

Family Services

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1. Background of the National Referral Mechanism and Victim Scope.

- 1.1 Arising from the Council of Europe Convention on Action Against Human Trafficking, the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a process launched by the government in 2008 designed to identify victims of human trafficking and ensure they receive appropriate protection and support. The NRM further assists the Home Office to build a clearer picture about the scope and types of human trafficking in the UK.
- 1.2 In 2015 the NRM was extended to include all victims of modern slavery in England and Wales following implementation of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The extension of scope includes within the NRM scheme any child, irrespective of immigration status, thought to be a victim of trafficking and any person who is considered a victim of slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. The extension of this criteria ensures that crimes a person may have committed as victim of modern -day slavery can be considered and mitigated against in the context of coercion and control.
- 1.3 Only agencies identified as 'first responders' can refer potential victims to the scheme i.e. Local Authorities, the National Crime Agency, Police, NSPCC and Barnardo's.
- 1.4 Children who are victims of Modern Slavery are victims of child abuse, as such first responder agencies and other professionals who come into contact with a child who may have been exploited or trafficked must refer to the local authority Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH); referrals to the NRM do not supersede statutory safeguarding duties.
- 1.5 This summary report sets out Barnet Family Services engagement with the NRM, it does not include referral data from other first responder agencies; although children referred to NRM by other agencies will have been referred to MASH.

2. Decision making, outcomes and challenges

- 2.1 The Single Competent Authority (SCA) in the Home Office makes a reasonable grounds decision in 7 days after which the SCA has 45 days to conduct further enquiries to determine if there is conclusive grounds that the subject is a victim of modern slavery. During this time the victim cannot be removed from the UK or convicted of crimes that

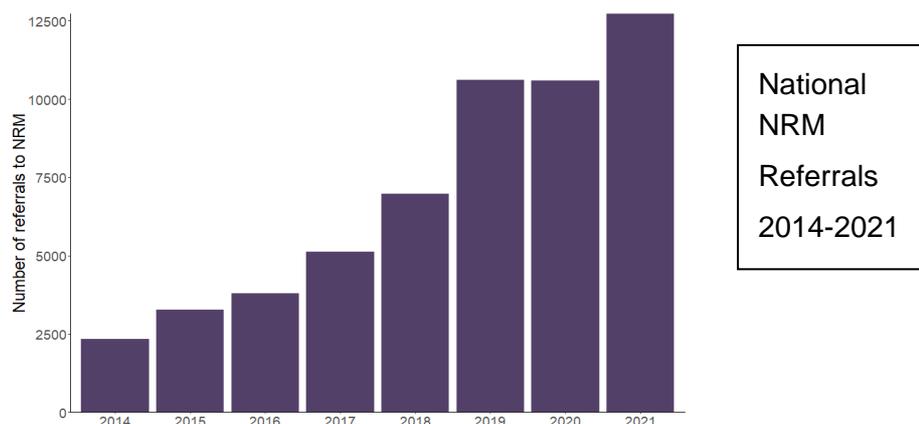
may have occurred as a victim of modern slavery. If “conclusive grounds” are found the victim is entitled to receive advocacy support from an Independent Child Trafficking Guardian (ICTG), where this support is being piloted.

2.2 There have been significant increases in referrals since the scope of NRM was widened which has created some delay in timeliness of SCA decisions. Leading to increased delays with decisions regarding immigration statuses and potential criminal prosecutions.

3. National Picture (2021)

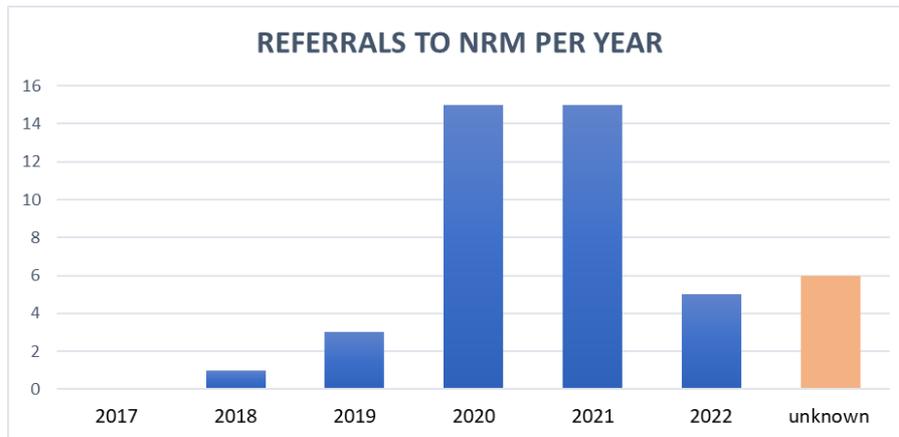
3.1 Across the UK in 2021:

- 12,727 potential victims of modern slavery were referred to the home office,
- 77% (9,790) were male and 23% (2,923) were female
- 58% (7,434) were referred for exploitation that occurred in the UK
- 31% (3,883) claimed exploitation overseas.
- 43% (5,468) claimed exploitation as children
- 33% of adult victims were due to reported labour exploitation (n=2,141),
- 49% of child victims were due to reported criminal exploitation (n=2,689)
- 12,665 reasonable grounds and 2,866 conclusive grounds decisions were made in 2021/22.
- Of these, 90% of reasonable grounds and 91% of conclusive grounds decisions were positive ¹



¹ [Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify statistics UK, end of year summary, 2021 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2021)

4. NRM Referrals Barnet.



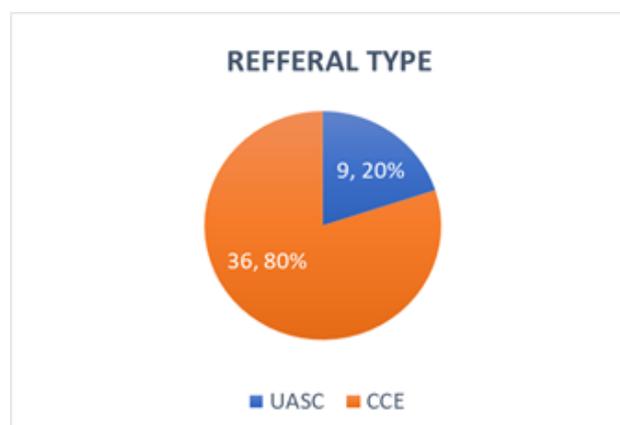
**Barnet NRM
Referrals
2018 - 2022**

4.1 Barnet figures have remained consistent over 2020/21, with 15 young people being referred in each year. Overall, 45 young people having been referred to the NRM since 2018. Barnet’s significant increase in referrals from 2020 was due an increasing awareness of modern-day slavery that recognizes young people involved in ‘county lines’ drug dealing as victims of exploitation. The launch of the Vulnerable Adolescents Strategy in 2020 -22 and development of risk assessment tools and complex case panels has also supported the identification of young people at risk

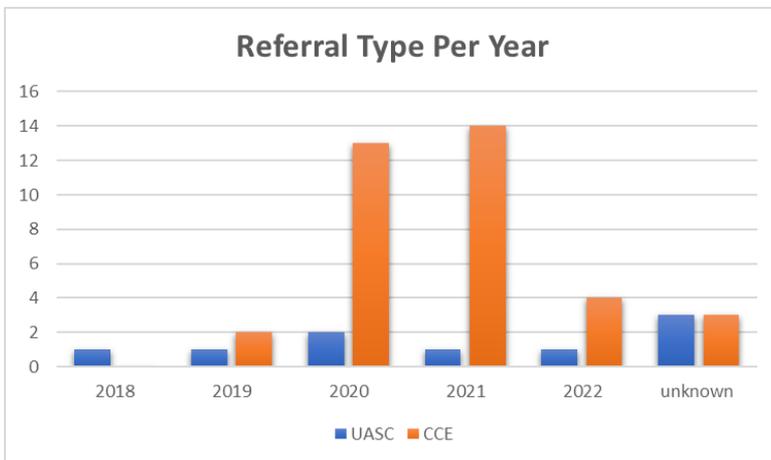
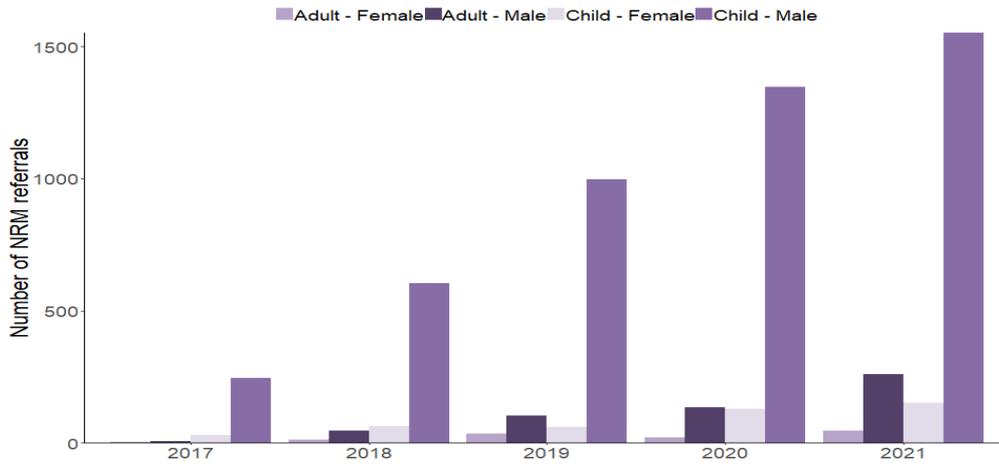
5. Demographics of NRM Cohort

5.1 80% of referrals made by Barnet to the NRM are due to concerns of criminal exploitation; unaccompanied asylum-seeking children account for the remaining 20%. All but one of the young people referred are male.

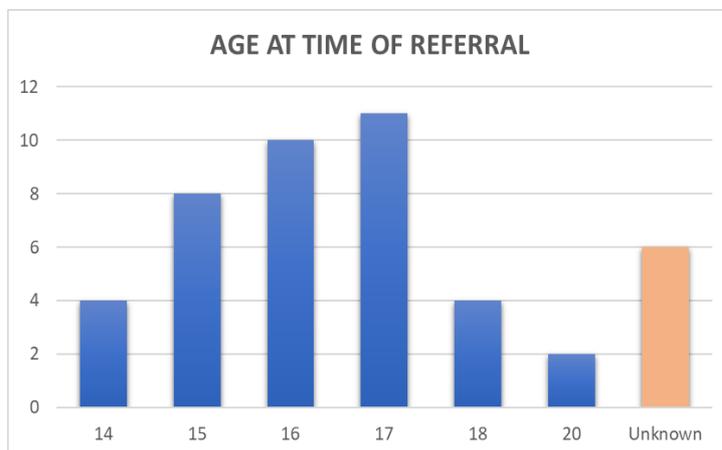
Barnet



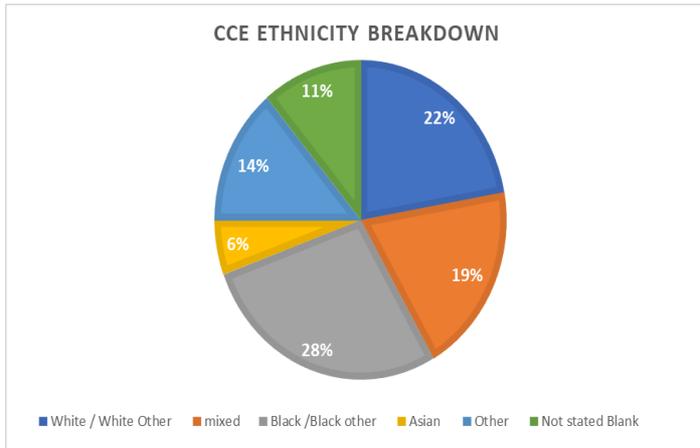
National NRM



Since the beginning of 2022, Barnet has referred 5 young people to the NRM; it is expected the volume will increase in 2022. Our local strategy for young people at risk of exploitation is being revised and this will support multi-agency approaches in reducing this trend.



Young people aged 17 years have the highest volume of referrals to NRM, which is also the age that young people are most commonly reported missing from home and care



Young people from Black and Other racially minoritized backgrounds account for 67% of young people referred to the NRM.

6. NRM Outcomes in Barnet

- 6.1 Barnet faces the same challenges as other local authorities in achieving timely decisions from the SCA due to the significantly higher volumes of referrals being made.

- 6.2 Locally for all young people who are referred to the National Referral Mechanism, and have, or are awaiting conclusive ground decisions are assessed and supported through our multi agency contextual assessment (Child Exploitation and Missing, CEAM). This assessment supports the understanding of young people’s lived experiences, relationships, and support networks. Individual child-led care plans are implemented to support their needs, manage and mitigate further risk of exploitation and to respond to experience of trauma. The Police are automatically informed that the young person are a victim of exploitation which alerts officers to young people’s vulnerability if they come into contact with them.

- 6.3 Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children represent a particularly vulnerable group of young people who through their lived experiences, may present with significant trauma. The journey of asylum-seeking children is often unknown, and reports highlighting the conditions of travel can be harrowing, particularly for young people who have been trafficked. These young people are received into care but lack familial support networks, have language barriers and can be subject to a ‘debt bondage’ to their traffickers. These risks are considered in assessments and at the point of accommodation, a referral to the National Referral Mechanism is always considered. Safety plans are co-produced with young people and implemented in partnership with the placement/carers, education local police and children social care can be implemented.

- 6.4 The Violence, Vulnerability and Exploitation Team maintains an overview of young people at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation and/or modern-day slavery which supports identification of themes, organised exploitation and human trafficking. Family Services work closely with Police, National Crime Agency, Community Safety, and key stakeholders to support strategic planning and police-led operations to identify and disrupt trafficking and exploitation.
- 6.5 If conclusive grounds are yet to be reached for a young person who has been charged for an offence, their circumstances are presented to court as potential victim to exploitation or modern slavery. The Youth Justice Service in partnership with Children's Social Care Services and the Court will support the need for further enquiries to be made for a 'conclusive ground' decision ahead of sentencing decision.

7. Developments in practice

- 7.1 The NRM was established by the Home Office to develop a national picture of the type and level of modern-day slavery in the UK. The scheme supports young people and adults to plea mitigating circumstances against deportation and criminal prosecutions, whilst the responsibility for safeguarding victims remains with the local authority.
- 7.2 The missing coordinator will take on the role of SPOC to align missing and NRM activity for children. This will support the provision of data to the Home Office who are running a pilot with 10 authorities to assess the effectiveness of devolved decision making in assessing young people against conclusive grounds criteria. Barnet will be providing local data as a comparator site to the pilot authorities.
- 7.3 The Vulnerable Adolescents Strategy 2022 – 25 will build on the previous two-year strategy and set out the multi-agency response to tackling the increasing numbers of children and young people who are victims of modern-day slavery, county lines and criminal exploitation. The Strategy will be subject to a consultation exercise over the summer period.