

# PLASP Meeting (including recent associated matters and links from elsewhere), 19 October 2023

## Modern slavery incidents

In Lancashire, 90% of modern slavery cases are currently Sexual Exploitation, but the Police suspect that the real Labour Exploitation number is probably greater. Key areas are Blackburn, Preston and Blackpool, for both Sexual Exploitation and Labour Exploitation.

Sexual exploitation gangs still use pop-up brothels but increasingly they use airbnbs, where, in many cases, you simply pick up a key and never see the owner. The Police still use the two main websites advertising prostitutes to identify and track possible sexual exploitation.

Two areas which are high on the list for potential modern slavery but not yet featuring in Lancashire statistics are Cannabis cultivation and the Care Sector. The Police suspect there are many cases of modern slavery in labour exploitation (including Cannabis Cultivation and County Lines) and also significant Domestic Servitude and Forced Marriage issues which are hidden.

**Cannabis Cultivation** There have been many cases of cannabis reported in the Press, note in particular <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-64351182> from January which states Lancashire Police shut down 70 cannabis farms worth £2m. However most cannabis farms are not involved, or easily identified as being involved, in modern slavery as the gangs are able to operate without slaves. The Police also report that there are now more Albanian than Vietnamese cannabis factories. However, two Vietnamese died in a cannabis factory that burnt down in Oldham. The risk of fire is high as the gangs will almost always bypass the electricity meter.

**Care Sector** Nationally, but not yet identified in Lancashire, residential care homes are currently regarded as a priority over other sectors due to the volume of referrals. They account for 29% of all forced labour reporting, more than double the number of referrals concerning car washes, which is the next most reported sector. Furthermore, the control exploiters have over workers' regarding the withdrawal of visa sponsorship for employers is significant and used as a method of control.

Criminals are using the skilled worker visa scheme as a way of smuggling people into the UK for large amounts of money. Migrant workers have arrived in the UK without the requisite skills for the work visa granted, leaving them without employment and open to labour abuse. The control exploiters have over workers around visa sponsorship is significant and used as a method of control. The GLAA Strategic Assessment for 2023/2024 details the problem highlighting post-Brexit changes and the ways that the exploiters are operating in a post-Brexit world <https://www.glaa.gov.uk/our-impact/strategic-assessment/strategic-assessment-202324/>

**Big Data** is large-scale data collection that is at the same time of high quality, relevant and actionable. It is information that provides answers and solves problems. We are currently exploring the potential of Deep Data for identifying Care Sector modern slavery issues with Peter Schofield, Founder of [Inspire a Billion](#), a group of highly experienced business and technology leaders with the aim of creating self-sustaining models in support of the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) one of which is, 8.7: End modern slavery, trafficking, and child labour. The potential for the approach can be seen in the [Global Business Coalition Against Human Trafficking \(GBCAT\)](#) and their [Tech Against Trafficking Interactive Map](#)

**Illegal Immigration Act, 2023** This Act will criminalise human trafficking victims, along with all others, arriving in small boats. On top of Brexit and the Nationality and Borders Act (2022) it will make matters much more difficult for human trafficking victims arriving in the UK via “illegal” routes. It has been described as unworkable and it remains to be seen what will happen in practice.

**Pan Lancashire Anti-Slavery Pledge** The aim is to launch the Pledge in 2024 and invite public and private organisations to subscribe to it by pledging to meet some or all of the pledges below (precise wording to be agreed)

- Promote modern slavery messages, particularly in the lead-up to Anti-Slavery Week
- Display posters in places where staff will see and alert them to the signs of modern slavery
- Provide Training on how to identify and report potential signs of slavery or exploitation
- Share Information and intelligence on trends and increased risk via line managers, Police, Modern Slavery Helpline or GLAA
- Recruit using low risk methods, paying particular attention to temporary, casual, agency, volunteers
- Talk to suppliers about what they are doing and might they sign the pledge
- Buy more ethically
- Display the Pledge logo on correspondence
- Complete a Modern Slavery Statement even if not legally required to do so

Boohoo is working with PLASP to develop the Pledge and its training and have offered to be the first to sign it.

**LANPAC** PLASP is now part of Lancashire Partnership Against Crime (LANPAC) which is a unique collaboration between Lancashire Constabulary, Lancashire Businesses and Public Services working to reduce levels of crime and disorder across the county. Membership of LANPAC will greatly increase the number of organisation PLASP can contact, link in with and work with.

### **His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services**

**(HMICFRS)** independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces and fire & rescue services. In their recent audit of Lancashire Constabulary’s response to serious organising crime, PLASP was identified as a model for others to follow. PLASP had set an example to other constabulary partnerships in their response to human trafficking and modern slavery.

**The Chamber of Commerce** do good training and Sion commented to that meeting that he could do something for them on human trafficking.

**Hope for Justice** raised the problem of unhelpful housing departments when dealing with UK criminal exploitation victims arriving from outside Lancs. Also, victims are choosing not to go into NRM because there is a belief that it slows asylum claims.

### **BOOHOO**

PLASP had its September meeting at the Boohoo Distribution Centre in Burnley, on 28 September. This was PLASP’s second visit to Boohoo and tour of the Distribution Centre. Boohoo joined PLASP and now regularly attends PLASP meetings. They are actively pursuing anti-slavery policies and inputting to PLASP action by working on the wording of the Pledge and offering modern slavery training e.g., to the Chamber of Commerce.