

OCTOBER 2019

THE JOURNEY OF OUR UK SURVIVOR NETWORK: CHALLENGES & SUCCESSES



BY

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This report would not be possible without the expertise provided by the UK members of Survivor Alliance. We owe you our deepest gratitude for your trust in us, and for your daily fight for justice.

We also want to thank the University of Nottingham's Rights Lab Beacon of Excellence for providing generous funding and support for Survivor Alliance. Their support enabled Survivor Alliance to host the first UK Survivor Network meeting, and the subsequent development and printing of this report.



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This work comprises the perspectives of various members of Survivor Alliance's UK Network. Views expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions and experiences of all members, nor the official stance of Survivor Alliance UK.

When quoted, members' names have been changed in order to maintain confidentiality.

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Printed in the United Kingdom
First Printing, October 2019

Visit www.survivoralliance.org



WHO ARE WE?

SURVIVOR ALLIANCE UNITES & EMPOWERS SURVIVORS OF SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING AROUND THE WORLD

Survivor Alliance is an international, US-based not-for-profit, made of, by, and for survivors of slavery and human trafficking. Survivors must maintain a majority on our Board and staff, and membership is only open to people who self-identify as a survivor. Survivor Alliance builds sustainable survivor communities that focus on meaningful survivor inclusion, economic empowerment, and wellbeing. Survivor Alliance UK CIC is a social enterprise that supports the development of the UK Survivor Network, consults with UK anti-slavery organisations, and provides operational support to Survivor Alliance.

.....
OUR VISION: A WORLD WHERE SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SLAVERY ARE THRIVING MEMBERS OF SOCIETY
.....

We aim to achieve this by two means:

1 Helping foster local, sustainable, survivor-led communities in our members' localities

We aim to empower our members to lead and direct their own communities, which correspondingly creates a safe space for peer-to-peer support, advocacy and mentoring.

2 Creating consulting opportunities for our members

Our consulting opportunities empower our members economically, as well as ensuring that their expertise and opinions are considered within anti-slavery policies, service provider protocols, and research efforts.

UKSN: WHO ARE OUR MEMBERS?

OUR UK SURVIVOR NETWORK (UKSN) CONSISTS OF APPROXIMATELY 38 PEOPLE. EACH HAS A DISTINCTIVE PAST, PERSONALITY, AND JOURNEY, AND EACH HOLDS DIFFERING OPINIONS REGARDING THEIR EXPERIENCES POST-SLAVERY. OUR FIRST MEETING OCCURRED IN OCTOBER 2018.

We believe that our members have unique expertise to offer the anti-slavery movement. In the pages to come, you will read their depiction of their journeys as survivors in the UK, alongside their recommendations for service providers and anti-slavery organisations.

In this page, we introduce you to our UK Network. As part of our values, we do not request information from our members unless absolutely relevant. As such, we do not have a complete picture of the demographics of our group. However, here is what we do know:

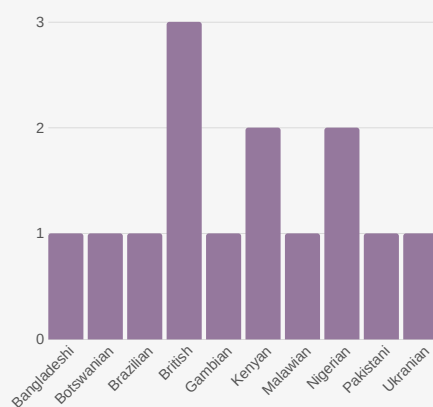
GENDER:

Women, men & gender non-conforming

AGE:

26 to 60 years old

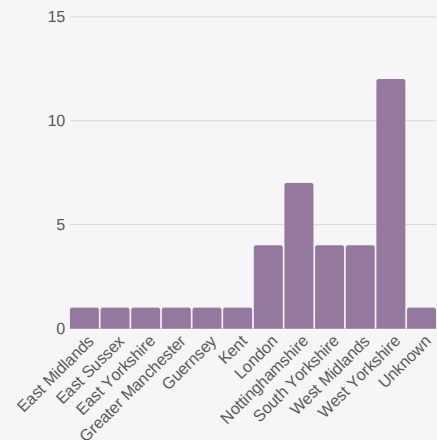
NATIONALITY:



PREVIOUS OCCUPATIONS:

- Teacher
- Customer Service
- Nurse
- Student
- Born into trafficking
- Other / Unknown

LOCATION IN UK:



KEY STOPS ON THE JOURNEY*

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THRIVING AS A SURVIVOR.....12

*Not all members engage with each 'stop' of this journey. Their journeys are complex, diverse, and often not linear. In addition, some 'stops' overlap - members may engage in leadership while continuing to struggle with housing, asylum, and awaiting NRM decisions.

FIRST IDENTIFICATION

OUR MEMBERS HAVE COMMENTED EXTENSIVELY ON THE PROCESS OF ENGAGING WITH POLICE OFFICERS AND HEALTHCARE STAFF DURING MOMENTS OF FIRST IDENTIFICATION. BELOW ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES THEY HAVE FACED, THEIR POSITIVE EXPERIENCES, AND THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BETTER ENGAGEMENT -



"Police and healthcare staff need to be educated about the significance of their jobs. They need to know that they are dealing with the lives of people, and their futures."
- Nancy

"They tried to calm me and make me feel safe, and listened to me carefully. I didn't expect them to, to be honest. I thought they were like in my home country, but I was really supported by them all"

JANET*

"They should not expect victims to be perfect or to not make mistakes while making a statement, most of them have been where police are corrupt... They should understand that some people act foolishly when threatened, but it doesn't mean they are lying"

ANONYMOUS MEMBER

LIAM*

"They should take into consideration the statement victims give while overwhelmed, we are always scared of telling the whole truth when first talking to them"



INVOLVEMENT WITH HOME OFFICE & NRM*

INTERVIEW PROCESS

BELOW, THOSE OF OUR UK NETWORK WHO HAVE ENGAGED WITH THE NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM COMMENT ON THE CHALLENGES OF THE INTERVIEW STAGE, AND OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A PREFERABLE PROCESS -

COMMENTS

- "They seem to think that people are just there to benefit from the system unjustly, so they don't take us seriously"
- "The way they question you is as if you're a liar"
- "There is a lack of collaboration / communication between departments"
- "We're seen as paperwork rather than humans"
- "The interviewing process is triggering"
- "I was told I would have a face to face interview but never heard from them... until I was given a negative decision"
- "The process is... so exhausting and inconsistent"

RECOMMENDATIONS

- "Don't ask us for details about what the strangers did to us. Don't remind us of how much we suffered and make us feel uncomfortable, and to feel again all of what happened to us"
- "Don't waste people's time by making them wait longer for interviews"
- "Don't put pressure on us, and listen to us carefully, because we are not here for fun"
- "Don't judge someone based on the country they're from"
- "The interviewers should not make the person feel intimidated"
- "Be honest if you make a mistake. Blaming the victim for the mistake is re-traumatising"

INVOLVEMENT WITH HOME OFFICE & NRM

WAITING

FOR MANY OF OUR NETWORK, THE PERIOD OF TIME FOLLOWING THE INTERVIEW - BEFORE RECEIVING A DECISION - IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT. HERE, THREE MEMBERS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES -

NANCY -



"Waiting for a decision following the interview is re-traumatising, and is a re-trafficking process. Like a trafficker, the Home Office promises you care and quality support. Like your trafficking experience, you feel that you cannot run away from the Home Office, because they know all your details and everything about you."

"I was told my wait time... was my 'reflection period'. Like I was some naughty child who needed to 'reflect' on their behaviour! What I was actually supposed to be 'reflecting on', I have no idea. Your whole being is on hold while you wait for some invisible beaucratic nightmare to complete its process and spit you out the other side with a 'yay' or a 'nay'. You have no proof of your identity, no access to welfare, no national insurance number, no home, no voice, no say. "

ANONYMOUS MEMBER -



"The wait is re-traumatising. I am still waiting... I have been for more than 900 days. This has caused serious consequences and delays to my asylum claim. I have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety with panic attacks, and low mood by my psychotherapist, in the context of this traumatic experience and the uncertainty of whether I will reunite with my children. I have provided all the documents they needed. The NRM is sitting on my life and the life of my children"

SISTER J* -



INVOLVEMENT WITH HOME OFFICE & NRM NRM DECISION

OUR MEMBERS OFFER THEIR OPINIONS ON THE HOME OFFICE'S 'POSITIVE / NEGATIVE CONCLUSIVE GROUNDS' DECISION-MAKING -

"Once you get a positive decision, you no longer have their support and they don't tell you what to do next."

"I don't get why, if two people go through the same experience of trafficking, why one person gets 'Positive Grounds' but not the other? Treat them the same!"

"Once the NRM decision is made they throw you to the wolves. They make the decision for you as to whether you still need support or not, and you have no say about it. No-one checks on you to see how you're doing and if you're happy with the decision they made for you."

ASYLUM SEEKING

OUR MEMBERS OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS & STATEMENTS REGARDING THEIR EXPERIENCE OF SEEKING ASYLUM -

"The feedback should not take forever as its holding our lives back!"

"It feels like they're trying to destroy us, by leaving us waiting. I feel stressed, depressed and hopeless for a free, safe future. We need to know the answer to know what is going on with our lives!"

"They make us wait too long to find out the decision. While we are waiting, they don't give extra opportunities to talk and explain my reasons for being at risk."

SERVICE PROVISION

HOUSING

THIS PAGE SHOWS DETAILS OF THREE MEMBERS' JOURNEYS AROUND THE UK, DUE TO ACCOMMODATION TRANSFERS. ALL ACCOMMODATION SINCE FIRST IDENTIFICATION IS LISTED, INCLUDING SAFE HOUSES & COUNCIL HOUSING.

STEVE*

1. London: 2 weeks
2. Wakefield: 4 weeks
3. Huddersfield: 2 years 1 month



NANCY

1. Luton
2. Dover: 3 months
3. Leeds: 1 year
4. Bradford: 1 year
5. Hull: a few months
6. Bradford: 3 years



"Do they realise that getting a house is maybe the breakthrough we need?"
- Karen*

KAREN*

1. Police custody (not pictured)
2. Service Provider Hotel (not pictured)
3. Leeds: 3 weeks
4. London: 2 days
5. Wakefield: a few months
6. Leeds: 1.5 months
7. Leeds (second location): 2 years 9 months
8. Leeds (third location): a few months



SERVICE PROVISION

GENERAL CHALLENGES

WHEN ASKED TO DESCRIBE THEIR EXPERIENCE OF SERVICE PROVISION, MEMBERS' REPLIES WERE MIXED - SOME MENTIONING POSITIVE EXPERIENCES WITH SUPPORTIVE, FRIENDLY STAFF, WHILE OTHERS COMMENTED ON THE DIFFICULTIES THEY ENCOUNTERED. BELOW ARE 7 COMMON COMPLAINTS -

1 Having to present as destitute / worse than you are, in order to receive the necessary support

Members acknowledged their needs not being taken seriously unless they appeared physically 'in need'

2 Stigma

Members acknowledged that many service providers held preconceived views concerning their race, religion, or exploitation experience

3 Language used by service providers

Members identified certain words used by service providers that were misinformed, re-traumatising or disrespectful. Examples include: "child prostitute" and "lifestyle choice"

4 Length of time for recovery services

Members expressed that support such as mental health services & organisational assistance were not sufficiently 'long-term'

5 Restrictions can feel like re-trafficking

Some members explained that the time restrictions and rules imposed by their Safe Houses took away their control, and thus mimicked their exploitation experience. One noted example was 'visitor time-limits'

6 Insensitivity to trauma

One member commented that, in her experience, professionals did not understand how trauma impacts survivors' interactions. She relayed her frustration at having to repeatedly explain herself

7 Access to counselling

Members commented on the difficulty of accessing counselling; some waiting for 9 months to be referred, others being unable to afford the quantity of sessions necessary for their conditions

INVOLVEMENT WITH SURVIVOR ALLIANCE

WE ASKED OUR MEMBERS TO DESCRIBE THEIR EXPERIENCE OF JOINING SURVIVOR ALLIANCE. HERE IS WHAT THEY HAD TO SAY -



ANONYMOUS MEMBER -

"Survivor Alliance has given survivors in the UK a platform to raise our voice and a space where we can unite and empower ourselves and encourage each other through this journey of healing. Survivor Alliance has also helped us as survivors to see a wider view or picture of the UK system of Anti-slavery."



KAREN* -

"I was never taken seriously until Survivor Alliance stepped in. Survivor Alliance is like a home to me, I feel like I have family. They have helped me in so many ways, and have always been there for me and my son. They have helped me see the world... from a different angle. Since being part of the Survivor Community, it has made me feel like helping other people who are exploited more, it has made me understand other survivors and victims better."

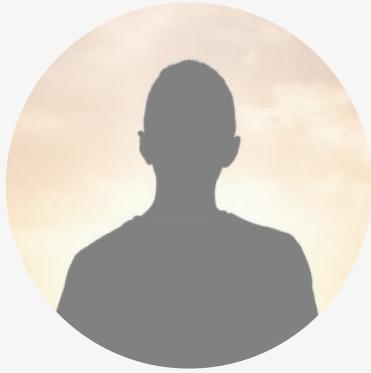


ANONYMOUS MEMBER -

"I wrongly or rightly get the impression that many of our UK Network are often so good at showing how 'well' they have survived, which makes those of us that struggle to live up to this expectation - such as myself - a little intimidated and overwhelmed."

INVOLVEMENT WITH SURVIVOR ALLIANCE

SISTER J* -



"Among all the other organisations that I attended before coming into contact with Survivor Alliance, Survivor Alliance is the organisation where I found what I was looking for. Survivor Alliance have given me the platform to empower myself, and speak up loud enough for the authorities and media to hear me, about the dehumanising way we are treated as survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery. Survivor Alliance create leadership opportunities to develop professional skills, confidence and advocacy for survivors."

NANCY -

"Survivor Alliance has helped me in ways in which other organisations have not been able to. They have equipped and encouraged me, and have helped me to understand that my life experience is not for organisations to make profit on, or for storytelling to satisfy people's nosiness. Rather, Survivor Alliance has opened my eyes to see that my life experience is my expertise. I alone can choose when, where, and how to share it. Survivor Alliance has also created a platform for me to share my expertise... and educated me in the process. They have "taught me how to fish rather than giving me a fish."



SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP / THRIVING AS A SURVIVOR

IN WHAT 'ROLES' DO OUR MEMBERS
SEE THEMSELVES?

- 1** Giving feedback to professionals, agencies & support services
- 2** Helping others speak up
- 3** Being an example by moving away from the 'victim' mentality
- 4** Supporting & mentoring each other
- 5** Giving hope
- 6** Advocating for change
- 7** Leaving a legacy

SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP / THRIVING AS A SURVIVOR*

LEADERSHIP EXAMPLES: CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT

BRADFORD CHAPTER

According to Nancy, leading the Bradford Chapter “involves seeing members through personal visits and calling to make sure everyone is doing okay... because I know that for survivors like myself, you have to push yourself every day.” For her, the “most rewarding thing is being close to the fellow survivor. They normally don't keep friends because of the traumatic experiences they have gone through... When I come into their life they see me as a friend that they could keep.”

“I work with Survivor Alliance to speak to and influence other organisations and people. I let them know that we are here and need the right opportunity to be able to amplify our voices. There are all these other organisations who are talking on behalf of survivors. But most of the time, they are not saying what we want to say and how we want to say it. I want our voices to be heard!”

“What drives me is knowing there is so much to do - especially in respect to how the government treats survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery... It drives me because I want our voices to be heard - we, the survivors!”



MARCH FOR FREEDOM

Our Chapters not only exist to provide a safe space for support, but to create opportunities for advocacy. One example of this is the 'March for Freedom', in which several of our Bradford members travelled to London to march from the Home Office to 10 Downing Street and deliver a petition regarding the Modern Slavery Victim Support Bill. Jen-Marie*, commented - *“It was good that we were willing to participate... marching and waiting outside No. 10. I felt I had accomplished something, by airing my thoughts I believe I made a positive input”*

SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP / THRIVING AS A SURVIVOR

LEADERSHIP EXAMPLES: CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT

NOTTINGHAM CHAPTER

Our Nottingham Chapter launched just two months ago. Sister J*, the leader of the Chapter, explains that "it takes huge courage and determination to take up the responsibility of being a Survivor Leader. It gives me the chance to explore a new environment, which gives me the self-confidence to think freely. But... it is not easy. I really need to push myself every day to overcome fear, worries, anxiety and so on. Survivor Alliance has given me tremendous support to build my confidence and amplify my voice in the field."

She adds that "the best part of leading the Nottingham Chapter is seeing my fellow survivors relaxed and chatting about their issues, traumas and the environment... and enjoying the platform that Survivor Alliance has provided for us to think and speak for ourselves. I also love to see how we build trust in ourselves and I love sharing family time and food together."



SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP / THRIVING AS A SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP EXAMPLES: CONSULTING

ALONGSIDE CHAPTER DEVELOPMENT, MANY OF OUR UK MEMBERS HAVE ENGAGED IN CONSULTING OPPORTUNITIES, PROVIDING SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTISE TO RESEARCHERS, HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS, SERVICE PROVIDERS AND POLICY MAKERS. BELOW ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF THEIR WORK -



GREATER NOTTINGHAM MODERN SLAVERY FORUM

"In May 2019, the Greater Nottingham Modern Slavery Forum organised a network session on Modern Slavery Survivors' Journey through Health and Care Services. Nancy from Survivor Alliance spoke and shared her experience of accessing healthcare in the UK, with the purpose of offering an inside-look into a survivor's journey, alongside helping professionals identify gaps for improvement. She gave a powerful talk about her experience, focusing on the barriers to engagement with health services and the importance of tailored support. In particular, she highlighted the need for ongoing or continuous support, the importance of cultural competency, and offered her insight as to how survivors can work with health practitioners to make the journey easier. Her talk was enlightening and the staff attending found her talk very useful."

- Minerva Hartley, Greater Nottingham Modern Slavery Forum

"Addressing healthcare professionals was very humbling and empowering."

- Nancy Esioowa, Bradford Chapter Leader

SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP / THRIVING AS A SURVIVOR

LEADERSHIP EXAMPLES: CONSULTING

THE RIGHTS LAB

"In the Rights Lab, we have found the input of Survivor Alliance invaluable for multiple pieces of work, from grant feedback and development, research output review, and policy report content, to project design, campaign messaging, and training. Our own antislavery work is immeasurably stronger, more effective and better targeted as a result, and we now would not embark on major new initiatives without first inviting Alliance input."

- Professor Zoe Trodd, Director of the Rights Lab, University of Nottingham



GOVERNMENT RESPONSE INDEX FOR MINDEROO FOUNDATION

'In October 2018, Minderoo Foundation's Walk Free initiative worked with Survivor Alliance and its UK Network to review our conceptualisation of a strong government response to modern slavery. The UK Survivor Network provided detailed insight into Walk Free's conceptual framework and developed concrete policy recommendations for improving the UK government response, such as allowing victims of modern slavery the right to work in the UK. This was invaluable feedback for our research, which has also been reflected in our advocacy work. Working with the UK Survivor Network has helped us to strengthen our understanding of the implications of government policy to combat modern slavery.'

- Katharine Bryant, Research Manager at Minderoo Foundation's Walk Free Initiative

"I am saying; let's educate people!
If possible, let's have people with experience
of modern slavery in charge, alongside
other victims and survivors.
Together we can do it!"

- Karen*



SURVIVOR ALLIANCE UK CIC

