

GMP NGO Forum, July 7, 2023 (some points of note)

Abuse Linked to Accusations of Witchcraft and Spiritual Possession (ALWSPA)

The key speaker was Jordan Alexander who spoke about [Abuse Linked to Witchcraft and Spirit Possession Accusations \(ALWSPA\)](#) and [Operation Violent](#) -

John is Head of Safeguarding & Development of the [Palm Cove Society](#) (Supporting Vulnerable Adults and Children) specialising in supporting those who are victims of slavery and trafficking and domestic abuse with No Resource to Public Funds, by providing safehouse accommodation and 24/7 support to those identified in need of help. He has over 20 years' experience in providing safeguarding care and support to others having previously worked in Greater Manchester Police, Metropolitan Police and West Yorkshire Police as a Detective Sergeant, working in all areas of safeguarding from child protection, adults at risk, abusive images and Abuse linked to faith or belief, now referred to as 'abuse linked to accusations of witchcraft and spiritual possession.

On the extreme end of faith based abuse John also referred to organ harvesting and albinism where people with albinism experience major challenges in integration due to ancient beliefs assigning them supposedly magical powers. In some countries, including Tanzania, superstitions lead to mutilation, dismemberment, organ harvesting and murder.

Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner

It has been more than a year since the UK had an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, a role to "encourage good practice in the prevention, detection, investigation, and prosecution of Modern Slavery offenses and the identification of victims". The Forum offered an open letter to MPs for organisations supporting survivors of Modern Slavery in Greater Manchester

GMP Modern Slavery Figures for CARITAS

After the meeting I asked for an update of the GMP modern slavery figures for a report Mark Wiggin and I are writing for Patrick O'Dowd, Director of Caritas Salford, so that we can finalise our strategic plan for the remainder of 2023 and beyond. The aim is to highlight to the Salford Diocese Modern Slavery Working Party (Caritas Anti-Trafficking is represented on this group via Patrick) the scale of the issue in Greater Manchester and East Lancashire with a view to awareness raising and action in our diocesan schools and in our parishes.

There are over 200 Primary and Secondary Schools and Roman Catholic Sixth Form Colleges in the Diocese and around 130 churches. There are over 40,000 regular Mass attenders. Six of our eight deaneries are in Greater Manchester so a substantial portion of the Diocese lies within it.

The data which went into the report for Patrick is below.

Greater Manchester Police

For 2022 (the partial figures for 2023 are not included here), the NRM and DTN (Duty to Notify) figures showed 558 referrals in GMP with 361 via GMP and the rest from other sources. Between 2015 and 2022 child referrals have increased significantly (largely because of the recognition that County Lines is a form of Modern Slavery) from 20 to 225. For adults the increase is from 70 to 255.

Charges and convictions are low because of difficulties of getting evidence from victims, CPS reluctance to charge without a strong chance of conviction, and because of the time taken from charge to conviction. The figures are not yet high enough to indicate a trend with virtually zero in the years up until 2020, but a total of 86 charges and 39 convictions from then until 2022.

Enquiries (An enquiry is any crime, incident log or referral to potential modern slavery. It can be made from one or more intelligence logs, crimes etc. Each enquiry will relate to one specific modern slavery topic (this could be a place, crime type, offender etc.)

Criminal exploitation has seen a large rise over the past few years and is the most identified form of modern slavery in Greater Manchester. Criminal exploitation is where victims are forced to work under the control of criminals in activities such as drug dealing (including county lines), forced begging, shoplifting and financial exploitation.

Sexual exploitation is the second most prevalent form of modern slavery in Greater Manchester although there has been a shift from on street sex work to online where adult service websites are used. As a result the numbers have been decreasing and it appears this exploitation is becoming more hidden highlighting an intelligence gap.

There are lower but significant numbers for labour exploitation and cannabis cultivation, with domestic servitude remaining low.

The trends indicated above are combined adult/children figures inflated by County Lines. Although sexual exploitation enquiries are falling overall, there has been a small rise for children.

The highest number of enquiries come from Salford followed by Bolton then Oldham. Referrals of potential modern slavery enquiries from outside agencies (including the Faith Sector) remain the highest number each year highlighting the importance of partnership working.

