as well as 'Learn My Way' training resources.
- In order to help organisations to better manage their workload, as well as for survivors to monitor their own progress and be more actively involved throughout the NRM process, we recommend policymakers explore the creation of an online portal for both organisations and survivors that needs to be highly secure and safe to use (see also recommendations for organisations below).
- Funding and guidance should be provided by policymakers with a view to supporting organisations to provide information on their websites in multiple languages, especially when it comes to the types of support services that they provide. Such a measure, which would alleviate language barriers experienced by survivors, should also apply to the design of the online portal suggested above.

Support organisations

- To aid survivors' reintegration into society, we recommend organisations explore the use of a centralised online portal (see also recommendations for policymakers above). This should be highly secure and safe to use and could include links to vetted external support services such as mental health websites, as well as features that enable survivors to refer themselves to such services. The portal could also provide access for survivors to access their own details and monitor their own progress once they enter the NRM. This will give survivors an element of control over their own recovery and help them in developing independence. Survivors could each be allocated with login credentials to manage their own progress. The portal could incorporate a traffic-light feature that identifies those survivors that are least and most vulnerable and/or at risk of re-trafficking.
- Organisations should be committed to taking a balanced approach to digital support and training. This would include providing access to both structured digital training as well as individualised and tailor-made support aimed at equipping survivors with the skills and knowledge they need in the digital age, with a focus on online safety. On the one hand, structured training aimed at developing survivors' more functional skills (e.g., to apply for jobs or search for information) and knowledge of online safety should be provided. On the other hand, informal *ad-hoc* guidance (e.g., one-to-one meetings or informal drop-in sessions) should also be made available by organisations so as to support survivors in terms of troubleshooting, if and when needed.
- Organisations should provide both formal and informal training (see above) in ways that are supervised by a specific body that may be established through the MSVCC and equivalents in the devolved administrations, whose responsibility would be to have oversight and ensure consistent provision of such training.

Suggestions for further academic research

- Future qualitative work could draw on this research in order to further explore the challenges experienced by organisations in this area as well as the views and experiences of survivors using digital technologies in the process of reintegrating into society.
- Quantitative research could build on this study to design and administer a UK-wide survey to map both the best practices and challenges of organisations working in this area. Such a survey could also provide a more detailed understanding of the patterns and variability in the current provision of digital technology to survivors, with a focus on the current gaps and where more work needs to be undertaken.
- International studies could also build on this research to explore questions around survivors' use of digital technologies and the support they receive within different contexts, and with a focus on different populations.

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APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW GUIDE: STAKEHOLDERS

Context and The Digital

- Can you tell me about your organisation? What does it do specifically in the context of supporting survivors of modern slavery?
- What types of survivors of modern slavery does your organisation support? Do you work with either men or women, or with both?
- What role do you play within your organisation?
- In what ways, if any, does your organisation support and provide support to survivors through the use of digital technologies? For providing support, how reliant are you and your colleagues on the internet and digital tools and devices? How do you use these technologies?
- Has your organisation experienced any challenges in terms of creating digital safety plans aimed at reducing risks (e.g., in the context of re-trafficking or recruitment of survivors by exploiters) that may affect your ability to provide support?
- How confident are you and your colleagues in your ability to access and use digital technologies in the context of supporting survivors?
- Could you give me some examples of how you've used these technologies in practice? How useful did you find these technologies in terms of the work that you had to do?
- How has the shift in increased use of digital technologies impacted on your work in terms of supporting survivors?
- Would you say that you, and your colleagues, have received adequate training, if any, to use the digital technologies required to fulfil your job? If so, what kind of training and did you find it useful?

National Referral Mechanism

First responders

- If you are a First Responder (that is, an organisation that is responsible for making referrals into the NRM), how was your organisation supported to make the transition from paper to digital referrals into the NRM?
- How confident do you feel about making digital referrals to the NRM?
- As a First Responder, what kind of challenges, if any, have you experienced when using digital technologies to make referrals into the NRM? What kind of action, if any, have you taken to deal with these challenges?
- Has your experience of using digital technologies to make referrals into the NRM been positive or negative? What made you say so and can you give me some examples?
- In what ways, if any, have digital technologies improved or hindered the NRM referral process?

All stakeholders

- What types of referral mechanisms, if any, are in place in your organisation in terms of supporting survivors, and how do you use them?
- Do you use digital technologies to refer clients to other support services (both statutory and non-statutory – e.g., GP surgeries and NHS, counselling services, legal advice, welfare, education and vocational services, etc.)? If yes, could you please explain how you use these technologies and list the support services that you access digitally?
- What kind of challenges, if any, have you and your colleagues experienced when using digital technologies when making referrals to other support services? What kind of action, if any, have you taken to deal with these challenges?
- Has your experience of using digital technologies when referring clients to support services been positive or negative? What made you say so and can you give me some examples?
- In what ways, if any, have digital technologies improved or hindered access to support services for your clients?

Survivors and The Digital

- How important is access to digital technologies for survivors of modern slavery?
- What is the impact of digital technologies on survivors' wellbeing?
- What support services do your clients access using digital technology?
- How do your clients use digital technologies in everyday life (e.g., paying bills, finding work, banking etc.)?
- What types of skills and knowledge do survivors need in order to access and use digital technologies and to request and receive the support they need?
- What barriers do you think limit survivors in terms of how they use digital technologies? Can you give me some examples of situations in which survivors might have struggled using these technologies?
- What risks have you identified for your clients when using digital technologies to request and receive the support they need? How do you mitigate these risks?
- What issues have your clients encountered when using digital technologies to request and receive the support they need? How have you supported them to overcome these?
- What types of procedures, if any, does your organisation have in place in order to support how survivors both use digital technologies and receive the help they need?
- How satisfied are you as an organisation with the digital services that you provide survivors? What is the reason for your answer?

APPENDIX 2 – INTERVIEW GUIDE: ADULTS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF MODERN SLAVERY

Note: Ensure that we follow the Do No Harm principle (i.e., avoid discussing traumatic history/experience of exploitation) so as not to re-traumatise participants. Interviews must be conducted in line with the principles set out in the IOM Handbook on Direct Assistance of Victims of Trafficking[1], the Slavery and Trafficking Survivor Care Standards (STSCS)[2], and the Helen Bamber Foundation Trauma Informed Code of Conduct[3]. Interviewers must read these documents before conducting the interviews.

Considerations for interviewers

Avoid using the word 'victim' as it implies powerlessness. You can use the word 'survivor' or preferably 'person with lived experience of modern slavery', but avoid the use of labels whenever possible.

Be mindful of possible differences among participants, for example in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, language, socio-cultural background.

When conducting the interviews, it's important to speak slowly and clearly using simple language to ensure participant understanding. Remember for most/all participants English will not be their first language. If an interpreter is present, they will be briefed about the nature of the interview as well as being offered an opportunity for a debrief in case the interviewee becomes distressed as a result of taking part in the interview.

It is important to note the participants are likely to have experienced exploitation, violence and abuse often leading to stress, anxiety or trauma. Be aware of using any questions/comments that could trigger thoughts that might lead to distress.

If a participant becomes distressed or makes a disclosure during an interview it is important to follow the steps set out in the distress protocol (or other agreed plan). These steps can be discussed/agreed with the participant at the beginning of the interview.

Check-in regularly to ensure they understand what is being asked and also to check their wellbeing/if they need a break. Be aware of signs of distress or dissociation. See below:

Some signs and symptoms of distress include: 1) Discomfort during a question; 2) Participant becomes nervous, angry, they don't maintain eye contact when they respond to a question; 3) Disclosure of ongoing abuse, self-harm, suicide attempts, or suicidal feelings; 4) Participant becomes emotional during an activity or when asked a question, starts crying, and shows signs of anxiety, such as shaking, sweating, or experiences headaches and difficulty formulating a sentence; 5) Participant dissociates, becomes disconnected during an activity; 6) Participant shows no interest in taking part in the exercise or responding to question, suggesting a lack of comfort.

It is important the participants don't feel rushed or under pressure. We would recommend allocating an extra 15 mins for each interview to allow them to run over if needed.

Check-in with someone within the research team and debrief following interviews so as to discuss any potential distress for the interviewers or the interviewees.

Survivors and The Digital

- How important is the internet to you? Which devices (e.g., laptop, smartphone, tablet), if any, do you use to access the internet?
- Do you access the internet through broadband (Wi-Fi) and/or internet data?
- Do you get any help paying for these devices and/or access to the internet? (note: if they refer to the NRM or the organisation that supported them via the NRM, go to section 2 below and then go back to this section)
- Do you share the same devices (e.g., phones, laptops, tablets) with family or friends? How has this helped other people using them (e.g., children's homework)?
- How important is it for you to have access to those devices and why?
- How do you use the internet in your everyday life (e.g., communicating with family, helping your children with homework, using Google maps, paying bills, finding work, banking etc.)? What do you enjoy doing online? What websites do you visit most often?
- How confident are you in using the devices and the internet? (Do you find it easy or hard to use the devices and the internet?)
- Where do you go for help in using the devices when you need it? Is there something that you would like to learn more about?
- What do you find difficult when using digital devices and the internet? Can you give me some examples of when you might have found it hard to use these technologies?
- Have you ever felt at risk or do you have any concerns about being online? What risks/concerns (e.g., misinformation, financial safety, privacy, online abuse) and how did you cope/deal with them?

1 https://publications.iom.int/books/iom-handbook-direct-assistance-victims-trafficking-0
2 HTF Care Standards v2.indd (squarespace.com)
3 https://www.helenbamber.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/HBF%20Trauma%20Informed%20Code%20of%20Conduct%202nd%20Edition.pdf

National Referral Mechanism

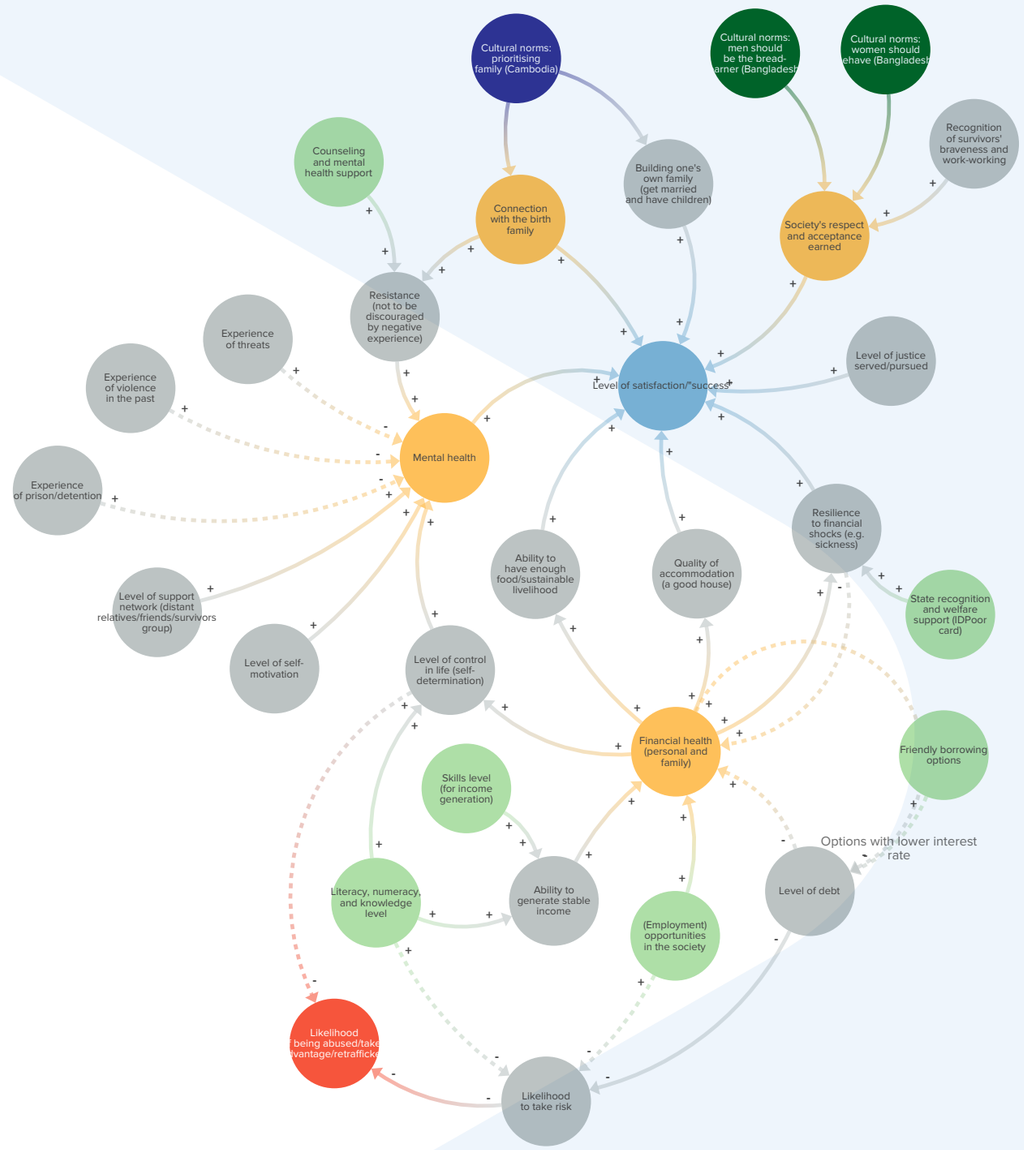
- Have you heard of the National Referral Mechanism? Did your caseworker ever talk to you about it?
- When were you referred to the NRM?
- Who supported you to access the National Referral Mechanism (e.g., the police and/or other organisations)?
- What kind of support (e.g., with accommodation, day-to-day living, medical or legal advice, language, counselling, repatriation) did you access through digital devices after you were referred? Are you still receiving support from them?
- When you entered the NRM, were you offered a place at a safe house?
- When you entered the NRM, were you given access to something like a laptop, a smartphone or a tablet? Who gave you this, if anyone? Did you get to keep it?
- When you entered the NRM, did you have broadband (Wi-Fi) access and/or internet data? Who gave you this, if anyone? How long did you have it for? Was it only for a short time?
- If you entered a safe house, were there any rules or restrictions about your use of devices and/or the internet?
- Did you receive any training or help as to how to use the device you were given? What type of training or help and did you find it useful? Why/why not?
- Did you receive any training or help as to how to use the internet safely? What type of training or help and did you find it useful? Why/why not?
- Do you feel you had enough support once your outcome/referral was successful (i.e., once a positive decision was made)?

Other Services and Support

- What kind of other support services, not the NRM if any, have you used or been supported to use online (e.g., GP surgeries and NHS, counselling services, legal advice, welfare, education and vocational services, etc.)? Which of these services have been most useful to you?
- What challenges, if any, did you have when using these services online?
- Who supported you in accessing or using those services? How helpful was the support you got?
- Are you part of any (formal or informal) support groups, either online or offline? What kind of groups (e.g., art, photography, yoga, etc.)? How helpful are they and in what ways?
- If you could change anything about the kind of support that you've had, what would you change?

APPENDIX 3 – MAP OF SYSTEMIC FACTORS IMPACTING SUCCESSFUL REINTEGRATION AFTER TRAFFICKING

(KASPER & CHIANG, 2020)



This map is available at the following address, where you can explore the factors and their relationships interactively and in greater detail:
https://kumu.io/BK28ZP9/successful-reintegration

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