

Open Report on behalf of Pete Moore, Executive Director of Finance and Public Protection

Report to:	Public Protection and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date:	12 March 2019
Subject:	Serious and Organised Crime

Summary:

This paper provides an overview of our approach to tackling serious and organised crime in Lincolnshire, with a particular focus of Fraud and Modern Slavery.

Actions Required:

Members of the Committee are invited to consider and comment on the contents of this report.

1. Background

1.1 In 2013 the Government published a cross governmental Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) Strategy¹. This has recently been revised in 2018². The strategy states that organised crime presents a threat to our national security and costs the UK economy at least £37 billion each year. The groups involved in such criminality intimidate and corrupt and have a corrosive impact on our communities.

1.2 The strategy stated that local partnership action against serious and organised crime was key to tackling it and this needed to be draw on the information and powers of many agencies and departments. Furthermore the strategy stated that partnership work to tackle organised crime should take what is known as the '4P' approach. This national response is built on the framework currently used to address Counter Terrorism and covers:

- **Prevent** which aims to prevent people from getting involved in serious and organised crime;
- **Protect** which aims to strengthen our protection against and our responses to serious and organised crime;
- **Pursue** which focuses on relentlessly pursuing criminals through prosecution and disruption; and

¹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/248645/Serious_and_Organised_Crime_Strategy.pdf

² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/752850/SOC-2018-web.pdf

- **Prepare** which aims to reduce the impact where serious and organised crime does occur.

1.3 Following our 2017 Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime, the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership decided to focus our SOC work on the following areas:

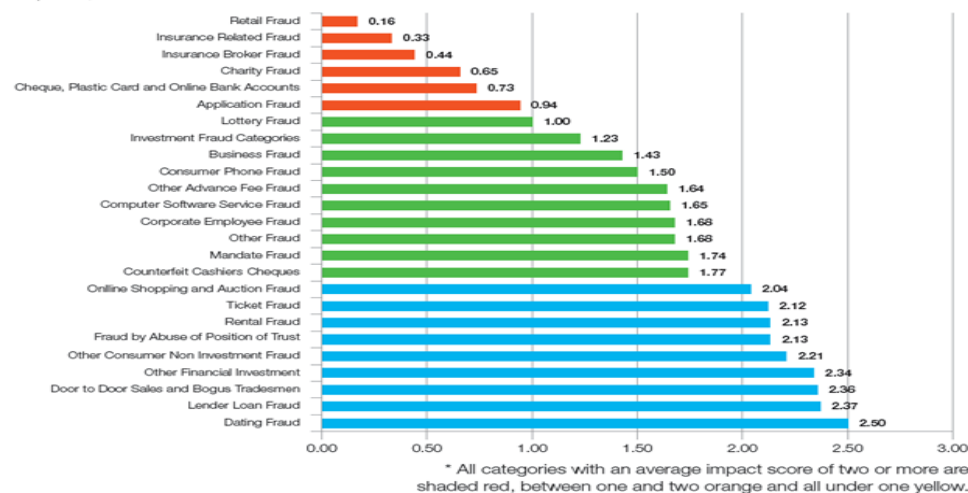
- Fraud
- Modern Slaver

1.4 Core Priority Groups (CPGs) have been established for both made up of statutory partners, third sector organisations and business and financial institutions. The following provides an overview of each area and CPG.

2. Fraud

2.1 A recent report³ conducted by The Police Foundation estimates that fraud makes up 31% of all crime in England and Wales, with 3.24 million fraud offences estimated to have taken place in the 12 months to March 2018. The same research has found that 45 % of fraud victims felt that financial loss they experienced had an impact on their emotional wellbeing and 37% reported a significant psychological or emotional impact.

FIGURE 9: Average self-reported impact score in cases allocated by the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau for a response, 2016-17. ³⁴



2.2 The revised November 2018 SOC Strategy includes a commitment to improve the response to victims of fraud and cybercrime. One of these improvements is to pilot a multi-agency response to safeguarding victims, Lincolnshire is one of the two pilot areas, the other being North Yorkshire.

³ More than just a number: Improving the police response to fraud http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/2017/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/more_than_just_a_number_exec_summary.pdf

2.3 The pilot work has been captured in the delivery plan for the SOC Fraud Group, who took an early decision to focus on frauds targeted at vulnerable people. The types of frauds included in this category are:

- Doorstep sales and bogus tradesmen
- Mail scams-lotteries, fortune tellers, prize draws
- Romance fraud
- Phishing emails
- Pension scams
- Investment fraud
- Copycat websites
- Tech support

2.4 A large analytical piece of work is currently underway to understand the prevalence and impact of such frauds in Lincolnshire. This assessment will bring together data from local policing, Action Fraud, local trading standards, local Citizens Advice Bureaux's and the National Trading Standards Scams Team. This assessment will inform future work. However work is already underway to understand the victim journey through support services such as Victim Support, Operation Revive (Lincolnshire Police) and Trading Standards Scam victim support. The victim support work will also look at ensure adult safeguarding concerns are identified correctly.

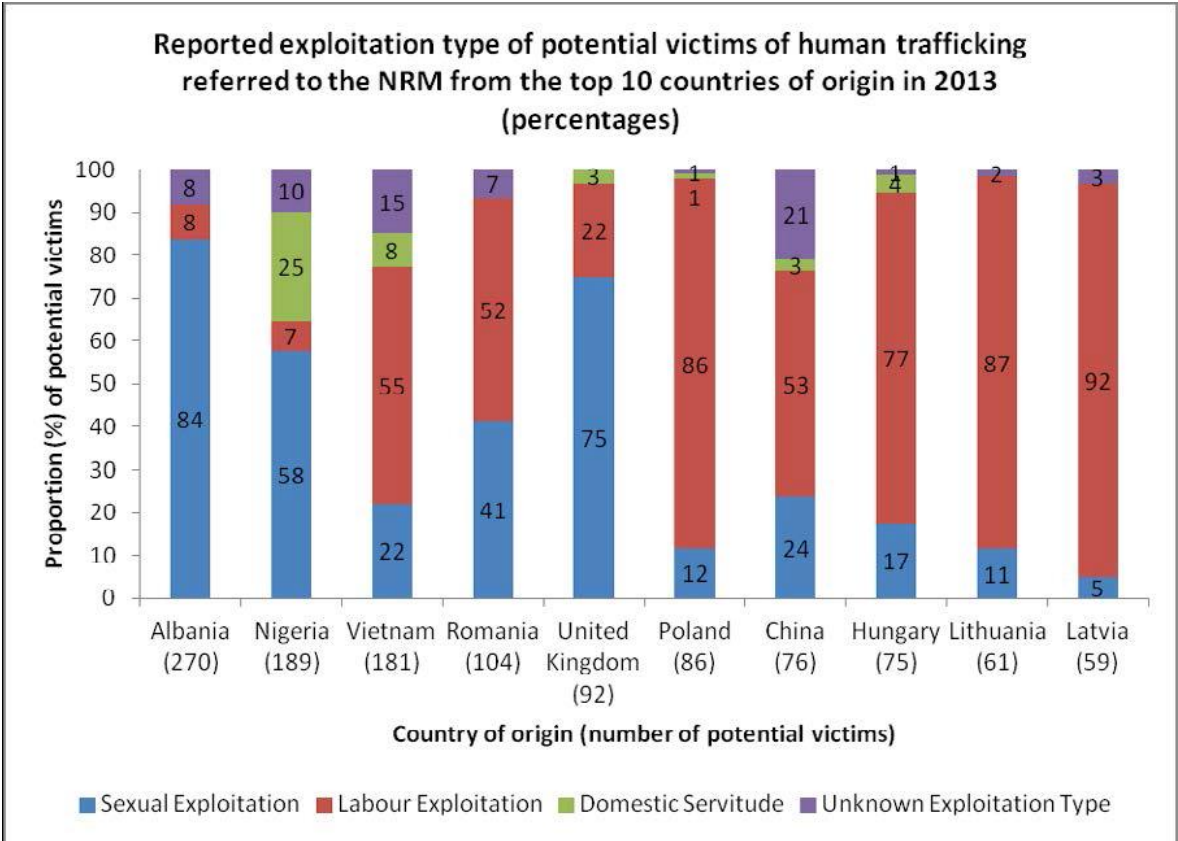
2.5 A further key work stream is raising awareness of fraud and scams amongst professionals and the public. Lincolnshire County council and the Safer Lincolnshire Partnership have been working with the OPCC to put on a "Scamference" on the 10th May which will see national experts highlight current problems and tactics to support victims and tackle offenders.

3. Modern Slavery

3.1 Modern slavery is a complex crime that takes a number of different forms. It encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking. Traffickers and slave drivers coerce, deceive and force individuals against their will into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment. Victims may be sexually exploited, forced to work for little or no pay or forced to commit criminal activities against their will. Victims are often pressured into debt-bondage and are likely to be fearful of those who exploit them, who will often threaten and abuse victims and their families. All of these factors make it very difficult for victims to escape.

3.2 These crimes are taking place in factories, fields, brothels and even in homes up and down the country. There is no typical victim of slavery – victims can be men, women or children of all ages and nationalities. Many victims are foreign nationals who are brought to the UK specifically so they can be abused and exploited for the benefit of others. Some are tricked into believing they are simply paying others to facilitate their journey to the UK, or that they are being smuggled here. Many often do not find out that they are destined for a life of abuse and servitude until after they arrive. Many victims are also UK nationals, including children.

3.3 There are a number of estimates of the total number of victims of modern slavery across the world. The hidden nature of modern slavery and different definitions and methods used mean there are limitations to these estimates. The Global Slavery Index estimates there are 35.8 million victims of slavery across the world, while in 2012 the International Labour Organisation estimated that there were 21 million victims of forced labour alone. Modern slavery has huge social and economic impacts. Human trafficking for sexual exploitation, just one form of modern slavery, is estimated to cost the UK at least £890 million each year. The below chart provides the reported exploitation type of potential victims of human trafficking and modern slavery referred through the National Referral Mechanism⁴ by country of origin.



3.4 The Modern Slavery CPG is currently working towards a delivery plan in line with the SOC Strategy 4P approach. Three key areas of work have been identified and sub groups have been established for each. These are:

- Communications – raising awareness of modern slavery in the community, what it is, how to spot it and who to report it to.
- Intelligence – improving the identification of victims and perpetrators or locations where modern slavery is occurring
- Training and awareness – ensuring frontline staff are aware of modern slavery and know how to spot the signs and who to report it to

Due to the nature of modern slavery it is largely a hidden crime and under-reported. The true extent of modern slavery in Lincolnshire, as with other areas of

⁴ A framework for identifying/confirming victims of human trafficking and modern slavery and ensuring they receive appropriate care

the country, is unknown. The partnership is working to change this so that victims are identified and safeguarded. Reporting of potential cases is encouraged through Lincolnshire Police (999/101) and the Modern Slavery Helpline⁵ (08000 121 700).

3.5 A Task and Finish Group was held to look at the specific emerging issue of 'county lines'. County Lines is closely associated to modern slavery. It is likely to involve the trafficking of vulnerable children from predominately urban metropolitan areas to smaller market towns to sell drugs through the establishment of a single phone line (the county line). It can also include the exploitation of vulnerable adults, adults with mental health or substance misuse issues, through the taking over (cuckooing) of their homes to establish a base for drug dealing. A report by the National Crime Agency in 2017 stated a conservative estimate of at least 720 active county lines in England and Wales. The task and finish group looked at how to spot the signs and recognise active county lines and where to report cases/concerns to.

4. Conclusion

4.1 The panel is requested to consider how it can raise awareness of Modern Slavery and Fraud within members own areas to increase reporting.

5. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

N/A

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

6. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

⁵ <https://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org/>

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