



## **'Exploitation; the scale of it and the impact on our responses' For Dialogue**

**August 2025**

**Lin Sands (Police & Justice Lead/Trainer)**

**NWG Network**

Thank you for joining the session. All the information below was included.

### **Who is the NWG Network**

- NWG is a 'National Working Group', non-profit charitable organization
- Supports a UK network of over 14,500 statutory/non statutory practitioners
- Disseminating information to support professionals working on the issue of Child Exploitation (CE) and trafficking within the UK
- Offering specialist support & guidance
- Raising the profile of CE in childhood/young adults
- Resources, training & a platform to share practice
- Influence the development of national & local policy, legislation & protocols

### **More Specifically....**

- National campaigns – Say Something if you See Something informed 'Make safe'.
- National Child Exploitation Awareness Day
- First Exploitation Disruption Toolkit – this week relaunch of a Modernised resource.
- Informing/educating specific groups (Faith/Sport/Entertainment) after change in sexual offences Act
- Platform for IICSA change makers, Internet Watch Foundation and Dept of Education
- Chairing Exploitation Meetings – Sharing learning
- Working groups in collaboration with other agencies/groups

### **Modern Slavery (Modern Slavery Act 2015);**

- Human Trafficking
- Slavery & Servitude
- Forced or Compulsory Labour
- Organ Harvesting

"Slavery & Servitude" includes all forms of exploitation; Sexual, Criminal, Financial, Forced Marriage, Radicalisation, FGM, illegal adoption & Domestic Servitude.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/30/contents>

### **The NRM (National Referral Mechanism):**

- From 30.01.23, the 'test' of whether a person was a victim of Modern Slavery or not, was amended.
- The decision maker/s must agree that based on '*objective factors*', there are '*reasonable*

NWG Exploitation Network Suite 1 Innovation House East Service Road Raynesway Derby DE21 7BF 01332 585371  
[network@nwgnetwork.org](mailto:network@nwgnetwork.org)

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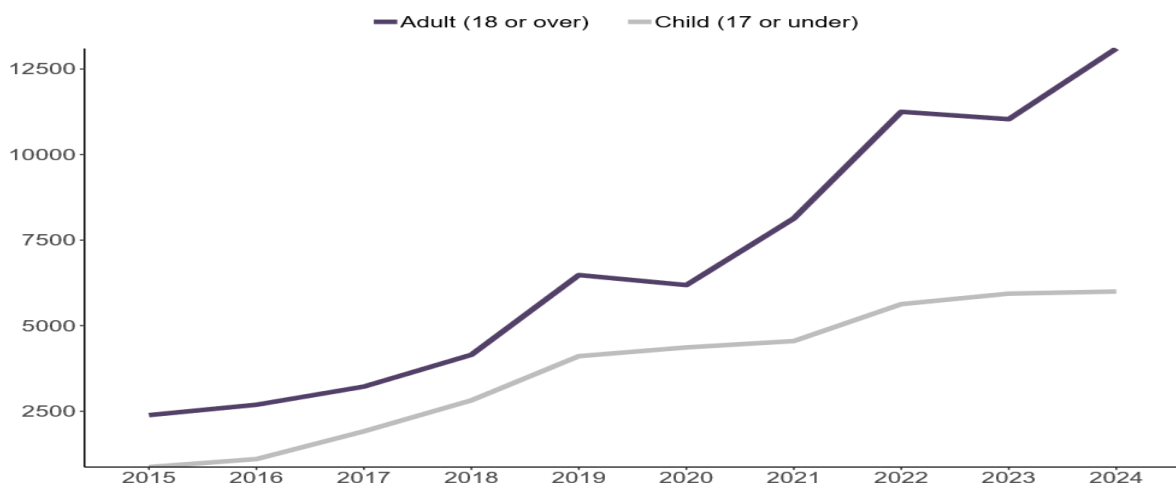
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*grounds to believe that a person is a victim of modern slavery’.*

- From 10.07.23, the test was further amended; the test remains an objective one.
- The decision maker must agree with the statement that there are “*reasonable grounds to believe that a person is a victim of modern slavery*”.
- This takes the victim’s account into consideration and any other relevant information to consider whether, in the circumstances of the case, it is reasonable to expect supporting information to be available.

#### The Scale of the problem:

	2023	2022	2021
<b>Number of children known as victims</b>	<b>7432</b>	<b>7019</b>	<b>5468</b>
<b>Number of male child victims</b>	<b>5918</b>	<b>5607</b>	<b>4314</b>
<b>Most prevalent form of abuse through MSHT</b>	<b>Criminal Exploitation</b>	<b>Criminal exploitation</b>	<b>Criminal exploitation</b>
<b>Most represented nationality</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>UK</b>



#### The NRM (National Referral Mechanism):

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[network@nwgnetwork.org](mailto:network@nwgnetwork.org)

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- A total of 8,156 referrals were made to the National Referral Mechanism reporting exploitation entirely within the UK between October 2023 and September 2024.
- A total of 4,415 referrals (54%) were for UK nationals
- 58% (4,697 of 8,156) of referrals, the potential victim reported exploitation as a child.

**Source: NCA**

#### **Technology Assisted Child Sexual Abuse (TACSA):**

- Social media & gaming platforms encompass a wide range of communication & file sharing features
- Lack of safety measures (robust age verification, effective moderation processes &/or reporting mechanisms)
- The deployment of end-to-end encryption without appropriate mitigations on social media platforms can undermine Safety by Design and impairs industry ability to identify child sexual abuse content.
- Identification of indecent/abusive images of children continues to increase

**Source: NCA**

#### **Internet Watch Foundation (IWF):**

- In 2024 the identification of 291,273 webpages confirmed as containing indecent images of children
- A 6% increase since 2023
- 91% were classified as 'self-generated indecent imagery' (shared consensually/ via manipulation)
- Most common age 13 to 14
- Continued upward trend in reports of under 10's (ages 7-10)
- Financially motivated sexual extortion of children predominantly affects young males
- 90% victims were 14 to 17 yr old male

#### **What is Grooming:**

Grooming is when a person (the perpetrator or abuser) builds a connection with a child, young person or adult, or someone close to them so they can abuse them.

Often this is done using threats, coercion, trickery or gifts. This means that abuse by exploitation can occur even when it appears consensual or if the victim doesn't recognise what's happening as abuse.

#### **Updated Disruption Resource**

<https://toolkit.stop-ce.org/>

#### **Case Library Template**

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=jAH6\\_p\\_1ak6shGE73a3lOn\\_1n0zY1QpPrAzGTjJDQ5FUNhGOTY1SE9FUVhNQ0MyWUVTN1dGVTFsQy4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=jAH6_p_1ak6shGE73a3lOn_1n0zY1QpPrAzGTjJDQ5FUNhGOTY1SE9FUVhNQ0MyWUVTN1dGVTFsQy4u)



**Things to remember;**

- Nothing about us without us - hear what's not said
- A child cannot be expected to protect themselves from abuse
- Be vigilant, any child can be a victim
- Recognising and responding to modern slavery and human trafficking is all our responsibility
- Be kind
- Don't make assumptions
- Signs are enough, don't wait to report!
- The importance of multi-agency working – trust your instincts
- Map what we know
- Every situation is different
- Professional curiosity

**\*\* Please note this is NOT an exhaustive list**

- **It's EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY to recognise and respond to the signs of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.**
- **Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking IS CHILD ABUSE.**
- **Child Abuse ALWAYS needs a safeguarding response – do not be afraid to say this.**
- **Follow your local Safeguarding Procedure & DON'T be afraid to escalate your concerns if you feel unheard.**

Thank you for taking part in our training session. Your feedback benefits other practitioners by influencing our training content which in turn supports the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable children.

<https://nwgnetwork.org/>

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**Any comments, queries, questions or feedback please contact:**

[lin@nwgnetwork.org](mailto:lin@nwgnetwork.org)

**Thank you!**