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Cultural influences and cultural competency in the prevention and protection of survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking: insights from the UK and Albania

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Executive Summary

Since 2018, Albanians have made up the highest number of foreign nationals entering the UK National Referral Mechanism (NRM). In 2022, the number of Albanian potential victims of trafficking referred into NRM overtook the number of UK nationals[1]. There is a pressing and acute need for evidence-based principles for understanding the reasons for this increase. This study aimed to explore the role of culture in the prevention of human trafficking and modern slavery and the potential for culturally competent based approaches to supporting survivors in the UK. Using Albania as a case study[2], a review of migration trends from Albania and analysis of focus groups with Albanian families[3] provided invaluable first-hand insights into cultural dynamics that intersect with human trafficking and modern slavery journeys from Albania. Acknowledging the role of culture in modern slavery trajectories is crucial to tackling this complex phenomenon, both in terms of prevention, particularly in the country of origin of potential victims, and in delivering trauma-informed and culturally competent based protection to survivors in the UK. Additional findings from surveys and consultations with practitioners and survivors based in the UK offer insights into awareness/understandings of cultural competence in the modern slavery sector. This multifaceted approach offers evidence-based recommendations for prevention and protection, based on 1) the actual cultural context in Albania, as opposed to myths perpetuated in common narratives, and 2) the need for a framework for cultural competency and compassionate care in prevention strategies and protection of survivors in the UK and further afield. Finally, adapting the Cultural Competence and Compassionate Care model[4], originally developed for the healthcare sector, will enable application of the findings from this study more broadly to other national cultural groups.

Project Aims and Objectives

- Examine cultural dynamics influencing precarious migration from Albania, to contribute to more effective prevention efforts against precarious migration, trafficking, and exploitation.
- Explore cultural competence among service providers in modern slavery support provision in the UK.
- Investigate cultural barriers experienced in survivor recovery journeys.
- Adapt the Cultural Competence and Compassionate Care model[5], as a potential model/framework for cultural competence in the modern slavery sector. The model is introduced through a complementary report which explains the adaptation of this framework.[6]

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1   Gov.UK (2022). Modern Slavery National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify Statistics UK End of Year Summary 2022 https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2022/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2022#:~:text=For%20the%20first%20year%20since,84%-25%20to%204%2C613%20in%202022. [Accessed on 25 September 2023]

2   Albania was selected as a case study due to the significant representation of Albanian nationals in the National Referral Mechanism in recent years; to highlight the reality of modern slavery for Albanians in the UK; and to build on existing relationships with key partner agencies in Albania established by the co-investigator.

3   Conducted in collaboration with the project partner, Mary Ward Loreto, a UK organisation offering services in Albania.

4   Papadopoulos, I. (2006). The Papadopoulos, Tilki, and Taylor model of developing cultural competence. *Transcultural Health and Social Care: Development of Culturally Competent Practitioners*, 7-24; Papadopoulos, I. (2018). *Culturally Competent Compassion: A Guide for Healthcare Students and Practitioners*. Routledge

5   Papadopoulos, I. (2006). The Papadopoulos, Tilki, and Taylor model of developing cultural competence. *Transcultural Health and Social Care: Development of Culturally Competent Practitioners*, 7-24; Papadopoulos, I. (2018). *Culturally Competent Compassion: A Guide for Healthcare Students and Practitioners*. Routledge

6   See Appendix A.

Key Findings

On cultural competence and prevention

1. Representations of Albanian foreign nationals in the UK public debate around migration and modern slavery oversimplify complex cultural realities that drive individuals into precarious migration.
2. Migratory decisions can be influenced by close or extended family, with implications for policy and prevention.

On cultural competence in service delivery

1. There is no comprehensive approach to culturally competent care in the NRM support system and broader support provisions that extend beyond the NRM.
2. Many practitioners lack adequate understanding of the cultural background of survivors, that may result in survivors feeling misunderstood and discriminated against.
3. The deficiency of culturally competent practice is experienced as re-traumatising by survivors.
4. Survivors in shared accommodation encounter cultural barriers relating to other residents, that can give rise to miscommunications, misunderstandings, and a lack of mutual appreciation for cultural differences.

Summary of Recommendations

1. **Culturally Competent Approach – Prevention**
   - Integrate family-focused considerations into migration policies, ensuring that policies consider the role of culture and family that influence decision-making processes related to migration.
   - Promote the adoption of a 'harm on a continuum' perspective related to precarious migration[7], fostering discussions that broaden understanding and encourage culturally nuanced strategies in addressing MSHT.
2. **Culturally Competent Approach – Practice**
   - Adopt the Culturally Competent and Compassionate Care model (see Appendix A) adapted for the modern slavery sector.
   - Use this model to design and introduce compulsory Cultural Competency training for practitioners.
   - Foster cultural humility among survivors to build understanding and mutual respect between communities.
3. **Cultural Understanding through Knowledge Exchange**
   - Facilitate cross-country sharing of insights and lessons on trafficking intervention.
   - Promote cross-cultural awareness through educational and community engagement projects.
   - Establishment of fora in both Albania[8] and the UK that foster trust through open dialogue and community building.

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[7] The harm experienced by migrants is not a one-time event but a continuum that intensifies at each stage of the precarious migration process. Sometimes, the shift from smuggling to trafficking increases vulnerabilities, and the migrant becomes trapped in a cycle of harm and/or exploitation that is difficult to escape. Acknowledging and addressing the continuum of harm is crucial for developing effective policies and intrerventions to protect vulnerable migrants and prevent precarious migration.

[8] And other countries represented in the NRM.

Introduction

This study explored the importance of cultural competence and impact of culture both in terms of service delivery in the UK and prevention efforts centred on Albania. Considering the focus of Albania as a case study, this report is structured in three discrete sections. First the methodology outlines the research strategy, data collection, and approach to analysis. Second, a review of migration from Albania over recent years highlights key issues in precarious journeys, supplemented by findings and analysis of data collected from focus groups with families and young Albanian nationals in Albania, and a shared learning event that took place in October 2023 in Albania with professionals from a range of sectors[9]. Third, a literature review of definitions of cultural competency and related terms in use is provided and contextualised with the MSHT sector. Findings from a survey of UK practitioners, consultations with stakeholders and survivors are then presented. The findings are organised into two main sections: A) Insights from Albania on cultural dynamics in precarious journeys, B) Practitioners' insights on the cultural impact on service delivery and survivors' experiences of navigating cultural barriers in the UK. Recommendations for policy, practice and research offer detailed guidance for constructive interventions. These include broadening dialogues around prevention and protection to take account of the complexity of historical and cultural contexts, including family dynamics, that may exacerbate risks of human trafficking.

Methodology

The project included desk research and empirical data collection conducted between July 2023 and November 2023. The desk research phase involved an in-depth literature review focused on two distinct overlapping topics: migration trends from Albania that intersect with modern slavery and human trafficking, including an examination of the role of the family in decision-making processes related to migration, which provided a framework for subsequent discussions with Albanian stakeholders during the field research phase; and cultural competence within the context of modern slavery in the UK that aimed to identify understandings of cultural competence in the sector, and to identify the existence and standard of approaches employed to deliver culturally competent support.

For primary data collection, the study employed a mixed methods approach, including a survey, focus groups, interviews and consultations. In Albania, focus groups were led by Mary Ward Loreto, with young people (n=10) and parents (n=13) affected by the phenomenon of mass migration in the past four years. Culminating this engagement was a shared learning event in October 2023, attended by 33 participants. This event focused on unravelling cultural dynamics in modern slavery and precarious migration, particularly emphasising challenges and misconceptions related to Albanian culture. All consultations were recorded and transcribed, then thematically analysed to identify emergent themes[10].

Surveys were disseminated and consultations with key stakeholders were conducted in the UK. A Stakeholder Group (n=13), comprised of practitioners from various agencies in the UK[11], was established, meeting monthly to share expertise and provide feedback on research findings and recommendations. To complement insights from the Stakeholder Group, an online survey was disseminated among practitioners[12] across the UK using the JISC platform. The survey sought to understand practitioner approaches to cultural competence and to investigate their perceptions of cultural challenges faced by survivors. Responses (n=40) were analysed using JISC analytical tools.

We approached this study from the framework of participatory action research. Due to time limitations, we were unable to develop the research with participants from the outset but were committed to eliminating power imbalances as far as possible. We achieved this by inviting survivors to act as professional consultants on the study, as opposed to 'interviewees', to ensure they felt valued as equals for their input.

Online consultations were conducted with adult survivors in the UK (n=10) who had received support through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Purposive sampling was used to identify and recruit survivor consultants from Greater London, Liverpool, Sheffield, Bolton and Devon, ensuring geographical diversity. Nationalities of consultants included Albanian (n=7), Nigerian (n=1), Bangladeshi (n=1), and British (n=1). Survivor consultants were identified with the assistance of service providers, some of whom were members of the Stakeholder Group. We chose to interview individuals not only from Albania to gain different perspectives and experiences, including those of British-born survivors, in order to comprehensively understand how they perceive and navigate cultural barriers within the NRM.

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[9] Attendees at the Shared Learning Event comprised law enforcement representatives, teachers, social workers, municipality workers, representatives from URAT (United Response Against Trafficking) Network, and members of the coalition of shelters.

[10] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp,77–101. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

[11] The Stakeholder Group comprised practitioners from frontline organisations, including those providing services under the MSVCC, as well as representatives from local authorities and law enforcement. Members of the SG had expertise in either working with Albanian service users or had engaged in cultural competency initiatives as part of their roles.

[12] The survey was designed to include, statutory and non-statutory and both MSVCC support providers and those supporting survivors of modern slavery outside the MSVCC. However, as this was an anonymous survey, we did not ask respondents to identify themselves or the organisations they worked for.

The findings sections further below present the data gathered through the online practitioner survey and the various stakeholder consultations, including with survivors, shedding light on the multifaceted cultural impact on service delivery. Quotes are presented using codes or pseudonyms to protect confidentiality.[13]

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Ethics Committee at St Mary's University in June 2023.

Case Study

Migration from Albania: Trends and Challenges

Over the past five years, Albanian nationals have consistently represented the highest proportion among foreign national referrals into the NRM. Notably, in 2022, the number of potential victims of trafficking from Albania referred into the NRM surpassed that of British nationals. The choice of Albania as a case study for this research is, thus, substantiated by the pressing demand to develop impactful strategies for engaging with the Albanian community within the NRM and those seeking to embark on precarious journeys to reach the UK. Mary Ward Loreto (MLW), our third-sector partner, played a pivotal role in the project, being actively involved in Albania and engaged in several prevention projects in vulnerable communities. The collaboration enabled us to 'reality check' emerging findings and recommendations, ensuring the relevance and applicability of the research outcomes.

The migration landscape in Albania has recently witnessed substantial shifts, with the Institute of Statistics reporting a significant increase of 10.5% in migrants leaving the country in 2022, totalling 46,460 individuals[14]. This trend reflects a persistent pattern over the last three decades, where mass international migration has become a perceived lifeline, especially for those in economically challenged regions like northern Albania[15]. The key migration waves in 1991(immediately after the fall of the communist regime), 1997 (civil war aftermath), and 2000 (state collapse post-pyramid scheme[16]) were primarily motivated by factors such as political instability, poverty and high unemployment rates, particularly in rural areas. These longstanding challenges persist, fuelling the recent surge in migration.

Additionally, the allure of better opportunities and improved quality of life in European Union (EU) countries serves as a powerful magnet for Albanian migrants. The disparities in income and living standards between Albania and its EU neighbours and the UK act as substantial pull factors[17], propelling the ongoing flow of migration. This sustained movement has profound consequences, contributing to depopulation, and an exacerbated brain drain[18] and loss of labour force.

Specifically concerning Albanian youth, Gedeshi highlights the decisive role of hope, or rather, the lack thereof, in compelling them to undertake precarious journeys[19]. This emotional dimension adds a poignant layer to the multifaceted reasons behind Albanian migration, emphasizing the complex interplay of economic factors, societal changes, and individual aspirations that shape migratory decisions. Unfortunately, as Hoxhaj notes, there has been limited emphasis from political parties on policies that could enhance opportunities. As an illustration, during the local election conducted in May 2023, there was insufficient detailed discussion on Albania's brain drain and the issue of youth migration[20].

13   Key to quotes: Survivor responses: pseudonyms; Practitioner Survey answers are denoted as PS + code; Consultations with parents are denoted as PC1; Consultations with young people are denoted as YPC2.

14   Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) (2023), Population of Albania, https://www.instat.gov.al/ [Accessed in October 2023]

15   Gëdeshi, I. and Jorgoni, E. (2012), *Social Impact of Emigration and Rural-Urban Migration in Central and Eastern Europe*, Final Country Report: Albania

16   These events were components of a massive Ponzi scheme in Albania, leading the country into financial collapse.

17   Carletto, G., B. Davis, and Stampini, M. (2006). Familiar Faces, Familiar Places: The Role of Family Networks and Previous Experience for Albanian Migrants. *Poverty, Vulnerability and Migration Choice*, Available online: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/5021755_Familiar_Faces_Familiar_Places_The_role_of_family_networks_and_previous_experience_for_Albanian_migrants, also see: House of Commons Home Affairs Committee (2023) Asylum and migration: Albania, Second Report of Session 2022–23, available at: Asylum and migration: Albania (parliament.uk)

18   Hoxhaj, A. (2023). Albania's brain drain: Why so many young people are leaving and how to get them to stay, The Conversation, https://theconversation.com/albanias-brain-drain-why-so-many-young-people-are-leaving-and-how-to-get-them-to-stay-207455 [Accessed on November 30, 2023]

19   Gëdeshi, I. (2018), Shkaqet e Migrimit: Pse Migrojme? Unpublished data – migrant interviews

20   Hoxhaj, A. (2023). Albania's brain drain: why so many young people are leaving and how to get them to stay. The Conversation, https://theconversation.com/albanias-brain-drain-why-so-many-young-people-are-leaving-and-how-to-get-them-to-stay-207455 [Accessed on November 30, 2023]

Unravelling the Impact of Family Dynamics and Cultural Influences on Migration Decisions

In our pursuit of contributing cultural insights for prevention initiatives and policymaking on precarious migration, particularly related to trafficking and exploitation, our focus has been on understanding the pivotal role of family in migration decision-making. This theme emerged from initial consultations with Albanian stakeholders, including our research partner. The following brief literature review provides context, which, although not exclusively centred on Albania, resonates in the Albanian context.

Past[21] and recent literature[22] indicates that a decision to migrate is significantly influenced by a potential migrant's family and the needs of respective family members. Families play a key role in migration decisions, with individuals contributing to family finances through remittances[23] while, reciprocally, families provide financial and cultural support[24]. Halfacree and Boyle further this debate by portraying family migration as 'an integral aspect of our past, present, and future—a part of our life story'[25]. This perspective is widely accepted in migration studies,[26] emphasising that human actions are influenced by broader structural conditions. However, the concept of 'human agency' becomes central in understanding migratory decisions, with intra-family conflicts, negotiations, and compromises[27] influencing individuals embarking on precarious journeys. These dynamics create a risk of human trafficking victimisation, where the family's role can either be supportive or hindering, as elaborated on below.

The importance of family becomes even more pronounced in the context of the Public Health Approach (PHA) to addressing MSHT. The micro-level prevention within this framework focuses on empowering individuals and families to make informed choices[28], aiming to enhance their quality of life[29], autonomy, and simultaneously reduce vulnerability to eliminate potential victimisation. Improving the immediate family environment is crucial, as it often plays a pivotal role in individuals making precarious choices, and, in some instances, the family may endorse such decisions[30].

Expanding on challenges within families, the literature reveals a critical aspect for MSHT survivors: the fear of returning and associated dishonour due to unfulfilled family obligations, which profoundly impacts survivors' choices and willingness to return to their home country. This has been found not only in Albania but also in Southeast Asia[31] and South America[32]. Families often invest in migrating family members, expecting repayment even in initially consensual smuggling cases[33]. The fear of returning

21 Asis, M. M. B., Huang, S., & Yeoh, B. S. (2004). When the light of the home is abroad: Unskilled female migration and the Filipino family. Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography, 25(2), (pp. 198-215); Kofman, E. (2004). Family-related migration: A critical review of European Studies. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 30(2), (pp. 243-262); Bragg, R., & Wong, S. (2016). In Migration, Decision Making and Young Families: A Literature Review by Rica Castaneda & Anna Triandafyllidou (Working Paper No. 2022/12, October 2022) (pp. 1).
22 Bauder, H. (Ed.) (2019). Putting Family First: Migration and Integration in Canada. Vancouver: UBC Press.
23 Mazzucato, V. (2011). Reverse remittances in the migration–development nexus: Two-way flows between Ghana and the Netherlands. Population, Space and Place, 17(5); Gedeshi, I. (2002) The Role of Remittances from Albanian Emigrants and their Influence in the Country's Economy, in Kotios and Petrakos (Eds.) Restructuring and Development in Southeastern Europe, University of Thessaly Press, SEED
24 Mazzucato, V. (2011). Reverse remittances in the migration–development nexus: Two-way flows between Ghana and the Netherlands. Population, Space and Place, 17(5).
25 Boyle, P. J., & Halfacree, K. H. (1995). Service class migration in England and Wales 1980–1: Identifying gender-specific mobility patterns. Regional Studies, 29(1), 43–57.
26 Bondi, L. (1999). On the journeys of the gentrifiers: Exploring gender, gentrification and migration. In P. J. Boyle & K. H. Halfacree (Eds.), Migration and Gender in the Developed World (pp. 204). London: Routledge; Ní Laoire, C. (1999). In Darren P. Smith (2004). An 'untied' research agenda for family migration: loosening the 'shackles' of the past. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 30(2), 263-282. DOI: 10.1080/1369183042000200696. (pp. 268).
27 Darren P. Smith (2004). An 'untied' research agenda for family migration: loosening the 'shackles' of the past. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 30(2), 263-282. DOI: 10.1080/1369183042000200696. (pp. 268)
28 Miley, K.K., O'Melia, M.W., & DuBois, B.L. (2010). Generalist social work practice. United States: Pearson
29 Corcoran, J. (2008). Direct Practice. In Mizrahi, T. and Davis, L. E. (Eds.), Encyclopaedia of social work (e-reference edition). Washington, DC: NASW
30 Jesperson, S. and Heriksen, R. (2022) Criminal Pyramid Scheme: Organised Crime Recruitment Strategies, In Murphy, C. and Lazzarino, R. (Eds.) (2022), Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking: The Victim Journey, Bristol University Press
31 Goard, C. J. (2021). Are Victims of Modern Slavery Falling Through the Gaps in the Criminal Justice System in England & Wales? Enhanced Victim Identification, Interviewing & Evidence Collection in the criminal justice system. University of Portsmouth.
32 Lazzarino, R. (2014). From policies to lived experience and back: The struggle for reintegrating returnees of human trafficking in Goiás State (Central West Brazil). Revista Interdisciplinar Da Mobilidade Humana, 21 (pp. 41
33 Initially consensual cases refer to situations where individuals may initially consent to being transported or smuggled, often for economic or personal reasons, but subsequently find themselves exploited or subjected to trafficking during the course of the journey or upon arrival in the destination country. Such cases highlight the nuanced nature of harm within the continuum of human trafficking, where what begins as a seemingly consensual arrangement can deteriorate into exploitative situations.

'empty-handed' may lead to survivors being shunned by their families or communities. This complexity highlights that dominant Western conceptions of slavery and exploitation are not universally shared, reducing survivor cooperation – especially when family members are involved and creating difficulties for criminal justice professionals[34]. Recent studies[35] further emphasise the 'role of shame and stigma as tools for exploitation', along with cultural practices such as 'paying intermediaries for employment' and 'cultural norms around domestic work among women and girls within family networks', including witchcraft practices performed by family members.

Empirical studies exploring migratory journeys in different national, cultural, and socioeconomic environments offer invaluable insights into decision-making processes and the role of family. This evidence sheds light on how these factors create situations in which individuals may potentially experience the harsh reality of human trafficking. Migration involves risks that can lead to human trafficking recruitment, necessitating an understanding of the complex factors influencing migration decisions. However, traditional economic analyses and considerations of historical inequalities alone cannot fully address this complexity, as migrants are not merely victims of oppressive structures.

One of these complex factors is imagination, influenced by socio-economic factors, culturally shared ideas, and personal experiences of mobility or immobility[36]. Migration offers an opportunity for some marginalised individuals to create their own identity or improve social status due to economic hardship or conflicts in the country of origin[37]. Migration is shaped by a mix of tangible and intangible factors, and understanding these complexities is crucial to address issues like human trafficking and make informed decisions about migration[38].

Moreover, empirical studies highlight that emotions, feelings of entrapment, jealousy, and frustration[39], combined with societal expectations[40] and the 'culture of migration', motivate migration to avoid social death[41] or prevent returning before achieving success abroad[42]. Guilt caused by a 'failed' migration can push individuals either to migrate again or to stay in the destination country rather than going back. Similarly, guilt derived from not meeting social obligations can influence the decision to return.

Cultural norms also play a significant role, where individuals failing to migrate may be perceived as lazy or failures, experiencing shame and embarrassment[43]. For example, men are mainly impacted by cultural shame, as migration is often linked to masculinity[44]. Gender aspects in migration decisions expose individuals to MSHT dangers through pressure to conform to gender roles and identities, power imbalances in control of marital resources, and dependencies that impede partners, mainly women, from leaving exploitative or abusive relationships[45]. In patriarchal family structures with clearly defined gender roles, varying degrees of freedom and personal development exist for men and women.

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[34] Goard, C. J. (2021). Are Victims of Modern Slavery Falling Through the Gaps in the Criminal Justice System in England & Wales? Enhanced Victim Identification, Interviewing & Evidence Collection in the Criminal Justice System. (pp. 25-28). University of Portsmouth.

[35] Such, E., Ariyo, M. D., Ahmed, N., Aminu, H., & Samota, N. (2023). Equality, diversity and inclusion in publicly funded modern slavery research in the UK (p. 45). UK BME Anti-Slavery Network, part of AFRUCA Safeguarding Children.

[36] Hagen-Zanker, J., Hennessey, G., & Mazzilli, C. (2023). Subjective and intangible factors in migration decision-making: A review of side-lined literature. *Migration Studies*, mnad003, p. 350.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., p. 354.

[39] Kalir, B. (2005). The Development of a Migratory Disposition: Explaining a "New Emigration." International Migration, 43(4), 167–196.; Belloni, M. (2019). The Big Gamble: The Migration of Eritreans to Europe. University of California Press. ISBN: 9780520298705. In Hagen-Zanker, J., Hennessey, G., & Mazzilli, C. (2023). Subjective and intangible factors in migration decision-making: A review of side-lined literature. *Migration Studies*, (pp. 352)

[40] Zagaria, V. (2019). 'The Morally Fraught Harga: Migration Blame Games in a Tunisian Border Town.' The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology, 37(2), 57–73. In Hagen-Zanker, J., Hennessey, G., & Mazzilli, C. (2023). Subjective and intangible factors in migration decision-making: A review of side-lined literature. *Migration Studies*, (pp. 352)

[41] Bredeloup, S. (2017). 'The Migratory Adventure as a Moral Experience.' In N. Kleist & D. Thorsen (Eds.), Hope and Uncertainty in Contemporary African Migration (pp. 134–153). London: Routledge. In Hagen-Zanker, J., Hennessey, G., & Mazzilli, C. (2023). Subjective and intangible factors in migration decision-making: A review of side-lined literature. Migration Studies, mnad003. (pp. 352). In this context 'social death' happens when a person experiences a series of humiliations that systematically erode their social identity, leading to marginalisation and isolation from meaningful participation in society. In such circumstances, the person or others believe that they are as good as dead. Králová, J. (2015) What is social death? *Contemporary Social Science*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 235–248, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2015.1114407

[42] Chan C. (2018) In Sickness and in Wealth: Migration, Gendered Morality, and Central Java. Indiana University Press. In Hagen-Zanker, J., Hennessey, G., & Mazzilli, C. (2023). Subjective and intangible factors in migration decision-making: A review of side-lined literature. *Migration Studies*, mnad003. (pp. 352)

[43] Bylander, M. (2015). "Contested mobilities: Gendered migration pressures among Cambodian youth." Gender, Place and Culture, 22, 1124-1140.; Heering, L., van der Erf, R., & van Wissen, L. (2004). "The role of family networks and migration culture in the continuation of Moroccan emigration: A gender perspective." Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 30, 323-337. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183042000200722 ; Kandel, W., & Massey, D. S. (2002). "The Culture of Mexican Migration: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis." Social Forces, 80, 981-1004. https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2002.0009. In Czaika, M., & Reinprecht, C. (2020). Drivers of migration: A synthesis of knowledge. IMI Work. Pap. Ser, 163, 1-45, p. 23.

[44] Maroufof, M., & Kouki, H. (2017). "Migrating from Pakistan to Greece: Re-visiting agency in times of crisis." European Journal of Migration and Law, 19, 77-100. https://doi.org/10.1163/15718166-12342116. In Czaika, M., & Reinprecht, C. (2020). Drivers of migration: A synthesis of knowledge. IMI Work. Ser, 163, 1-45, p. 23.

[45] Family migration: Understanding the drivers, impacts and support needs of migrant families (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.gov.scot (p. 4).

Cultural factors affecting survivors include language, religion, social and gender norms, socioeconomic factors, as well as elements directly linked to MSHT journeys and mechanisms. Some specific cultural elements mentioned in the literature include: childrearing practices[46], the role of the family, extended family and communities[47]; beliefs and practices around marriage and the role of the woman in the house[48]; beliefs system and cultural expectations regarding health, specifically mental health, and healthcare and treatment[49]; spirituality and other traditional beliefs and practices, such as witchcraft[50]; gender and other social norms in relation to gender-based violence and sexual abuse, and relative help-seeking behaviour[51]; social stigma, shame, dishonour[52]; a sense of mistrust and fear towards the authorities, and specific perception of the legal system and of humanitarian, non-governmental aid[53]; and structural and institutional racism[54]. Such cultural factors play a crucial role in survivors' experiences, influencing their capacity and willingness to seek support and accept help comfortably[55]. In the realm of survivor recovery from modern slavery, cultural considerations play a pivotal role.

46 Kelly, L., Magalhães, M. J., Meysen, T., & Garner, M. (2019). The contested concept of culture: Encounters in policy and practice on violence and abuse. In L. Kelly, T. Meysen, & C. Hagemann-White (Eds.), Interventions against child abuse and violence against women (1st ed., pp. 121–133). Verlag Barbara Budrich. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvr7fcsw.10

47 Chan, H. T. V. (2019). Understanding the Practice of Frontline Child Protection Social Workers Working with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Families. University of Huddersfield.; Goard, C. J. (2021). Are Victims of Modern Slavery Falling Through the Gaps in the Criminal Justice System in England & Wales? Enhanced Victim Identification, Interviewing & Evidence Collection in the Criminal Justice System. University of Portsmouth.

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Section A Findings

Cultural Dynamics in Precarious Journeys: Insights from Albania

The following section presents a snapshot of data exposing the cultural and societal dynamics influencing migration journeys originating from Albania. This data stems from two focus groups and a shared learning event, which took place in Albania. Participants exchanged experiences and deliberated on practical strategies to enhance cultural understanding of the Albanian context, with specific attention given to family dynamics in migration, precarious journeys, and trafficking. The event provided valuable insights, informing the potential for a nuanced approach to support those affected by these multifaceted challenges. Notably, stakeholders also shared insights into the impact of British approaches to prevention efforts and funding directed towards initiatives in Albania, which sometimes disregards the societal and cultural context[56]. However, it is important to note that this aspect is not extensively examined in the current study; instead, it is recommended as a subject for future research.

To enhance the dataset, the research partner, Mary Ward Loreto, conducted focus groups in Tropoja, engaging with young individuals and parents directly affected by vulnerable and precarious migration. The revelations from these consultations align closely with the literature mentioned earlier, providing a comprehensive understanding of the cultural nuances influencing migration dynamics. The findings from the shared learning event and the focus groups are presented below under the two overarching themes: *Prevailing Cultural, Economic and Familial Pressures; and Prevailing Narratives*.

Prevailing Cultural, Economic and Familial Pressures

Economic challenges, lack of services, and limited employment opportunities in Albania contribute to the decision to migrate.

> My daughter has graduated from the University, bachelor and masters in Physiotherapy and cannot find any job here. I do not want her to leave the country, because I know that if she goes to Germany there, she will receive a salary of 2000 euros per month. But Albania is not giving her anything. I do not want her to leave me, because I have a son in Germany and another son in Italy. My body trembles when I think about it'. (PC1)

While remittances from those settled abroad benefit the Albanian state and families in the short-term financial context, the challenges of securing employment in Albania without connections and the prevalence of corruption present significant barriers. The aspirations of young people for a better future often manifest in a sad reality of leaving Albania, driven by a prevailing sense of hopelessness. Faced with economic struggles and/or familial pressures, and a perceived absence of prospects, the youth find themselves compelled to seek opportunities abroad, viewing migration as a desperate yet necessary path to escape the prevailing sense of despair within the country. The desire to be with family already settled abroad often motivates risky journeys, even if it means struggling and being subjected to exploitation. The narratives below emphasise the importance of familial bonds in decision-making.

Role of Family in Decision-Making

The family plays a crucial role in the decision-making process, both as a supportive factor and, at times, as a potential risk factor due to the cultural and economic context. The strong support of families for their migrating members, both emotionally and economically, underlines the importance of a nuanced understanding of cultural dynamics.

> My son was a minor only 14 years old when he left for emigration, to my sister in Belgium. He suffered a lot, but it was worth it. He went to school there; he is 24 years old today.' (PC1)

> My parents never agreed with my decision to go to England, and I discussed it with them every night. I knew they were afraid for me, but I had realised that I had nothing to look forward to in Albania and I had to take risks. It took a lot of money that I would never be able to raise, not even through my friends, so only family remained hope. It took time to convince them and then they sacrificed for me taking huge debts for me to go there. Debts which have not yet been fully repaid because I was caught there after 6 months and ended up in prison for another 6 months and then returned to Albania. It was very difficult at the beginning here.' (YPC2)

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[56] For instance, millions of pounds have been allocated for a prevention project in Kukes. However, the current depopulated state of Kukes raises questions about the adequacy of contextual understanding and consideration during the project scoping and design phase.

Families often harbour a sense of guilt for not providing their children with a better future within Albania. Part of the problem also lies in the lack of opportunities for the youth, but it is also the deceitfulness that trumps many efforts, even for those who are still living in the country.

> I do not believe in Albanian schools. In the High School ('matura') exams, my son entered without a phone because he was an excellent student, while X, another student entered the exam using his phone and when the results came out my son got 9, while the other 10. This is dishonest! Therefore, I knew that my excellent son would not find himself here and I told him to leave and study abroad.' (PC1)

Migration is often viewed as an opportunity by families, who engage in discussions about individuals who have left, obtained asylum, found employment abroad, or even built new homes in the village. Despite the British political and public characterisation of such movements as illegal migration, there is a prevalent perspective among people that does not distinguish between legal and illegal pathways. The general perception rests towards viewing migration through avenues like lotteries[57] as legal, while the associated risks are often overlooked or underestimated in their decision-making process.

> Of course, I support him because I cannot meet the conditions in my home. I do not want him to go through the same suffering that I went through, and I want him to be comfortable for himself. When the child stays here and has no future, because abroad I think there is a future and employment opportunities. Here my son has nothing to do apart from drinking coffee.' (PC1)

Although parents might not want their children to leave illegally, they also think that sometimes it is 'worth the suffering', as eventually the children will settle and regularise their status in the host country.

> My son was 17 years old when he decided to leave for Germany and asked us for 30,000 ALL at home. He suffered a lot and worked in the black market since he was a minor.' (PC1)

Family-oriented and culturally competent approaches are highlighted as essential for effectively addressing human trafficking and precarious migration.

Cultural and Gender Expectations

Unlawful employment, including involvement in criminality can be seen as acceptable for men and boys, as long as they provide for the family. Cultural expectations blur ethical boundaries; engaging in illegal activities is tolerated if it fulfils the provider role. This complicates efforts to addressing precarious migration that leads to many men and young boys ending up in cannabis houses in the UK. Alas, societal norms play a role in justifying unlawful actions.

Some individuals, often children, are forced into labour and exploited by traffickers who give a small amount of money to the family every few months. This deceptive practice creates an illusion of the child contributing to the income, causing the normalisation and underestimation of the severe issue of child labour. Unfortunately, these beliefs are frequently shared among victims, perpetrators, and their families.

It is also worth noting that the rise in child marriages is fuelled by the aspiration for improved economic prospects and the necessity to 'stabilise' their daughters or improve the financial circumstances resulting from poverty. It is important to highlight that this trend is not widespread and tends to be sporadic, especially in remote regions. Numerous families aim to arrange marriages for their daughters with men residing abroad, often without adequate knowledge of the individuals' status in the host country, or their occupations.

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[57]   Stakeholders referred specifically to the US Green Card – US Lottery.

Prevailing Narratives

Lack of legal pathways occasionally results in the dependence on false asylum claims, as individuals receive a set of instructions from facilitators[58] upon their arrival in the country of destination. Regardless of the veracity of these claims, they leave individuals and families significantly vulnerable and susceptible to hardship.

> I left with my family in France, and my sister and I were minors. For documents, my sister and I went and stayed at the orphanage, hoping our documents would be made. We lived away from our parents for a year and a half, and it was a great sacrifice. I have not seen my parents during that time, only once. It was not the right decision because we were alone, without parents and it still hurts me today when I remember.' (YPC2)

Miscommunication and/or lack of understanding of the divergent narratives in Albania and those presented in the UK creates challenges in addressing issues like trafficking, emphasising the need for more effective communication and collaboration. The clash of perspectives and adoption of problematic narratives without consultation hinder effective solutions. In the UK, it is a common practice for First Responders to consider narratives of potential victims of trafficking without consulting Albanian professionals who possess a deeper understanding of the cultural and societal context. These professionals can also play a crucial role in fact-checking and contributing valuable insights. For example, blood feuds, often portrayed as a significant problem in the UK, although present in Albanian society, are found to be rare and concentrated in and attached to the culture of specific regions[59], highlighting the importance of accurate information.

Furthermore, participants also discussed distrust between UK law enforcement and Albanian authorities including reference to a recent case, which hampers collaboration, complicating efforts to address trafficking and other cross-border issues. This strained relationship may create a conducive environment for traffickers and organised crime groups to operate more freely. The lack of collaboration at every stage also impedes the effective allocation of resources when it comes to prevention efforts funded by UK counterparts.

Illusions of Success in Precarious Migration Narratives

Lack of awareness in Albania about the realities in the UK contributes to individuals leaving with unrealistic expectations. This contributes to disappointment and in other cases, leads to exploitation, however, due to shame, stigma and the societal pressure to succeed once you leave Albania, people are reluctant to return or share the truthful accounts of their journeys.

> Young people think they find flower fields where they go but it is not so. It is a horrible case that one of my relatives told me how immigrants get under trucks, get caught and held there tightly, in the hope of surviving and arriving in England. I still feel sad when I remember it.' (PC1)

> My sister's son just arrived in England by truck, got off and broke his leg, because he had to get out of there more carefully. They slept in the mountains and climbed to the top of the trees all night, because they had nowhere to go.' (PC1)

Young people may find themselves working in cannabis houses because they cannot secure work in the formal economy while being in the UK illegally. A common theme in the data, this reportedly stems from their pride in not showing failure to their relatives, acquaintances, or family, concealing the hardships they face. There are families in Albania that fail to recognise trafficking as a phenomenon, rendering them unaware and unable to prevent it. Young people often decide to migrate directly after finishing the 9th grade, typically around the age of 15. Positive narratives of Albanians successfully crossing into the UK and eventually settling there, circulate predominantly through word of mouth and social networks, overshadowing discussions about the associated challenges, risks, and failures. These 'success stories' are openly shared within family and school environments.

> The parents do not have much information, they have only heard that the people there [in destination countries] have rights and it is a better, more developed life and people are treated as 'people'. (PC1)

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58 Facilitators in this context may include the smugglers; those who harbour migrants along the journey and when they arrive in the UK; and solicitors involved in this scheme.

59 Global Initiative (2021) Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups, Available at: Blood feuds in Albania exploited by criminal groups. | Risk Bulletin #11 – December 2021 (globalinitiative.net)

Albania as a 'safe' country

In considering the perception of Albania as a 'safe' country, several nuanced points emerged that shed light on the multi-layered nature of safety, in terms of opportunities, and challenges within the country. Participants mentioned that while the idea of safety holds true for residents, it does not necessarily extend to those who have experienced trafficking, particularly affecting women. The country's small size and the presence of organised crime groups (OCGs) pose challenges, including making it easier for these groups to locate individuals and create difficulties for reintegration.

The concept of safety was also widely discussed and acknowledged as a contributing factor in that it also becomes entangled with issues of corruption, hindering job searches and acting as a barrier to establishing businesses, especially for small enterprises. The attraction of owning a business is countered by the impact of corruption, which suppresses many entrepreneurial undertakings. This highlights the importance of addressing corruption to facilitate a fair and equitable business environment, ensuring the safety and integrity of business practices. Presently, the reliance of business on nepotism, political favouritism and bribery emphasises the need to prioritise a level playing field, fostering an environment where opportunities are accessible to all strata of the population. This a crucial factor for prevention, and it is imperative for UK policymakers to take this into account when developing future prevention projects in Albania.

Last but not least, the prevailing sense of learned helplessness and hopelessness among young people in Albania contributes significantly to the safety dynamic, as these emotions are intertwined with a pervasive belief that their own country lacks viable opportunities and a promising future.

> 'Families do not want young people to emigrate, but they see every day that there is no future or hope here. There is no work and then they support them, even by borrowing for them, supporting them emotionally, even selling cattle or whatever they have, to make money and leave.' (YPC2)

In summary, for many Albanians, migration is deeply embedded in their cultural history, as they often see it as the only way to succeed and survive. The intricate web of family dynamics, economic pressures, societal challenges, and aspirations for a better future, all influenced by cultural and gender norms, collectively shape the migration landscape in Albania. This complex interplay often results in undesirable outcomes, including trafficking and exploitation. The notion of 'harm on a continuum'[60] becomes very prevalent when reflecting on this issue, as it suggests that risks and challenges associated with migration are multifaceted and evolve across various stages of the migration process. Addressing and comprehending these challenges necessitates a comprehensive approach that recognises the enduring influence of traditions in Albanian society. Supporting victims requires not only legal and economic assistance but also a profound understanding of the cultural context they navigate. Advocating for change involves adopting family-oriented and culturally competent approaches to tackle MSHT and precarious migration.

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[60] As outlined in the Executive Summary, 'harm on a continuum' refers to the fact that the harm experienced by migrants is not a one-time event but a continuum that intensifies at each stage of the precarious migration process. Sometimes, the shift from smuggling to trafficking increases vulnerabilities, and the migrant becomes trapped in a cycle of harm and/or exploitation that is difficult to escape. Acknowledging and addressing the continuum of harm is crucial for developing effective policies and interventions to protect vulnerable migrants and prevent precarious migration.

Defining Cultural Competence and its application in the Modern Slavery Sector in the UK

Introduction

In this section of the report, we shift the focus to the UK and the context of supporting survivors. This study employs the concept of cultural competence to investigate the display and comprehension of cultural influence within the modern slavery sector, with a focus on addressing cultural barriers. Despite acknowledging the criticism surrounding this concept, the project introduces a framework that views cultural competence not as a fixed skill but as a lifelong journey of reflection, awareness, and learning. These perspectives are not contradictory; rather, they can be integrated seamlessly.

Exploring the complexities of culture and cultural understanding has been a long-standing topic of discussion and debate in the modern slavery sector in the UK. It is important to acknowledge that cultural differences extend beyond surface-level awareness, often weaving into unequal power dynamics, particularly in terms of gender, race, legal status, and social status. This understanding calls for a nuanced approach, acknowledging the potential for power imbalances embedded in cultural differences.

The model introduced in this research project, the Papadopoulos model for Culturally Competent and Compassionate Care[61], goes beyond fixed notions of competence and culture. Both cultures and the competence of service providers are dynamic and complex, continuously evolving. The model embraces the notion of culturally competent compassion, defined as the human quality of understanding the suffering of others and wanting to do something about it, using culturally appropriate and acceptable interventions, which take into consideration both the service users' and the service providers' cultural backgrounds as well as the context in which care is given[62]. For simplicity, 'CC' is used as a shorthand, encompassing other related terms within the Papadopoulos model's conception, unless otherwise specified.

The significance of CC approaches as a crucial element in addressing Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT), in all four key pillars of prevention, prosecution, protection, and partnerships[63], was evident in the literature. Overall, culturally competent services are deemed necessary in all fields of prevention, judicial actions, assistance and care provision. Notably, this research places particular emphasis on the relevance of CC in service delivery in the UK, while extending the focus to explore the importance of CC in prevention efforts, centring on Albania as a case study, as discussed above.

Defining and Understanding Cultural Competence

The literature review revealed that the predominant term referenced was 'cultural competence' alongside a myriad of related terms like cultural sensitivity, knowledge, understanding, awareness, safety[64], intelligence[65], humility[66], and congruence[67] which are often used interchangeably. However, the notion of competence has faced criticism, especially when treated as a fixed skill, risking the perpetuation of stereotypes[68].

The ongoing debate brings forth a noteworthy comparison between cultural competence and cultural safety, particularly in the context of health navigation. Recognising the impossibility of mastering the intricacies of every cultural background and context, the term 'professional curiosity'[69] has been proposed. This approach emphasises an open mindset grounded in active listening, positioning the individual served as a knowledgeable guide to learn from.

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61 Papadopoulos, I. (2006). The Papadopoulos, Tilki, and Taylor model of developing cultural competence. Transcultural Health and Social Care: Development of Culturally Competent Practitioners, 7-24; Papadopoulos, I. (2018). Culturally Competent Compassion: A Guide for Healthcare Students and Practitioners. Routledge; See Appendix A for the adaptation of the model for the MSHT sector, including the methodology.

62 Papadopoulos, I. (2011). Courage, compassion and cultural competence. The 13th Anna Reynvaan Lecture. May 19.

63 Referring to the US Department of State 4Ps Paridigm.

64 Dein, S., & Bhui, K. S. (2013). At the crossroads of anthropology and epidemiology: Current research in cultural psychiatry in the UK. Transcultural psychiatry, 50(6), 769-791.

65 Local Government Association. (2022). Council guide to tackling modern slavery. Local Government Association; Van Dyke and sector experts (2022) *'Training Framework for the Prevention, Identification, Support and Care of Child Victims and Survivors of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking and Information and Resources to Support the Training'*. Skills for Care and Development. https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/bakhita/training/support-and-care-of-child-victims.aspx (Accessed: 5 December 2023)

66 Nelki, J., & Sen, P. (2022). Seeking asylum and mental health: A practical guide for professionals (pp. 90).

67 OSCE/ODIHR. (2022). National Referral Mechanisms: Joining Efforts to Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons. A Practical Handbook (2nd ed.). Warsaw: ODIHR.

68 Perpetuating stereotypes can involve preconceived and oversimplified ideas about a particular group of people based on their cultural background, which can inadvertently contribute to overgeneralisation or failure to acknowledge diversity within cultures.

69 Kelly, L., Magalhães, M. J., Meysen, T., & Garner, M. (2019). The contested concept of culture: Encounters in policy and practice on violence and abuse. Interventions Against Child Abuse and Violence Against Women, 121.

In a practical guide for professionals assessing the mental health needs of asylum seekers, the authors clarify that there is no expectation that professionals are 'fully familiar' with clients' cultural background, but clients 'should be able to expect an exchange whereby we try to understand their situation'[70]. Drawing from a number of authoritative scholars in transcultural psychiatry, Nelki and Sen write:

> *'Cultural competence' – a professional's awareness of cultural assumptions and their ability to show empathy across cultures – is perhaps easier to describe than to practice […]. It involves being open to asking questions and staying curious about differences. A respectful attitude and approach – sometimes termed 'cultural humility' – is a key component and enhances clinical engagement […]'.*[71]

Additionally, it is crucial to move away from the notion that individuals within a culture universally possess fixed traits, discounting the influence of personal life history and social context. Drawing from Kirmayer's work[72] the terms cultural safety or cultural humility may be more helpful in taking distance from reified conceptions of culture, because they 'focus on issues of power in an effort to move the clinical encounter towards greater dialogue and accountability' and rely on a dynamic and politically situated conception of culture[73].

A parallel conception of CC, including the use of the term cultural safety, arguably the only one markedly framing CC within MSHT prevention[74] is described thus:

> *Although broad concepts, cultural competence or safety refers to a range of individual and organisational practices and attitudes that enables people to work effectively and equitably across ethnic or 'cultural' difference. The concept embeds an understanding of the likely power imbalance between service user and deliverer and seeks to address these disparities by providing culturally congruent and safe services. This requires cultural openness, awareness, desire, knowledge, sensitivity, and meaningful encounters on behalf of service providers.*[75]

Importantly for this study, this definition highlights the likely imbalance of power and the need to address this. Furthermore, among the several sources concerned with children and young people, the *Practitioner Responses to Child Trafficking*[76] offers a particularly useful description of CC in these terms:

> *Cultural competence, or cultural humility or sensitivity, is the ability to understand, appreciate and interact with people from different cultures or belief systems. It is important that all professionals working within the sector are culturally competent to root out unconscious bias and prejudice within institutions.*

This source emphasises the significance of combining a trauma-informed response with a culturally competent approach within an empathetic framework.

Application of Cultural Competence in the Modern Slavery Context

Despite its unanimously recognised importance, CC is not extensively articulated or defined in many of the sources consulted; mostly it is mentioned and underlined as a crucial feature of services that allows a better understanding of motivations, behaviours, and experiences of MSHT survivors. However, the concept is more thoroughly articulated in some sources. For example, in the *Public Health Framework for Modern Slavery*[77], CC features among the principles of the delivery of services, together with trauma-informed, peer-led and person-centred support. In this framework, culturally competent services are those delivered to meet the needs of people with diverse backgrounds. Culturally competent service delivery flexibly responds to the backgrounds and practices of communities, families and individuals. Psychological support, for example, should be responsive to various understandings of mental health and illness[78].

[70] Nelki, J., & Sen, P. (2022). Assessing mental health needs. *In Seeking Asylum and Mental Health: A Practical Guide for Professionals* (pp. 90-92).

[71] Ibid

[72] Kirmayer, L. J. (2012). Rethinking cultural competence. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 49(2), (pp. 149-164.)

[73] Dein, S., & Bhui, K. S. (2013). At the crossroads of anthropology and epidemiology: Current research in cultural psychiatry in the UK. *Transcultural psychiatry*, 50(6), 784-785.

[74] Such, E., Aminu, H., Barnes, A., Hayes, K., Ariyo, M. D., & Brierly, R. (2022). Prevention of adult sexual and labor exploitation in the UK: What does or could work.

[75] Such, E., Aminu, H., Barnes, A., Hayes, K., Ariyo, M. D., & Brierly, R. (2022). Prevention of adult sexual and labour exploitation in the UK: What does or could work (pp. 22).

[76] Saker, A. (2022). Practitioner Responses to Child Trafficking: Emerging Good Practice (pp. 15).

[77]

[78]

Key documents emphasise the critical role of CC in the provision of effective, person-centred and trauma-informed services. *The Slavery and Trafficking Survivor Care Standards* place the respect for cultural, religious and gender issues at the centre of the non-judgmental attitude of trauma-informed care. The same guidance recommends conducting risk assessments in 'a culturally sensitive and tactful way', implying an understanding of the extent to which the experience of trafficking is connected to stigmatised practices. Cultural and spiritual needs are included as key areas of survivors' Needs Assessment. The authors underline how the Western-centric approach in healthcare which revolves around 'talking' about symptoms may not feel comfortable for some survivors, in addition to the difficulty of trusting people in a position of power, such as doctors, or the authorities[79].

In fact, the same issues may apply to the criminal justice system, which may look different from that of the survivor's country of origin if they are foreign nationals. For this, caseworkers should understand the differences and find resources in the survivor's language to reduce 'language barriers, lack of trust, vulnerability and cultural disorientation'[80]. Finally, culturally appropriate food is recommended, particularly for children.

Culturally appropriate medical treatment and food are also flagged in the recently developed Modern Slavery Core Outcome Set (MSCOS) for Survivor Recovery, Wellbeing and Integration[81]. The study highlights that being 'able to eat culturally appropriate food is an important way to find a sense of familiarity in new settings', part of the outcome 'Belonging and Social Support'[82].

Although not specific to the UK, UK stakeholders[83] contributed to the practical handbook National Referral Mechanisms, compiled and published by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)[84]. This is a comprehensive, key handbook for the sector, where 'cultural congruence' is described as the competence and intelligence to demonstrate 'respect for the cultural origin and personal identity of each individual person, supporting the formation of relationships of trust'[85]. Significantly, CC is connected to two other sections of the handbook, one regarding cultural mediators and one regarding survivor leaders. The importance of gender-sensitive and trauma-informed communication is also addressed and emphasised in the document.

A recently published guide for local authorities and councillors[86] also highlights the significance of CC approaches in addressing MSHT, referencing the Public Health Framework, mentioned earlier. According to the guide, practitioners should undergo annual training on 'cultural intelligence, equality, diversity, and inclusion' based on recommendations from the BME Anti-Slavery Network (BASNET)[87]. While the CC framework discussed in the guide is not MSHT-specific, it is one of the few models available, rooted in Spillett's[88] concept of CC and the Johari Window model[89]. This model helps assess cultural competence levels, uncovering strengths and blind spots, including unconscious biases and beliefs. Additionally, the guide mentions two relevant models, the Barnahus[90] and Lundy[91], both aiming to create safe communication spaces for children to understand their rights and actively participate in procedures and decisions concerning them. Both models are also referenced in the OSCE National Referral Mechanisms Handbook.

Finally, the only model specifically developed in relation to women in sexual exploitation, including within the context of MSHT in the UK, is the Complex Experience Care Model (CECM)[92]. The CECM encompasses several intersecting issues in women's support and can be used as a reflective tool to inform design and decision-making in different services. Against the background of considerable institutional misinterpretation of women's needs and experiences, the authors maintain that services which are not appropriate enhance the risk of further exploitation. Addressing cultural barriers is considered along two other central aspects of women's services: access and awareness; and creating safe and welcoming environments.

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[79] Roberts, K., Terry, E., Witkin, R., Marks, V., Mullan-Feroze, R., Bowen, P., ... & Douglas, A. M. (2018). The Slavery and Trafficking Survivor Care Standards. Human Trafficking Foundation.

[80] Ibid., (pp. 116)

[81] Jannesari, S., Damara, B., Witkin, R., Katona, C., Sit, Q., Dang, M., & Paphitis, S. A. (2023). *The modern slavery core outcome set: A survivor-driven consensus on priority outcomes for recovery, wellbeing, and reintegration. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 15248380231211955.

[82] Ibid. (pp. 47)

[83] UK practitioners had a key role in drafting the handbook, with input from academics and survivor leaders.

[84] OSCE/ODIHR. (2022). National Referral Mechanisms: Joining Efforts to Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons (Second Ed.). Warsaw: ODIHR.

[85] Ibid. (pp. 77)

[86] Local Government Association. (2022). Council guide to tackling modern slavery. Local Government Association.

[87] Bawso Training. (2023). BAWSO. https://bawso.org.uk/en/training/

[88] Spillett, M. (2018). Cultural Competence: Promoting Leadership & Organisational Change.

[89] Luft, J., & Ingham, H. (1961). The Johari window. Human relations training news, 5(1), 6-7.

[90] Haldorsson, O. L. (2017). Barnahus Quality Standards Summary: Guidance for Multidisciplinary and Interagency Response to Child Victims and Witnesses of Violence.

[91] Lundy, L. (2007). 'Voice' is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *British educational research journal*, 33(6), 927-942.

[92] Hodges, K., & Burch, S. (2019). Multiple and Intersecting Experiences of Women in Prostitution: Improving Access to Helping Services. Dignity: *A Journal on Sexual Exploitation and Violence*, 4(2).

The authors describe culturally responsive services as those able to resonate with and affirm the culture of their beneficiaries, by attuning with their values and norms. These services can better identify 'the subtle cultural background and context that can influence how women ask for and access help and support'[93], as well as facilitating the establishment of relationships of trust within holistic support provision. The cultural competence of practitioners 'involves awareness, knowledge, and skills to understand and discern cultural differences, with subsequent adaptation to clients' needs'[94]. CC entails also the ability to adopt information about a client's culture to increase service acceptability, better meeting support needs and reducing cultural barriers, as well as barriers of another nature. In recognition of the importance of diverse cultural dynamics that impact women's lived experience, CECM has been recently updated and set within the context of CC, responsiveness, and sensitivity/mediation, to further address cultural and gender needs'[95].

Practices and tools in culturally competent services

A number of promising practices have been identified in the literature, such as culturally specific provision[96], also within the framework of the interculturalisation of services[97]; cultural mediation[98], the usefulness of cultural and ethnic matching practitioners[99]; health navigation and bridge referrals[100]; advocacy and community champions[101]; arts-based and creative practices[102]; social prescribing, community-based and community development interventions[103]; leaflets and cultural booklets for immediate, quick and wide use[104].

A culturally specific provision implies a proactive approach in the identification of vulnerability in a way that clients can receive the most suitable service as early as possible and can in turn also engage pro-actively and consistently with providers[105]. In this way, service users are better positioned to shape services and enhance co-production, while aiming to increase self-esteem, confidence, mental health, and ability to deal with the impacts of their trauma. 'Tailored cultural provisions' that is attentive to survivors' cultural needs, including their language and socio-economic status, are better positioned to gain the necessary trust of service users and consequently support them holistically and appropriately.[106]

In contrast, cultural mediation, as explained in a report by Rakovica and Ianovitz[107], contributes to broader integration goals in the host society, acting as a bridge between institutions and migrants. The holistic adoption of cultural mediation within a survivor-centred approach has proven to be an effective tool for healing, gaining independence, and re-establishing control over survivors' lives[108]. A non-exhaustive list of examples showcasing effective implementation of cultural competence observed during this research is further listed in **Appendix C**.

93   Hodges, K., Brachou, A., & Burch, S. (2022). Sexual exploitation: Framing women's needs and experiences. In Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (pp. 182-199). Policy Press. (pp. 191)

94   Ibid. (pp. 192)

95   Ibid. (pp. 182-199) 52 Fassil, Y., & Burnett, A. (2015). Commissioning mental health services for vulnerable adult migrants. Mind. https://www.mind.org.uk/media/3168649/vulnerable-migrants_2015_mindweb.pdf; Nelki, J., & Sen, P. (2022). Assessing mental health needs. In Seeking Asylum and Mental Health: A Practical Guide for Professionals (p. 90); Van Dyke, R., & Brachou, A. (2021). What looks promising for tackling modern slavery: A review of practice-based research.

96   Fassil, Y., & Burnett, A. (2015). Commissioning mental health services for vulnerable adult migrants. Mind. https://www.mind.org.uk/media/3168649/vulnerable-migrants_2015_mindweb.pdf;

97   Sandhu, S., Bjerre, N. V., Dauvrin, M., Dias, S., Gaddini, A., Greacen, T., ... & Priebe, S. (2013). Experiences with treating immigrants: A qualitative study in mental health services across 16 European countries. Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 48. (pp. 105-116)

98   Rakovica, B., & Ianovitz, S. (2021). XX Cultural Mediation. An inclusive solution to help reduce the cultural and language barriers experienced by survivors of trafficking. Hibiscus for Social Justice.

99   Chan, H. T. V. (2019). Understanding the Practice of Frontline Child Protection Social Workers Working with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Families. University of Huddersfield.

100   Braham, C. (2021). "Being a 'professional friend': An exploration of the functioning and impacts of health navigation to improve access to healthcare for migrant women" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Sheffield); OSCE/ODIHR. (2022). National Referral Mechanisms: Joining Efforts to Protect the Rights of Trafficked Persons (Second Ed.). Warsaw: ODIHR.

101   Fassil, Y., & Burnett, A. (2015). Commissioning mental health services for vulnerable adult migrants. Mind. https://www.mind.org.uk/media/3168649/vulnerable-migrants_2015_mindweb.pdf

102   Marziale, L., Knight, R., & Reynolds, T. (2023). Migrant women resisting borders through participatory arts. In UK Borderscapes (pp. 191-202). Routledge.

103   Hashagen, S., Doyle, M., & Keenan, B. (2017). Cultural identity, migration and community development in Glasgow. In Community Organising against Racism (pp. 159-170). Policy Press; Such, E., Walton, E., Delaney, B., Harris, J., & Salway, S. (2017). Adapting primary care for new migrants: A formative assessment. BJGP Open, 1(1); Zhang, C. X., Wurie, F., Browne, A., Haworth, S., Burns, R., Aldridge, R., ... & Campos-Matos, I. (2021). Social prescribing for migrants in the United Kingdom: A systematic review and call for evidence. *Journal of Migration and Health*, 4

104   IOM UK. (2019). Strengthening responses to child trafficking and modern slavery: A Pilot Project to support foster carers looking after Albanian and Vietnamese unaccompanied children. Child Trafficking Protection Fund Project Evaluation Report. IOM UK and Croydon Council. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/child_trafficking_modern_slavery.pdf; West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network. (2022). Vietnamese and Albanian Cultural Information Booklets. https://westmidlandsantislavery.org/vietnamese-and-albanian-cultural-information-booklets/; Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime (2023) Romanian and Roma Cultural Resource

105   Van Dyke, R., & Brachou, A. (2021). What Looks Promising for Tackling Modern Slavery: A Review of Practice-Based Research. Bakhita Centre for Research on Slavery, Exploitation and Abuse.

106   Ibid.

107   Rakovica, B., & Ianovitz, S. (2021). Cultural Mediation: An inclusive solution to help reduce the cultural and language barriers experienced by survivors of trafficking. Hibiscus for Social Justice.

108   Ibid.

Section B Findings

The following section presents findings that depict the cultural challenges faced by survivors journeying through the NRM. Findings from survivor consultations, practitioner insights, and survey data are organised under key themes: *Cultural Competence and Humility in Support Systems; Language Barriers and Communication; Social Stigma and Discrimination; Cultural Barriers beyond the NRM; Continuous Learning and Reflection; Culturally Specific Support and Culturally Matching Practitioners*.

Cultural Competence and Humility in Support Systems: Insights from Practitioners and Survivors

The importance of recognising culture as a factor for diversity in the support system and NRM process emerged as a crucial theme for survivors. The survivor consultants shared invaluable insights on their experiences and/or perceptions of the difficulties adapting to and navigating new cultures, especially within the support context. They shed light on the complexities of integration, and the pursuit of one's rights. The narratives herein delve into the cultural barriers experienced within the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), offering insights across a spectrum of experiences, ranging from encouraging support to disheartening challenges.

While many caseworkers provided excellent support, the survivors spoke about a pervasive lack of consistency within the system. A stark contrast emerged between compassionate guidance from one caseworker, described as an '*angel*', and the bullying behaviour of another, as highlighted by a survivor.

> **'I received very good treatment from the NRM, but one caseworker was like an angel, and I felt very bullied by another one, and received psychological pressure from her.' Teuta**

Some revealed that external organisations[109] provided more substantial assistance during the reflection and recovery journey than the NRM itself. The inconsistency in support across different caseworkers stressed the challenges of navigating a system with varying levels of cultural competence. Beyond the inconsistency, portraying frontline workers in such contrasting terms also highlights a common occurrence. Due to varying degrees of support within existing systems, survivors sometimes idealise third-sector workers, placing them on a pedestal, and experiencing disappointment when these expectations are not met.

Not being seen

In exploring the cultural barriers faced in the NRM, a prevalent theme emerged regarding the disingenuous nature of the system, which, instead of facilitating recovery, re-traumatises survivors. Survivors indicated that it objectifies individuals with lived experiences, reducing them to their victimisation or disregarding their personhood and cultural identity. This disingenuity prompts survivors to set aside their true selves and cultural identities to conform to expected norms, as a means of protection from potential misunderstanding and mislabelling.

The theme of individuals with lived experiences '*not being seen for who they are*' within the system was evident in several discussions. One survivor highlighted caseworkers' lack of cultural awareness, expressing disappointment in their generalised approach that did not take account of Bangladeshi or Asian culture. He noted a focus solely on the trafficking story, neglecting crucial aspects of his professional background, family, and personal interests. The desire to be seen as a whole person, not just a survivor, resonates with his frustration and disappointment. Amidst these challenges, emotional support emerged as crucial for fostering a sense of identity and security. Another survivor emphasised the importance of feeling valued beyond financial assistance, seeking recognition as an individual rather than merely a body occupying space.

Empowerment Dynamics: Navigating Information Gaps and Power Disparities

Survivors within the NRM expressed a common concern: they often lack clear explanations about the system and struggle to navigate its complexities. They perceived this as due to a lack of understanding of UK systems and culture, and a disregard for their own experiences and cultures.

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[109]   Referring to organisations not contracted via MSVCC, providing non-statutory support while survivors were going through the NRM.

The recurring theme of knowledge as power highlighted the importance of understanding one's rights and responsibilities, especially in navigating the complex asylum process that is merged with the NRM. One survivor explained that, as she faced the disparities within the system, the importance of being informed and proactive became increasingly evident. Despite variations in the information provided, three survivors also emphasised a key issue – the significant gap between their rights as outlined in the relevant statutory guidance[110] and the practical support received, highlighting the need for clearer guidance for survivors to help them navigate complex and unfamiliar systems. The post screening interview period, marked by an official letter from the NRM and the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, pushed one survivor into a largely independent and isolated journey. In this case, the lack of detailed explanations and minimal support from the NRM led the survivor to self-navigate complex bureaucratic systems, rather than focusing on reflection and recovery. However, despite the challenges encountered, she expressed a sense of pride in her ability to manage independently.

In contrast, the disempowering nature of the system was also reflected in one survivor statement regarding the need to increase access to information for survivors, such as housing rights and tenancy agreements. The lack of this information removes the sense of power and control of the individual over areas that should be within their locus of influence and could be seen as having a patronising and infantilising impact on the survivors involved.

Another perplexing aspect arose where survivors were expected to express gratitude but instead, they questioned the appropriateness of expressing thanks when services were lacking, revealing cultural dissonance in their reluctance to thank when feeling suppressed. The narrative also highlighted a survivor's assertion, '*There is a lot of abuse of power*', suggesting a broader cultural discrepancy in power dynamics and authority structures. This invites reflection on how power is wielded, perceived, and navigated in the survivors' cultural background compared to the prevalent dynamics in their current environment.

Living with others

Almost all survivors highlighted challenges related to cohabiting with people from other cultures in shared accommodation, revealing the need for cultural humility among both service deliverers and fellow survivors. One survivor faced challenges with noise in the NRM accommodation, which hindered religious practices, while another expressed uncertainty around cultural differences and fear of inadvertently offending people from a different culture/religion. The caseworker's suggested solution of advising the survivor to 'avoid' interactions with residents from different cultural backgrounds left the survivor feeling disempowered.

Consequently, practical issues stemming from cultural differences remained unresolved, contributing to frustration. These experiences emphasise the need for facilitation of open discussions on cultural differences among survivors to alleviate confusion and anxiety during their NRM and asylum journeys. Such feelings impede the sense of safety crucial for their recovery from trauma. Service providers should recognise and address these cultural challenges, by actively collaborating with survivors to cultivate cultural humility rather than avoiding the issues altogether.

> **'Can we ask survivors what is true for them? We are also integrating the willingness to share power with survivors in order to learn from them. So, it's important. What do I know about this? What do I think? When we are able to acknowledge our own experiences, we make room to understand other cultures, and we are able to collaborate with the people we are working with. So, we can ask questions like, "Is this true for you?"'** Jenny

Building Cultural Bonds

Indeed, some examples of positive experiences/initiatives were identified by survivors which could be used to inform practice. Multicultural cookery classes were highlighted as an example of an activity for bridging language gaps and fostering cultural exchanges. Sharing stories about food facilitated cultural understanding. While some survivors praised support workers for sharing information on connecting activities, others faced challenges with key workers lacking ties to the survivors' cultural organisations, hindering their access to religious communities and or cultural festivals. Survivor-led activities were also recommended, as opportunities for people to learn about and embrace new cultures.

Peer support was also mentioned as a valuable resource in overcoming cultural barriers, which served as a source of solidarity. One of the survivors explained that by guiding friends through similar challenges, she became an advocate for shared experiences and mutual understanding. Another survivor talked about the positive experiences in online parenting training sessions facilitated by an Albanian organisation, that created a supportive community, extending beyond the training and fostering solidarity among mothers facing similar challenges. However, these types of interventions are few.

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[110] Statutory guidance: Modern Slavery: statutory guidance for England and Wales (under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) and non-statutory guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland (accessible version) Updated 9 October 2023, Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-slavery-how-to-identify-and-support-victims/modern-slavery-statutory-guidance-for-england-and-wales-under-s49-of-the-modern-slavery-act-2015-and-non-statutory-guidance-for-scotland-and-northe

Waiting and Lack of Trust: Exacerbating Cultural Barriers

Discussions also focused on NRM support, and survivors shared their struggles for adequate support from the Home Office during years of awaiting asylum decisions. The financial assistance of £45 per week also served as a stark reminder of the disparities faced by those carving out a life in a foreign country, exacerbating difficulties posed by cultural barriers. The quest for meaningful employment, impeded by a lack of or inconsistent employability support, was a persistent challenge.

The system's dysfunction is exacerbated by prolonged waiting for responses from authorities, creating an elusive trust dynamic. The survivors describe this waiting period as a perpetual state of anticipation, emphasising the emotional toll of prolonged uncertainty.

> 'A person gets tired of waiting; faith is lost. I learned not to wait.' Klodiana

Trust in practitioners was also identified as an issue, leading to uncertainty about the motivations of those helping, whether genuine or because they are incentivised by receiving a salary. This pervasive lack of trust transforms into a cultural barrier, hindering full engagement with available support systems.

> 'With support workers, we have understood one another; they have been like intermediaries. However, you always have to ask [for support and things] and wait– they don't initiate anything.' Sibora

Experiences of prolonged waiting impacts on survivors' ability to trust. Consequently, the ongoing fight for equality and the enduring impact of cultural barriers shape a multifaceted emotional landscape. These barriers are discussed further below with additional insights from practitioners and an acknowledgement of the intersection of cultural competency and trauma informed approaches within support provision.

Importance of Trauma-Informed Approaches

As the sector evolves towards greater trauma-informed practices, practitioners exhibit an enhanced understanding of the impact of trauma. During extensive discussions within the Stakeholder Group, practitioners highlighted the complex interlinking of cultural factors into survivors' experiences of trauma, which necessitates a tailored and person-centred approach to support. Survey responses further illustrate practitioners' adeptness in recognising and addressing trauma, with a keen awareness of the influence of cultural backgrounds.

> 'We ensure we provide a trauma-informed approach which considers their cultural background when assessing and interviewing them.'(PS030)

> 'I implement a trauma-informed approach that recognizes the impact of trauma and respects survivors' individual needs and preferences. I understand how cultural factors may influence their experiences of trauma and their responses to support services.' (PS692)

Despite the commitment by practitioners to implement trauma informed approaches, much of the data revealed multiple barriers to achieving this.

In survey and stakeholder group consultations, practitioners identified a contrast between *knowing about* cultural competency and *provision of* culturally competent services. The survey revealed that the majority of practitioners were familiar with the concept of cultural competence, in the context of supporting survivors of trafficking, as illustrated below:
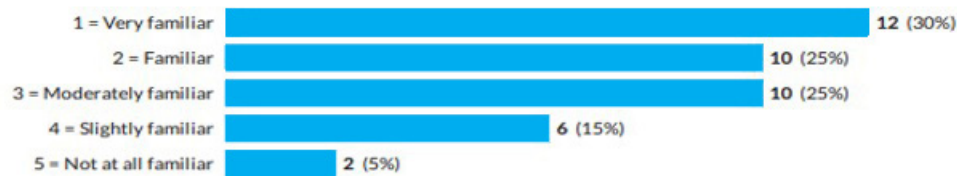
Multi answer: Percentage of respondents who selected each answer option (e.g. 100% would represent that all this question's respondents chose that option)

Figure 1. Practitioners' Familiarity with the Concept of Cultural Competency

When queried about challenges in integrating cultural competence into their work, 47.5% of practitioners affirmed encountering difficulties, while 52.5% reported having no such challenges. These figures are quite stark, revealing almost half of practitioners facing obstacles. Regarding the critical cultural needs and potential barriers impacting the recovery and reintegration process of foreign national survivors of trafficking, practitioners identified the following themes, all of which are reflected in the discussion with all respondents, and discussed below:
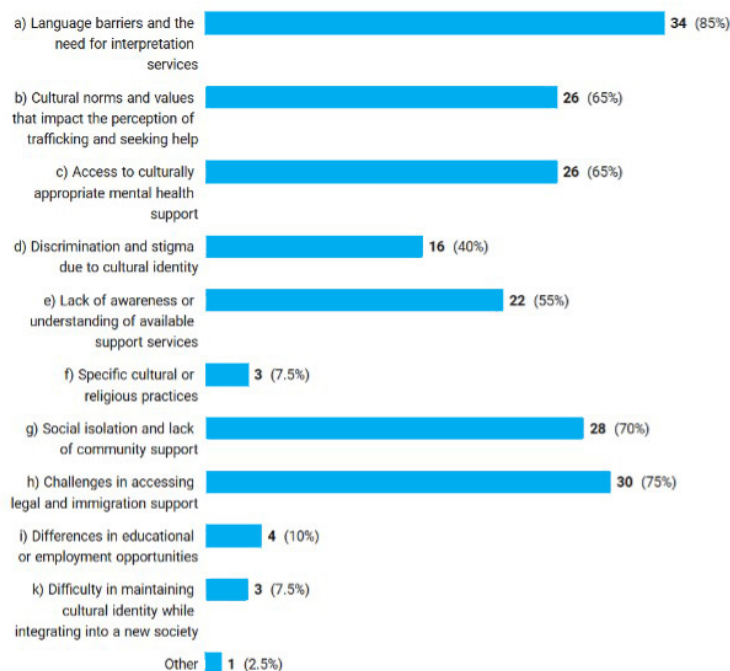
Figure 2. Cultural barriers faced by survivors as identified by practitioners

The struggle begins with the realisation that cultural competence is not inherently woven into the fabric of existing structures and processes. Its absence creates a vacuum where the richness of diversity remains unexplored. Practitioners consistently highlight systemic challenges and resource limitations that impact service provision, consequently affecting efforts to deliver culturally competent services.

> 'The initiative[111] has been individual and there was not enough theoretical background to support and help to create a practical guideline.' (PS030)

In the pursuit of cultivating cultural competence, the tools and support required, including adequate time allocated for needs assessments, co-production and reflective practice, are not readily available and rely on individual commitment.

As noted, practitioners commonly identified that there is a lack of cultural competence and cultural understanding within service delivery. This includes challenges such as the absence of information among professionals regarding mental health awareness in different cultures, insufficient consideration of cultural backgrounds affecting recovery, and the impact of racial discrimination on confidence in approaching services. This theme underlines the need for increased cultural sensitivity and awareness among service providers.

> 'A lack of accessible, culturally appropriate information relating to available support... Survivors have commonly experienced racial discrimination during their stay in the UK and in different services, which impacts their confidence in approaching those services.' (PS709)

> 'Prejudice against specific nationalities such as Albanians seems to be embedded from the Home Secretary down.' (PS423)

> 'Difficulties that a lot of the statutory support we have in the UK is not geared towards people from different cultures so doesn't accommodate specific needs which are not deemed important in Western cultures but would be in some others.' (PS263)

> 'Service providers have never considered priority cultural backgrounds in terms of food and nutrition. The fact survivors do not have access to food they can healthily consume for a long time in hotels affects their physical health and emotional health.' (PS709)

Fewer practitioners expressed a critical concern regarding the lack of '*professional curiosity*' to explore cultural dynamics that go beyond government and organisational reports, and academic publications. They explained that in some cases they felt they could not express their shared cultural insights, challenge embedded cultural narratives or query the veracity of certain claims due to systemic barriers within the NRM. Their hesitation was rooted in the perception that challenges to mainstream narratives are beyond the scope of practitioners' roles.

The absence of a 'safe place' for open dialogue compounds this issue, preventing genuine conversations about the nuanced and emotional aspects of their work. This lack of professional curiosity and wider availability of safe reflective spaces in the sector pose challenges to fostering authentic understanding, hindering the development of comprehensive strategies that consider the unique cultural dimensions of service delivery. Encouraging a more inclusive and open approach to discussions, beyond bureaucratic confines, is essential for promoting a holistic understanding of the challenges faced by practitioners in the field. In addition to these systemic issues, respondents also identified a number of specific sites outside of their remit in which there was a lack of cultural competency.

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[111] The practitioner's own initiative to learn about cultural competency.

Language Barriers and Communication: Practitioners' Insights

Obstacles such as language barriers, communication challenges, and trust issues stemming from past disappointments and fear of authority figures hinder effective support and communication. Managing the intricacies of communication and trust-building with survivors poses a significant challenge. Practitioners emphasised the need to strike a careful balance – avoiding re-traumatisation while exploring survivors' backgrounds and cultures with professional curiosity.

Building trust also means tackling the tough task of breaking down the psychological barriers set by traffickers. Practitioners recognised the difficulty in overcoming these obstacles and stressed the importance of a culturally competent and compassionate approach. The lack of culturally sensitive information exacerbates the challenge. Language services, including interpreters and translators, emerge as crucial tools in overcoming communication barriers.

> 'I ensure that effective language access services, such as professional interpreters and translators like [names of interpretation services], are available to facilitate communication between staff and survivors. This helps overcome language barriers and supports accurate and culturally sensitive communication.'(PS425)

However, despite practitioners acknowledging the necessity for accurate, culturally sensitive communication to ensure survivors receive the support they require, the actual experiences of survivors with interpreters often fall short of achieving this sought-after standard, discussed below. Practitioners also acknowledge the poor quality of interpretation services, which consequently impacted on their work. While the research did not delve into the root causes of the pervasive poor quality of interpretation in the sector, both practitioners and survivors indicated factors such as a perceived lack of compassion and overall animosity among interpreters, and the loss of cultural nuances due to hurried translations.

> '….. even when interpreters are available the quality of it is very poor and it does not help the working process.' (PS030)

This quote highlights the challenges faced when using interpreters, suggesting that even their presence may not always guarantee effective communication due to inadequate service quality. It underlines the need for better interpretation that considers cultural nuances for enhanced understanding.

Language Barriers and Communication: Survivors' Experiences

Reflecting findings from practitioners, language emerged as a significant barrier, posing challenges in expression, interpretation, and leading to instances of misunderstanding for survivors whose primary language is not English. All Albanian survivors highlighted communication and language challenges during their journeys in the UK. Despite initially seeking interpreters for assistance, survivors abandoned this aid, citing exhaustion and dissatisfaction, and finding relief in expressing themselves independently. However, in such cases, communication challenges were exacerbated by the '*impatience*' of some support providers when expressing oneself in English.

> 'Despite my efforts to communicate in English, my American-accented English required additional gestures for comprehension.' Klodiana

Some interpreters had caused hindrances, leading survivors to distance themselves from those lacking compassion or displaying rudeness. One survivor explained that the use of interpreters proved essential, with 90% of interactions being positive. However, a single negative incident during a hospital appointment exposed the harsh realities of cultural bias because of judgements about her sexual health that disregarded the exploitative nature of her experiences.[112] The complexities of cultural nuances and misunderstandings were exemplified in debates with interpreters, such as arguments on the existence of postcodes in Albania. Communication breakdowns during critical interviews left survivors feeling misunderstood and offended.

> *'With interpreters, I have had negative experiences – in an interview with [name of organisation], the interpreter told me, 'Briefly, please...' Wanted me to hurry up, but my story cannot be told briefly.'* Teuta

In exploring cultural differences in the context of communication, a recurring sentiment surfaced: 'We have been brought up differently!' This declaration reflects the nuanced challenges faced in adapting to a new cultural environment. Two survivors recounted being perceived as confrontational or aggressive due to expressing feelings in culturally acceptable ways from their home countries, which differ from common practices in the UK.

> *'In Nigeria, when we are angry we shout, we say what we think. We express our emotions and we vent. I shout when I feel hurt on the inside. Then I feel calm and at peace'.* Olusola

The survivor's initial response to this sense of being so deeply misinterpreted and misunderstood was characterised by her attempt to adapt her authentic responses so that she could fit in:

> *'Then, I started trying to imitate how other people express their feelings.'* Olusola

She perceived this as '*neo-colonialism*' and expressed the struggle of abandoning her native language for English, as a form of oppression within a system meant to address and aid recovery from trafficking. This restriction on language use is seen as disempowering, hindering the survivor's ability to express trauma and communicate effectively during her recovery journey and societal reintegration.

Barriers to Integration: Social Stigma and Discrimination

The challenge for victims to integrate into a new society and learn unfamiliar cultural norms emerged notably through the consultations with survivors and the practitioner survey. This struggle manifested in either a lack of community connection or a deliberate disassociation from a community of people who share a nationality/ethnic/cultural background, contributing to isolation and adverse effects on mental health.

> *'Adapting and integrating into society, understanding social norms, and the absence of a community connection, or conversely, the desire to disassociate from the community—all impact recovery due to isolation and have repercussions on mental health.'* (PS194)

Survivors also detailed discrimination based on asylum status, ethnicity, and nationality, emphasising the societal biases eclipsing individual identities. The vulnerability tied to asylum status and cultural stereotypes added layers to the challenges faced by survivors. For many survivors, the label of 'asylum seeker' was not just bureaucratic; it brought obstacles and discrimination, highlighting their vulnerability in society, in terms of access to essential services, employment opportunities, and social acceptance.

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[112] How practitioners approach women can affect their ability to seek help, especially when considering the stigma around prostitution and its impact on women discussing their experiences. See: Hodges, Kathryn and Burch, Sarah (2019) "Multiple and Intersecting Experiences of Women in Prostitution: Improving Access to Helping Services," Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence: Vol. 4: Issue 2, Article 3. https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2019.04.02.03

The theme of discrimination extends to ethnicity and nationality, with one survivor detailing the difficulties her son encountered in school during a period of media scapegoating against Albanians. This highlights the influence of cultural stereotypes. A survivor shared a solicitor's quote, based on a stereotype that '*Albanians have money*', which emphasises how cultural biases can affect interpersonal relations when seeking support and services, revealing the challenges individuals encounter.

The narratives also acknowledged the impact of negative stereotypes about Albanians perpetuated by a number of members of parliament and reported in the media.[113]

> **'They can't put us all in one basket.'** Klodiana

Recognising individuality within communities is crucial, otherwise creating a negative impact on societal perceptions based on political rhetoric.

Another survivor shared experiences of discrimination due to her 'black skin', citing it as a disadvantage. She previously expressed being labelled '*abusive or aggressive*' for expressing feelings congruent with her culture, highlighting the importance of cultural humility and awareness among support staff.

Furthermore, the recurring theme of shame and stigma associated with one's cultural background and in some cases asylum status, has a profound impact on survivors' mental and emotional well-being. Overcoming societal judgment emerged as a significant challenge in the recovery process, particularly regarding mental health. This stigma is intertwined with cultural norms and taboos, forming additional barriers that hinder survivors' willingness to seek, particularly, mental health support.

The pervasive nature of this theme, mentioned in most interviews and in several survey responses, highlights the importance of addressing and dismantling cultural stigma to foster more open and supportive environments for survivors.

> **'Cultural and societal norms which tell male survivors that to ask for help is a sign of weakness.' (PS906)**

> **'Mental health is often not disclosed by some Albanian clients as it is culturally a taboo issue.' (PS610)**

The acknowledgment of mental health as a 'taboo issue' emphasises the importance of fostering cultural humility and employing creative, empathic, and holistic approaches to address mental health issues within diverse cultural contexts[114].

Accessing Mental Health Support

Cultural challenges were also mentioned when reflecting on psychological support received during the NRM and in some cases intersect with the theme of language barriers and communication. One survivor shared a disheartening first encounter with a psychologist, an experience damaged by an unwelcoming environment and racist undertones. The psychologist's lack of empathy, coupled with instructions on how the survivor could return to Albania, highlighted the cultural insensitivity within crucial support services.

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[113]   See example of media article: Hymas, C. (2023) 'Suella Braverman warns of new wave of Albanian migrants crossing the Channel.' Telegraph, Available at: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/06/05/suella-braverman-new-wave-of-albanian-migrants-channel/; See also: Walsh. P. and Oriishi, K. (2023) Albanian asylum seekers in the UK and EU: a look at recent data, Migration Observatory. Oxford University. Available at: https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/commentaries/albanian-asylum-seekers-in-the-uk-and-eu-a-look-at-recent-data/

[114]   A recent call for proper support to address mental health, which takes into consideration cultural dynamics was shared by Migrant & Refugee Children's Legal Unit (2023), available at: Brook-House-Albanian-asylum-seekers-mental-health-risks.pdf (miclu.org)

Another survivor (n=1) explained that she found group sessions initially challenging due to cultural differences, but eventually accessed one-to-one online sessions with an interpreter, which were positive. On the other hand, six other survivors (n=6) hinted that counselling sessions conducted with interpreters, while somewhat effective, fell short of full understanding. The preference for self-expression without the presence of a third party highlights the complexities of conveying personal experiences through translation.[115]

Despite these challenges, counselling was experienced by some as a liberating space. The opportunity to express oneself freely and departing from one's cultural norms regarding mental health, was welcomed by the Albanian survivors who saw the benefits of counselling. The majority (n=6) used counselling without the intermediary of an interpreter, which not only facilitated more direct communication but also enabled a sense of empowerment for the survivors. One survivor shared as an example of good cultural competence and trauma-informed practice the NHS psychologists who were patient and took time to ask questions, including about his cultural background. He stated, "*They knew who I was*".

Cultural Barriers beyond the NRM

In interactions in broader sections of society, it is crucial to acknowledge that instances of discrimination stemming from a lack of cultural competency can potentially cause feelings of exclusion and a sense of not belonging. Addressing these aspects is essential in fostering an environment that mitigates the risk of re-trafficking by promoting inclusivity and cultural understanding.

Accessing Community Support and Availability of Cultural Resources

Collaboration with community organisations was listed as instrumental in understanding and embracing cultural nuances. In one example, an organisation showcased a tangible case, detailing the benefits of partnering with an Albanian organisation to source a therapist, who provided online counselling sessions to Albanian survivors. Such collaborative approaches enhance cultural understanding and deliver specialised support to survivors. In another positive example, one practitioner shared:

> 'I establish partnerships with community organisations specialising in supporting foreign nationals or specific cultural groups. These organisations provide valuable insights and assistance in delivering culturally competent support services. For example, …. when I worked as an MS Victim Care Advisor, we used a therapist based in London who specialized in working with women who had suffered sexual violence, domestic violence, and had PTSD.' (PS692)

However, services should recognise that not all survivors may want reconnection with their own community, and it's crucial to acknowledge this preference. This choice may stem from a lack of readiness, often associated with unhealed trauma rooted in one's community or may be influenced by a perpetuated culture of distrust linked to broader cultural, historical and societal contexts.

In consultations with Albanian survivors, refraining from seeking support within the Albanian community was a recurring theme. This choice ranged from a scarcity of support in their community, to distrust of organisations. One survivor expressed struggling with self-prejudice and external fear of community judgment, thus, declining referrals to Albanian organisations due to unreadiness and fear.

> 'They don't understand what you've suffered. I have felt offended, even by Albanians.' Teuta

Although not always present in all the cases, family members or close friends played a pivotal role in providing support, breaking down barriers, and fostering resilience. However, the narrative also exposed the isolation felt within the Albanian community, marked by suspicions regarding others' intentions and internal fractures among those seeking belonging in the UK.

> 'I don't know anyone in the Albanian community. Some have not-so-good intentions.' Klodiana

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115 The Care Quality Commission Report (2023) echoed a similar observation, emphasising an example of good practice where Albanian survivors could communicate directly with an Albanian counsellor, eliminating the need for interpretation services. Report available here: https://www.cqc.org.uk/publications/services-survivors-human-trafficking-and-modern-slavery/our-key-findings#:~:text=In%20another%20example%20of%20good%20practice%20beyond%20contractual%20requirements%2C%20a%20provider%20proactively%20addressed%20the%20l.

The concept of community is a complex issue for survivors, as it is linked to positive but also negative cultural factors, such as stigma or the presence or lack of trust. It is, however, important to support the possibility that survivors make connections, and that they feel safe to do so, either with members of their own cultural communities[116] or within multi-cultural contexts – where they may feel safer[117].

On the other hand, practitioners seeking to reach out to community and cultural organisations on behalf of their service users, also face certain challenges. The available organisations that represent and work with specific cultural and ethnic groups face a hectic schedule, balancing a high demand for their expertise with the pressure of overwhelming commitments. This dual burden complicates matters, as the key players in building cultural competence struggle with their own limitations.

> 'Also, some cultural organisations you reach out too are busy and inundated themselves - this adds a lot of pressure on them too. Engagement needs to be more coordinated/ structured.' (PS569)

Supporting these findings, a recent study, focusing on child protection practices of social workers working with Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) families[118], revealed limited research on the cultural competence of social workers in England, underlining the importance of understanding communities as a crucial resource for social workers dealing with BAME families.

This highlights the need for practitioners to recognise that 'culture is not an excuse for abuse'[119] and underlines the significance of learning about cultural influences on family dynamics and roles. Additionally, as was pointed out by survey respondents even within a country with a myriad of cultural differences:

> 'A country can have many versions of cultural experience depending on your status or position in society.' (PS383)

As highlighted in a different study, and echoed by stakeholders in this research, practitioners should commit to '*using online resources, conducting their own research, and consulting with community organisations or ethnic-specific services, specialised teams and interpreters, as well as using reflective practices*'[120]. In addition to advocating for cultural competency and the necessary systemic efforts to prioritise it in service delivery and on a policy level, the research highlights the significance of cultural humility as a self-explorative journey that both practitioners and policymakers should undertake.

Legal Aid

Furthermore, the scarcity of legal aid solicitors further exacerbates the existing challenges, for both those seeking, and providing, assistance. The pursuit of timely legal representation becomes a time-intensive marathon, involving countless phone calls and emails, in order to find a solicitor and/or mental health service with the capacity to help.

> 'The other barriers of being unable to find legal aid/immigration advice is very important.' (PS657)

Timely access to legal representation is viewed by research participants not only as a cultural issue but as a human rights concern, stressing the need for improved accessibility to legal and immigration support services. These concerns and gaps can be found in other community settings, institutions and research studies[121].

[116] Such, E., Aminu, H., Barnes, A., Hayes, K., Ariyo, M. D., & Brierley, R. (2022). *Prevention of adult sexual and labour exploitation in the UK: What does or could work?* Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy & Evidence Centre. Link to the report.

[117] British Red Cross, Hestia, ASHIANA. (2019). Hope for the future: Support for survivors of trafficking after the National Referral Mechanism UK integration pilot – evaluation and policy report. British Red Cross.

[118] Chan, H. T. V. (2019). Understanding the Practice of Frontline Child Protection Social Workers Working with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Families. University of Huddersfield

[119] Ibid. (p.5)

[120] Ibid. (p. 64-72)

[121] Tran, D. and Brachou, A, (2021) Legal Assistance for Victims of Trafficking Across Europe: With Special Reference to six European Countries, RENATE Study Report, Available at: https://www.renate-europe.net/wp-content/themes/renate/Final%20Report_LegalAidEurope%20 FINAL%201%20korrik.pdf; Currie, S. and Young, M. (2021) Access to legal advice and representation for survivors of modern slavery, Available at: https://modernslaverypec.org/assets/downloads/Legal-advice-report.pdf

Education and Healthcare Settings

Education and healthcare settings presented their own set of challenges. Within a college[122] environment, a survivor faced cultural judgments as a Muslim woman not wearing a headscarf. Similarly, encounters with healthcare professionals carried tones of suspicion when disclosing an Albanian background, exposing the prevalence of cultural stereotypes. Another Albanian survivor also explained that the revelation of her Muslim identity added an extra layer of complexity, invoking surprise and disbelief.

One survivor also shared about interactions with social services, in which she was questioned about her parenting skills in an adversarial manner. In her attempts to protect herself, she was perceived as defensive, highlighting the challenges survivors face in navigating systems that may not fully understand or account for their trauma-informed responses. The clash with social workers also highlighted the fragility of one's position as an asylum seeker, raising fears of potential loss of right to care for her children.

Speaking about cultural divergences in the healthcare setting, one survivor said:

> 'The expectations and approaches to healthcare in my country starkly contrast with those in the UK. I had to assertively insist in the medical centre to have my child seen by a doctor, as they kept telling me to go home although my daughter had a high temperature.' Sibora

The quote illustrates the dissatisfaction with the local hospital, exposing unmet duty expectations that highlighted a clash in cultural norms regarding healthcare services.

Dealings with Law Enforcement

Two survivors also shared their dissatisfaction with the police. In one example, a disappointing encounter with the police further highlighted the cultural barriers, as evidence provided by the survivor failed to translate into justice. Additionally, complaints, it seemed, were merely a formality, emphasising the systemic challenges faced by those seeking justice.

One male survivor talked about feeling discriminated against during his arrest, as he was accused of lying about his modern slavery claim and seeking asylum to stay in the country. However, the subsequent apology from the police held little significance for the survivor, as the harm had already been inflicted, leaving him with profound doubts about the concept of justice in this country.

Culturally Competent Services and Resources

Both the primary data and the literature review highlight a significant gap in culturally competent resources and services within the modern slavery sector. Both survivors and practitioners provided numerous examples pointing out the crucial role that culturally competent resources and approaches can play in improving the effectiveness of support services. Conversely, the lack of such resources/approaches may present challenges in delivering adequate assistance to survivors. The need for comprehensive training and increased support for reflective practice was identified as critical to improving the landscape of modern slavery approached to prevention and protection in the UK.

Continuous Learning, Training and Reflection

Findings from this study emphasised the need for a dedicated commitment to ongoing learning, training and reflection to effectively support survivors from diverse cultural backgrounds. Out of the 40 survey respondents, 25 indicated that they had attended training sessions or utilised resources to enhance their understanding and implementation of culturally competent support and care for foreign national survivors of trafficking. Practitioners detailed their proactive approach to researching different cultures and actively seeking training opportunities, aiming to enhance their proficiency in navigating cultural complexities. Only 14 out of 40 survey respondents provided training or workshops in collaboration with cultural or ethnic community organisations.

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[122] Survivor consultants attended adult ESOL classes in their local colleges.

> **'I have found a module online for working with Vietnamese nationals which was useful and also at one NGO I was working with we had a session on African traditional religion which explored the use of juju in trafficking but also the healing potential of African traditional religion which I found really useful working with clients traumatised by some juju rituals but to understand the positive from this cultural practise too was refreshing.' (PS077)**

A list of trainings identified as part of this research is included in **Appendix D**. Some practitioners (n=9) noted receiving relevant training within their organisations, implying that a considerable amount of training activities occur but may not be adequately documented. This limitation of desk-based research suggests that much happens in practice beyond what is evidenced. While training opportunities exist and the field is evolving, there is presently insufficient and poorly documented information on cultural competency training. This gap is particularly notable as a substantial portion of training is provided in-house.

Nevertheless, the responsibility of efforts to boost cultural competence skills often rests on individuals' willingness to learn and engage in self-reflection, leading to a potential lack of consistency in these endeavours. Inconsistencies in service provision can create confusion for survivors and contribute to the lack of trust. Addressing the gap between support on paper and in practice is crucial to providing effective assistance and ensuring survivors receive the support they need.

Several sources acknowledge the scarcity of CC in MSHT services in the UK[123], and therefore strongly recommend the need to implement training in CC and enhance social norms literacy of the anti-modern slavery system so that it is better equipped to address 'aspects of beliefs and practices that can contribute to exploitation risk and harm'[124]. A source recommends training in CC for all practitioners working in MSHT so that its values are incorporated at all levels of the organisation and its processes as part of an Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy.[125]

A recent study on EDI in MSHT research in the UK found that many researchers received some training, particularly online, however CC was underrepresented, even though survey participants were interested in this topic.[126]

123   Adisa, O., Maitra, D., Allen, K., Tyrrell, K., & Barbin, A. (2022). H.O.P.E Cross-Cultural Training Evaluation. Centre for Abuse Research, Institute of Social Justice and Crime, University of Suffolk.; Nicholl, P., Devine, P., Sheldon, J., & Best, S. (2016). *An Evaluation of Social Work Practice in the Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency in Working with Children and Families from Black Minority Ethnic Communities. Child Care in Practice*, 22(4), 335–347. https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2016.1188762; Such, E., Ariyo, M. D., Ahmed, N., Aminu, H., & Samota, N. (2023). Equality, diversity and inclusion in publicly funded modern slavery research in the UK (p. 48). UK BME Anti-Slavery Network, part of AFRUCA Safeguarding Children.

124   Such, E., Aminu, H., Barnes, A., Hayes, K., Ariyo, M. D., & Brierley, R. (2022). Prevention of adult sexual and labour exploitation in the UK: What does or could work? Modern Slavery and Human Rights Policy & Evidence Centre. Link to the report, p. 16.

125   Saker, A., Hine, N., Lawson, K., & Gow, E. (2022). Practitioner Responses to Child Trafficking: Emerging Good Practice. Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and Cumberland Lodge.

126   Such, E., Ariyo, M. D., Ahmed, N., Aminu, H., & Samota, N. (2023). *Equality, diversity and inclusion in publicly funded modern slavery research in the UK* (p. 48). UK BME Anti-Slavery Network, part of AFRUCA Safeguarding Children.

To address the identified gaps in practitioners' skills, progress has been made in advancing training. In 2020 and 2021, two training frameworks[127] were published, specifically focusing on adult and child survivors of modern slavery. The frameworks incorporate key learning outcomes related to person-centred care, recognising the uniqueness of each survivor, shaped by their culture, trauma, ethnicity, and gender. Both training frameworks advocate for service providers to understand their own culture and background, enabling a better understanding of the impact cultural factors have on their perceptions, judgments, and interactions with survivors. The training frameworks also highlight the value of reflective practices as a way of advancing cultural competence.

Finally, stakeholders actively engaged in this research, particularly those associated with the Stakeholder Group, along with responses from the survey, have collectively acknowledged the immense value of incorporating spaces for reflective practice. These designated spaces serve a vital role in nurturing deeper understanding and enhancing cultural competence within the sector. Despite the current gaps, there is a collective awareness that culturally competent and compassionate care requires an ongoing process of self-reflection and a deliberate effort to engage with diverse cultures and perspectives.

> 'I think personally trying to reflect critically on my perception on behaviour/situations is also crucial. Having spaces for reflective practice can help with this. In my role now, I am trying to create spaces to focus on particular cultural groups through discussion facilitated by a colleague who is based and working in that country/region to explore how we can engage better with survivors of trafficking when we feel we are not able to engage meaningfully without making support more culturally appropriate.' (PS077)

Culturally Specific Support, Culturally Matching Practitioners and Staff Diversity

As previously mentioned, cultural and ethnic matching practitioners, though not always for reasons discussed[128], are recognised as valuable assets in overcoming cultural barriers. A specific practice highlighted is cultural mediation[129], which proves beneficial in aiding survivors. Another example mentioned by multiple sources[130], including stakeholders consulted in this study stress the role of interpreters in facilitating communication and understanding between service providers and survivors. Concerns were raised about the use of interpreters, including in the criminal justice system, emphasising the need for sensitivity to victims' unique needs related to gender, ethnicity, culture, or religion.

Especially in the early stages of the NRM, the need for culturally specific assistance was apparent, highlighting the significance of having a practitioner who understands the cultural context. Effective support tailored to one's cultural background also emerged as a crucial factor in addressing the challenges faced by survivors. The presence of cultural and ethnic matching practitioners within certain organisations proved invaluable, fostering a sense of belonging and understanding by addressing unique challenges tied to diverse backgrounds. The cultural nuances, usually lost in translation, emphasised the crucial role of culturally matching practitioners embedded in services in fostering genuine understanding.

[127] Van Dyke and sector experts (2022) 'Training Framework for the Prevention, Identification, Support and Care of Child Victims and Survivors of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking and Information and Resources to Support the Training'. Skills for Care and Development. https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/bakhita/training/support-and-care-of-child-victims.aspx (Accessed: 5 December 2023); Bundock, L and Hodges, K. (2020) 'Training Framework: Identification, Care and Support of Victims and Survivors of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking'. Skills for Care https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/centres/bakhita/training/identification-care-and-support.aspx (Accessed: 5 December 2023).

[128] As mentioned earlier, we acknowledge that survivors may sometimes be hesitant to engage with individuals from their own community. Despite the reasons for this reluctance, it's important to highlight that practitioners who share cultural and ethnic backgrounds, while not always preferred, are recognised as valuable assets in mitigating cultural barriers.

[129] Rakovica, B., & Ianovitz, S. (2021). *Cultural Mediation: An inclusive solution to help reduce the cultural and language barriers experienced by survivors of trafficking*. Hibiscus for Social Justice.

[130] See Chan, H. T. V. (2019). *Understanding the Practice of Frontline Child Protection Social Workers Working with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Families*. University of Huddersfield.; Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland. (2020). *Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking: An inspection of how the criminal justice system deals with modern slavery and human trafficking in Northern Ireland*. Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland.

Furthermore, the importance of diverse staff to enrich the support landscape by bringing varied perspectives was highlighted. Practitioners actively endorse and prioritise staff diversity, acknowledging its pivotal role in comprehending diverse cultural backgrounds.

> 'I value and promote staff diversity, as it better reflects society and brings a variety of perspectives. Working with a diverse team allows me to listen to different cultural backgrounds and learn from them. It also helps to address challenges and unconscious biases that may arise.' (PS692)

In essence, the insights gathered from practitioners and survivors and the measures outlined collectively emphasise the impact of culture on service delivery and reception. The cultural barriers span social, psychological, communicative, informational, and discriminatory dimensions. Addressing these challenges necessitates a comprehensive and culturally competent approach within modern slavery support services and beyond. The steps taken to ensure culturally competent support for survivors include language access, trauma-informed approaches, community collaboration, safe spaces for open discussion, person-centred support, staff diversity, continuous learning, and promoting inclusivity. Together, these strategies contribute to the establishment of a more comprehensive and empathetic support system tailored to the unique cultural backgrounds of survivors.

Strengths and Limitations

Due to the time constraints of this study, the findings provide only a preliminary understanding of the complex migration experiences from Albania to the UK, as well as the cultural barriers encountered by survivors in the NRM. However, despite the small sample in the UK and individuals affected by precarious migration in/from Albania, the findings are congruent with other sources[131] on this topic.

While the recruitment methods aimed to capture diverse perspectives, it is important to acknowledge potential limitations. For instance, survey respondents may exhibit self-selection bias, as those with particular experiences or opinions may be more inclined to participate. Additionally, the identification of survivor consultants with the assistance of service providers, some of whom were part of the Stakeholder Group, could also introduce a selection bias. The researchers' positionalities may also impact the data collected. Notably, the Co-Investigator responsible for conducting consultations with Albanian survivors is of Albanian background. While this background is a strength, fostering positive and open conversations, it is crucial to acknowledge that, in one instance, an Albanian survivor declined to proceed with the consultation. Although the specific reason was not disclosed, the Co-I's shared background might have played a role, potentially making the survivor reluctant to engage in conversation.

Despite the limitations, this research is ground-breaking, bringing attention to the crucial role of cultural competence in both service delivery and prevention efforts. While part of the study primarily focuses on Albania through a case study approach, it has unearthed significant challenges and cultural insights that may extend to other cultures and nationalities. It is important to emphasise that cultural competence is not exclusive to foreign national survivors or perceived 'more traditional' minorities[132]; it is equally essential for British nationals[133]. A recent study report highlighted missed opportunities in identifying and protecting vulnerable British nationals, noting that the challenges are highly specific to the regions, populations, and cultural contexts[134]. In our consultations with survivors, we included a British national who shared observations and similar challenges experienced by foreign nationals.

Last but not least, the study aimed to establish safe spaces for various stakeholders in both the UK and Albania to collaborate and contemplate the significance of culture in addressing issues such as trafficking, exploitation, and precarious migration. The development of these safe reflective spaces stands out as a notable accomplishment of this project. There is an aspiration to leverage the momentum generated by this pioneering research to promote and embed such safe reflective spaces within the sector, fostering cross-border discussions and partnerships.

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[131] See also: Walsh. P. and Oriishi, K. (2023) Albanian asylum seekers in the UK and EU: a look at recent data, Migration Observatory. Oxford University. Available at: https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/commentaries/albanian-asylum-seekers-in-the-uk-and-eu-a-look-at-recent-data/; Wallis, E. (2023) 'Modern Slavery: Albanian Migrants in the UK Back in Focus,' InfoMigrants, Available at: https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/46103/modern-slavery-albanian-migrants-in-uk-back-in-focus

[132] Kelly, L., Meysen, T., Hagemann-White, C., Jalušič, V., & Magalhães, M. J. (2019). *Transnational Foundations for Ethical Practice in Interventions Against Violence Against Women and Child Abuse*. In L. Kelly, T. Meysen, & C. Hagemann-White (Eds.), *Interventions against child abuse and violence against women* (1st ed., pp. 256–268). Verlag Barbara Budrich. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvr7fcsw.18.

[133] Essentially, the notion and application of cultural competence is important to non-UK nationals, foreign-born UK survivors and anyone with a multicultural family including UK-born British nationals with foreign-born parents.

[134] Murphy, C., & Lazzarino, R. (Eds.). (2022). *Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking: The Victim Journey*. Policy Press.

Recommendations

For UK Policymakers:

In our pursuit of effective anti-trafficking measures, a culturally competent approach is essential, across prevention and protection efforts. In terms of prevention, our focus is on cultural nuances that impact migration policies. To address the unique challenges faced by survivors and those at risk of exploitation, we propose integrating family-focused considerations into migration policies. This ensures that these policies are not only sensitive to the importance of family support when considering returns and reintegration in the country of origin, but also consider the familial and cultural pressures and the potential risks in the decision-making process.

Furthermore, we recommend the adoption of a 'harm on a continuum' perspective, encouraging discussions[135] that broaden understanding of risks and promote culturally nuanced strategies in addressing modern slavery, human trafficking and exploitation, particularly in the context of precarious migration.

Recommendations:

- The Home Office Modern Slavery Unit (MSU) should consider implementing mandatory training for decision-makers within the Single Competent Authority and the Immigration Enforcement Competent Authority to enhance cultural competency[136].
- The existing Modern Slavery guidance would benefit from amendments that explicitly highlight the significance of cultural factors and their profound influence on the experiences of MSHT survivors[137].
- The Home Office should consider engaging with experts, NGOs, and communities to understand the diverse family dynamics and the role of family support in the migration process.
- The Home Office and Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office should consider incorporating the 'harm on a continuum' perspective into existing policies related to migration (including upstream migration), emphasising the varied risks associated with different stages of the migration process[138], faced by migrants and their families.

For Practitioners/Service Delivery Organisations:

In terms of practice and service delivery, we strongly recommend advocating for holistic practices that centre on victim care, adopting the Culturally Competent and Compassionate Care model (as presented in Appendix A). This requires the introduction of mandatory cultural competency training for practitioners (examples of which are listed in Appendix D), ensuring they have the necessary awareness, knowledge and skills to engage effectively with diverse populations.

Additionally, our recommendations extend to fostering cultural humility among survivors, recognising its key role in building understanding and mutual respect between communities. This emphasis on cultural humility should be integrated into daily practices, encouraging a mindset of continuous learning and self-reflection among both practitioners and survivors.

Recommendations for consideration:

- Adopt the Culturally Competent and Compassionate Care Model (outlined in Appendix A) to facilitate the adoption of holistic, culturally competent practice that centres on survivor care.
- Encourage practitioners to engage in reflective practices, promoting self-awareness and critical examination of personal biases and assumptions.
- Establish a supportive environment that values continuous learning, fostering open discussions about cultural competence and humility within organisations.

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[135] These discussions could take the form of working groups, sector-wide stakeholder engagement meetings, or other appropriate platforms. It is crucial to involve key actors, policymakers, and NRM decision-makers to foster a comprehensive understanding of risks and promote culturally nuanced strategies in addressing MSHT and exploitation, particularly within the context of precarious migration.

[136] Incorporating Cultural Competency as a module into the existing training programmes can reduce costs compared to developing an entirely new and separate training programmes.

[137] Currently statutory guidance briefly mention culture and gender under Appendices D [Working with vulnerable people': https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-slavery-how-to-identify-and-support-victims/modern-slavery-statutory-guidance-for-england-and-wales-under-s49-of-the-modern-slavery-act-2015-and-non-statutory-guidance-for-scotland-and-northe#annexd] and E [Guidance for all Competent Authority staff on the NRM decision- making process: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-slavery-how-to-identify-and-support-victims/modern-slavery-statutory-guidance-for-england-and-wales-under-s49-of-the-modern-slavery-act-2015-and-non-statutory-guidance-for-scotland-and-northe#annexe]. MSU should consider adding to these sections, drawing from the findings of this research to emphasise the role of culture in shaping risk and vulnerabilities; and responses will contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of MSHT, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of prevention, identification, and support mechanisms.

[138] Incorporating this perspective into existing policies can enhance their effectiveness by recognising the nuanced nature of migrant experiences. Our research highlights that the prevailing culture of migration and the economic and sociocultural landscape in Albania suggest an inherent and persistent inclination towards migration, emphasising the need for comprehensive policy measures that address the diverse challenges faced by migrants and their families at different stages of their journey.

- Facilitate peer learning among survivors and knowledge exchange among practitioners to share insights and effective approaches in culturally competent care.
- Create/provide resources and support for practitioners to engage in community-based initiatives that improve cross-cultural understanding and engagement.

For Research Funders and Knowledge Brokers:

Moreover, for a more informed and connected approach, cultural understanding through knowledge exchange becomes paramount. To achieve this, we recommend facilitating cross-country sharing of insights and lessons on trafficking interventions. Additionally, promoting cross-cultural awareness through educational and community engagement projects will contribute to a more informed and alert society.

Acknowledging the significance of open dialogue and community building, we suggest the establishment of fora in both Albania[139] and the UK. These platforms will foster trust and understanding through open communication, providing spaces for survivors, practitioners, and policymakers to collaboratively shape effective and culturally sensitive anti-trafficking measures.

Recommendations:
- Facilitate cross-country sharing of insights and lessons on trafficking intervention.
- Promote cross-cultural awareness through educational and community engagement projects.

For Researchers:

In summary, this set of recommendations seeks to lay the foundation for a more nuanced, culturally competent, and effective strategy in addressing modern slavery and human trafficking. This includes enhancements to both prevention and protection efforts. Furthermore, these recommendations are designed to boost future research endeavours by highlighting the importance of monitoring and evaluating culturally competent efforts within the modern slavery sector and conduct in-depth studies on the intersection of culture, migration decisions, and vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation.

Recommendations:
- Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of interventions specifically designed with cultural sensitivity in mind, assessing their relevance and success in diverse communities.
- Further explore the significance of cultural competence in recovery and reflection support services, addressing the unique needs of survivors from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Further explore how cultural factors affect migration decisions and examine how culture may influence vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation.
- Conduct comprehensive studies on the interpretation services available and accessible within the modern slavery sector, focusing on the quality of services and trainings on culturally competency available for interpreters.

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[139] And other countries represented in the NRM.

Conclusion

The exploration of cultural barriers within the UK and the National Referral Mechanism stresses the necessity for more inclusive support structures. The findings highlight the importance of a deep understanding of the unique cultural barriers individuals face, emphasising the pivotal role of cultural competence in promoting effective communication, enhancing support and the cultivation of trust. It is evident that a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient; instead, recognising the unique aspects of each person's cultural background is imperative to navigate the complexities of their experiences.

Finding a balance between embracing new customs and preserving one's identity is a crucial aspect of cultural assimilation. While acclimatising to the host culture brings comfort, it also highlights the challenge of balancing old and new ways. The stories in this study capture resilient journeys amid cultural barriers in the UK, providing deep insights into the several challenges of cultural adaptation, including language obstacles, bureaucratic complexities, and enduring stereotypes.

The accounts of cultural challenges encountered as part of this research are a call for a more thoughtful approach that goes beyond acknowledging rights on paper to implementing practical and compassionate solutions. The consistent pleas to be taken seriously during lengthy waiting periods in the NRM and asylum journeys underlines the importance of seeing and valuing people beyond restricting labels that trigger feelings of discrimination.

In sharing these experiences, the aim is to encourage a deeper understanding of the complex and multiple challenges faced by individuals in similar circumstances. The ultimate goal is to contribute to the creation of a more inclusive, compassionate and empathetic society where cultural diversity is celebrated rather than met with scepticism. As we reflect on the legal instruments introduced in the last two years in the UK, this study also serves as a testimony to the importance of cultural competence when attempting to address complex migration matters and shaping a more harmonious global community.

The Cultural Competence and Compassionate Care model played a central role in this study, guiding every aspect to deepen our understanding of culture and its impact in different contexts. The model was not just a theoretical framework but a guiding tool that drove our engagement with stakeholders to ensure varied perspectives were deeply understood. This inclusive approach enriched our findings, enabling a more nuanced and culturally sensitive analysis. Reflecting on its significance, it is evident that the model is not merely a component of our study but has a critical role in shaping future training and monitoring and evaluation tools in the sector.

Appendices

Appendix A: Report on the adaptation of the Papadopoulos Model for Cultural Competence and Compassion in Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Service Provision

Introduction

The 'Papadopoulos Model on Culturally Competent and Compassionate Care' was adapted for the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT) sector in the UK, forming a key component of the MSPEC-funded[140] project titled 'Mapping and Enhancing Cultural Competency in Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention and Service Delivery: Learning from the experiences of victims and service providers.' Professor Irena Papadopoulos led the adaptation of this model, in close collaboration with the research team[141] and the Stakeholder Group.[142]

The model aims to enable service providers to offer high-quality culturally competent services and care to survivors of MSHT, in a systematic and holistic way. The model is supported by a content map that delineates essential domains and subdomains, providing a comprehensive framework. The subdomains in the content map included under the four key domains [cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural sensitivity, cultural competence] are suggestions which the user/s of the model may wish to add or modify in order to tailor the model to specific contexts and service users. The model diverges significantly from a rigid understanding of competence and culture. Both cultures and service providers' competence are complex and dynamic realms, continually evolving.

Culture is relative to those who live it and those who observe it, and it is open to rapid changes as the world becomes more interconnected. However, the model, does not only focus on culture but also on the essence of care which is **compassion**. It also focuses on societal **structures** as a major factor for the inequalities, barriers, insensitive services, and misconceptions around modern slavery and human trafficking.

More specifically, the key **concepts** of the model can be summarised as follows:

Culture: All human beings are cultural beings. Culture is the shared way of life of a group of people that includes beliefs, values, ideas, language, communication, norms, and visibly expressed forms such as customs, art, music, clothing, and etiquette. Culture influences individuals' lifestyles, personal identity, and their relationship with others both within and outside their culture. Cultures are dynamic and ever changing as individuals are influenced by, and influence their culture, to varying degrees.

Cultural competence: This is a process one goes through, in order to continuously develop and refine one's capacity to provide effective and compassionate care, taking into consideration people's cultural beliefs, behaviours and needs.

Culturally competent compassion and care: Culturally competent compassion is the human quality of understanding of the suffering of others and wanting to do something about it, using culturally appropriate and acceptable interventions, which take into consideration both the sufferers' and the compassion-givers' cultural backgrounds, as well as the context in which compassion is given. Caring is an activity that responds to the uniqueness of individuals in a culturally sensitive and compassionate way using therapeutic communication.

Human Trafficking: The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of people through threat, coercion, deception, or abduction for the purpose of exploitation, often involving sexual exploitation or forced labour.

Individual: All individuals have inherent worth within themselves as well as sharing the fundamental human values of love, freedom, justice, growth, life, health and security.

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140   Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre – https://modernslaverypec.org/
141   Dr Carole Murphy, Dr Anta Brachou, Eva Karra and Dr Runa Lazzarino
142   The Stakeholder Group consisted of 13 stakeholders from various statutory and non-statutory organisations working in the MSHT sector in the UK.

Modern Slavery:[143] Modern slavery refers to the practice of exploiting and coercing individuals in various forms of forced labour or servitude, often under conditions of extreme abuse. It is a grave violation of human rights and encompasses a range of situations where individuals are subjected to forms of exploitation, control, and bondage, typically for the financial gain of the perpetrators.

Structure: Societies, institutions, and family are structures of power which can be enabling or disabling to an individual.

The adapted description of the model's domains, and its underpinning values and key concepts, are based on the original work of the author.[144]

Methodology

Professor Papadopoulos, the designer and author of the original cultural competence and compassionate care model created for the health sector (see Figure 1 below), led the adaptation process for the MSHT sector. Between July and November 2023, a series of consultations involving professionals and individuals with lived experience were conducted. The adaptation process drew insights from a comprehensive literature review on cultural competence approaches in the modern slavery sector in the UK. Additionally, a practitioner survey was undertaken, exploring challenges faced by practitioners in supporting survivors from diverse cultural backgrounds, further informing the model's refinement.

CULTURAL AND COMPASSIONATE AWARENESS

- Develop **self-awareness** and **self-compassion**
- Develop awareness of **cultural identity**
- Become aware of your **ethnocentricity**
- Avoid **stereotyping**
- Become aware of the **universal** elements of compassion

CULTURAL AND COMPASSIONATE COMPETENCE

- Practise culturally competent and compassionate **assessments**
- Provide culturally competent and compassionate **care**
- Advocate **human rights**
- **Challenge** discrimination, injustice, exploitation and racism

CULTURAL AND COMPASSIONATE KNOWLEDGE

- Learn about cultural **beliefs** and **behaviours** of those in your care
- Understand the **causes and impact** of inequalities
- Appreciate the existence of cultural **similarities and differences** between groups & individuals

CULTURAL AND COMPASSIONATE SENSITIVITY

- Form culturally sensitive and compassionate **relationships**
- Give and receive culturally sensitive **compassion**
- Acknowledge the uniqueness of individual expressions of **suffering**
- Address **barriers** to cultural sensitivity and compassion

Figure 1: The Papadopoulos Model for Cultural Competence and Compassion

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[143] Often the terms 'Human Trafficking' and 'Modern Slavery' are used interchangeably in practice. It is important to note that 'Modern Slavery' is a legal term specific to the UK, while 'Human Trafficking' is a broader and internationally recognised legal term. For the purpose of clarity and inclusivity, in this document, both terms will be represented as Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT).

[144] See Papadopoulos, I. (2006). The Papadopoulos, Tilki, and Taylor model of developing cultural competence. Transcultural Health and Social Care: Development of Culturally Competent Practitioners, 7-24; Papadopoulos, I. (2018). Culturally Competent Compassion: A Guide for Healthcare Students and Practitioners. Routledge.

Domains of the Papadopoulos model for the provision of culturally competent and compassionate care to survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking (see Figure 2. below).

The model consists of **four domains each with a different construct**.

The first domain in the model is **cultural awareness** which begins with an examination of our personal value base and beliefs, before we explore and understand the values and beliefs of others. These shape our identities, raise our awareness of our own ethnohistories and the consequences of our ethnocentricity. This awareness leads us to examine our stereotyping of others, and hopefully prevents us from developing biases and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. In the adapted version of the model, the importance of the impact of trauma on support-seeking journeys, and the awareness of intersecting experiences and continuum of harm, have been added.

Cultural knowledge (the second domain) can be gained in several ways, such as reading books, watching films, attending courses, through cultural and ethnic matching practitioners, connecting with cultural mediators and so on, but another important way is having meaningful contact with people from different ethnic groups. All these actions can enhance our knowledge about their values, beliefs, customs and behaviours, as well as raise understanding around the challenges they face. In the adapted version of the model some other key elements have been added to the conceptual map, such as the importance of integration and acculturation processes and knowledge on legal rights and entitlements for various cohorts.

An important element in achieving **cultural sensitivity** (the third domain), is how professionals view people in their care/ services. The model advocates that unless service users are considered as true partners, culturally sensitive care is not being achieved. Not considering service users as partners who can negotiate person-centred care, may indicate that professionals are using their power in an oppressive way. Equal partnerships involve compassion, trust, acceptance and respect, as well as facilitation and negotiation. Crucially, the model acknowledges the examination of power and control — including professional, governmental, societal, and familial realms, among others — with significant implications on our lives, often serving as the root of structural inequalities.

The achievement of the fourth domain – **cultural competence** – requires the synthesis and application of previously gained awareness, knowledge and sensitivity. Further focus is given to practical skills, such as assessment of needs, and community engagement skills. A most important component of this stage is the ability to recognise and challenge racism and other forms of discrimination and oppressive practice. In the adapted version of the model another key elements that has been added is the ability to enable survivor reflection and learning through cultural humility.

In order to be culturally competent practitioners, educators and researchers need to develop both **culture-specific** and **culture-generic** competencies. Culture-specific competence refers to the knowledge and skills that relate to a particular ethnic group which enables us to understand the values and cultural prescriptions operating within a particular culture. It is important to note that achieving a uniform level of competence across all cultures is not feasible. Competence in this area can vary across different degrees, recognising the diverse nuances and complexities inherent in each unique cultural context. Culture-generic competence is defined as the acquisition of knowledge and skills that are applicable across ethnic groups. Overall, cultural competence is both **a process** and **an output**, resulting from the synthesis of knowledge and skills acquired throughout personal and professional lives, continuously evolving over time.

The **underpinning values** of the model, as articulated by Papadopoulos,[145] are:
- Respect
- Compassion
- Justice
- Courage

The model is further founded on the following **building blocks**:
- Human Rights
- Human ethics
- Human caring
- Socio-political systems
- Inter-cultural relations

Effective support and care for survivors of MSHT requires a culturally competent approach that considers the individuals' culture, values, and beliefs. Nevertheless, the workplace structures and training of practitioners in the sector may not adequately equip them to practice in a manner which is both compassionate and culturally competent. After extensive use in the healthcare sector, the model below has been adapted for application in MSHT sector. This adaptation aims to enhance the skills and build the capacity of practitioners involved in the support and care of survivors of MSHT.

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[145] Papadopoulos, I. (2006). The Papadopoulos, Tilki, and Taylor model of developing cultural competence. Transcultural Health and Social Care: Development of Culturally Competent Practitioners, 7-24

CULTURAL AND COMPASSIONATE AWARENESS

1.1 Develop **self-awareness** and **self-compassion**
1.2 Develop awareness of **cultural identity**
1.3 Develop awareness of one's own **ethnocentricity**
1.4 Avoid **stereotyping, biases, discrimination**
1.5 Embody the **universal elements of compassion***
1.6 Develop awareness on **the impact of trauma**
1.7 Develop awareness and understanding of **intersectionality**

CULTURAL AND COMPASSIONATE COMPETENCE

4.1 Implement **culturally competent and compassionate needs assessments,** integrating **Trauma-Informed Code of Conduct** principles
4.2 Provide culturally competent comprehensive **care, protection, and consider prevention measures**
4.3 Facilitate **survivor reflection** and learning through **cultural humility**
4.4 Foster **community engagement**
4.5 Advocate against **discrimination, injustice, and racism**
4.6 Commit to **Continuous Professional Development**

CULTURAL AND COMPASSIONATE KNOWLEDGE

2.1 Gain knowledge of **historical and current trajectories** of modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT)
2.2 Understand **vulnerabilities** and **risk factors** associated with MSHT
2.3 Explore **values, beliefs and customs** of others
2.4 Familiarise oneself with **legal rights** and **entitlements** for various cohorts
2.5 Gain knowledge on **family** and **societal structures** in countries of origin
2.6 Expand understanding of **integration** and **acculturation processes**
2.7 Develop knowledge about **diverse religious** and **spiritual practices**

CULTURAL AND COMPASSIONATE SENSITIVITY

3.1 Foster **culturally sensitive** and **compassionate relationships**
3.2 Acknowledge individual **expressions of suffering** and **healing**, recognising their uniqueness
3.3 Address language and cultural barriers through **interpretation** and **cultural mediation/cultural** and **ethnic matching practitioners**
3.4 Provide **culturally sensitive services**, such as counselling
3.5 Commit to **EDI values** (Equality, Diversity, Inclusivity)
3.6 Recognise and address the **impact of structural** and **institutional inequalities**
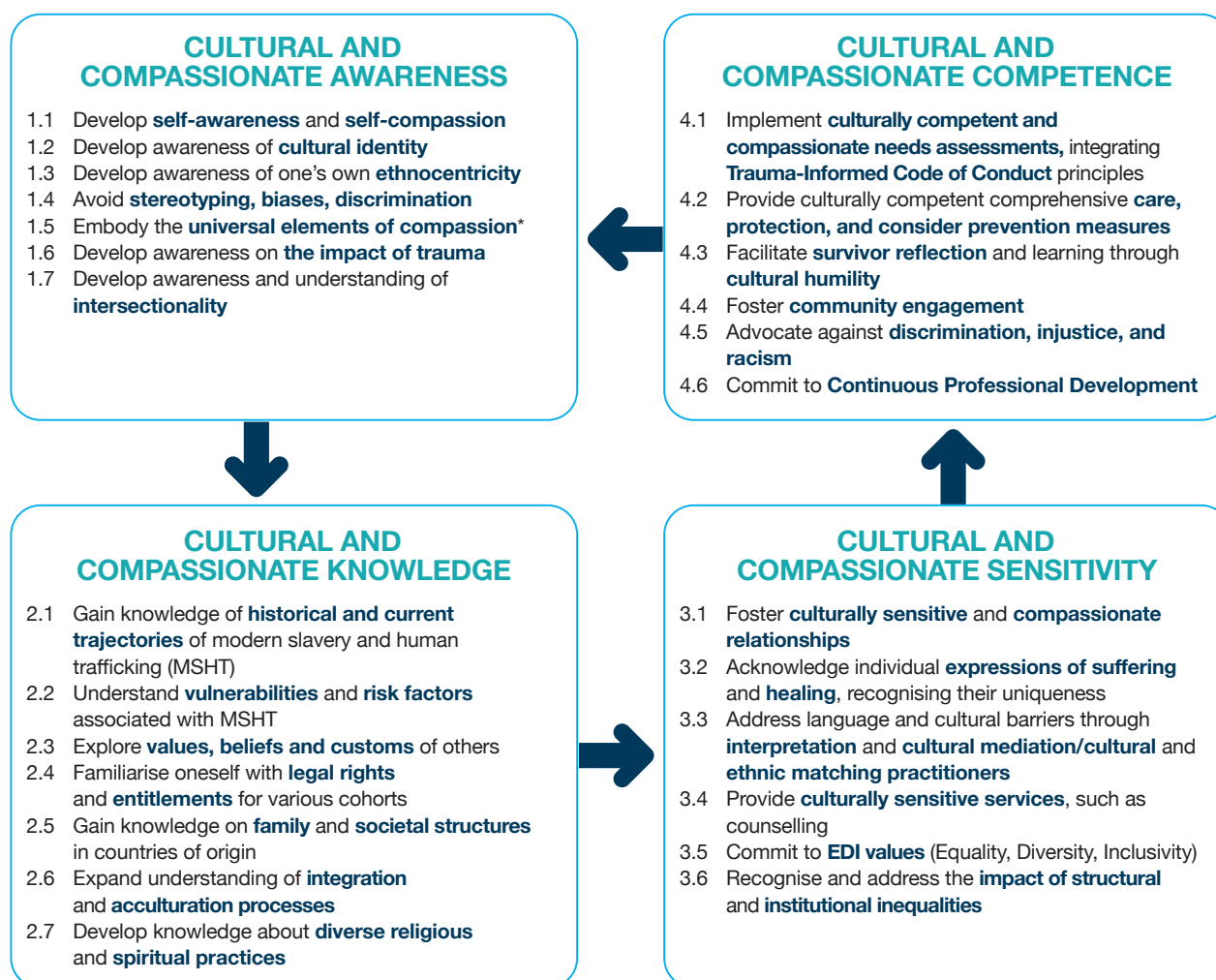
Figure 2: The Adapted Papadopoulos Model for Cultural Competence and Compassion in Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Sector

The following examples of learning units offer detailed insights into the practical implementation of the identified domains, illustrating how the framework can be effectively implemented in practice, thereby contributing to the improvement of service delivery and enhancement of support and care. Moreover, the framework extends beyond its instructional role and can be used as a tool for ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Its adaptability allows it to evolve with changing circumstances, making it a 'living' resource that remains relevant and effective over time. This living tool serves not only as a guide but also as a flexible instrument for continuously assessing and refining service delivery strategies.

Importantly, ethical survivor inclusion should be at the core of utilising this framework. Ensuring the voices and perspectives of survivors are actively integrated into the implementation, monitoring, evaluation and training processes enhances the ethical foundation of the framework. By placing survivor experiences and insights at the forefront, the framework becomes more responsive, and attuned to the diverse needs of those it seeks to support. This ethical survivor inclusion ensures that the framework remains a relevant and compassionate resource, reflecting a commitment to dignity, respect, and empowerment in the field of support service delivery.

Each learning unit should include the following components:

Theoretical component	• Principles and values • Aims and Objectives • Definitions • What research says • What legislation says • What local policies say
Practical component	• Classroom activities • Activities in Practice • Reflection on Practice ✓ Develop case studies that integrate all aspects of cultural competence covered in the learning units. Allow participants to explore these cases, applying their knowledge and skills in a practical context. ✓ Establish continuous learning platforms, such as seminars/webinars/ workshops, and discussion and reflection groups to keep participants engaged in ongoing conversations about cultural competence and to share resources and best practices. ✓ Implement a mentorship program where experienced practitioners guide others in applying cultural competency in their specific roles. This hands-on approach can provide tailored support and encourage a culture of continuous improvement.
Assessment component	• Theoretical • Practical
Evaluation component	• Who will take part • What to evaluate • How to evaluate • How to report and use evaluation results.

Examples of learning units for a training course

CONSTRUCTS AND CONTENT MAP	EXAMPLES OF LEARNING UNITS
CULTURAL AWARENESS	**Activities under this domain focus on personal awareness and compassion**
1.1 Develop self-awareness and self-compassion	1.1 Guided reflection exercises encouraging participants to explore their own beliefs, values, and emotions, promoting a deeper understanding of personal biases.
1.2 Develop awareness of cultural identity	1.2 Cultural mapping exercises where participants explore and articulate their cultural background, enabling them to understand how it shapes their worldview.
1.3 Develop awareness of one's own ethnocentricity	1.3 Explore scenarios in which participants are able to recognise and consider cases where their cultural perspective might influence their judgments/ behaviours / reactions.
1.4 Avoid stereotyping, biases, discrimination	1.4 Explore case studies and role-playing sessions demonstrating the impact of stereotypes and biases, followed by discussions on strategies to mitigate and avoid them.
1.5 Embody the universal elements of compassion (kindness, empathy, generosity and acceptance)	1.5 Compassion-focused mindfulness exercises and reflective group discussions on recognising the universal elements of compassion, fostering empathy, and promoting compassion in diverse contexts.
1.6 Develop awareness on the impact of trauma	1.6 Workshops on trauma-informed care, including real-life survivor stories focusing on the importance of cultural understanding and recognising how the absence of such awareness and understanding can exacerbate feelings of distress and isolation for those seeking support.
1.7 Develop awareness and understanding of intersectionality	1.7 Workshops on intersectionality exploring the interconnected nature of social identities, coupled with case studies on how these intersections impact individuals' experiences in the context of modern slavery [recovery and integration].
CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE	**Activities under this domain focus on gaining adequate knowledge to enhance intercultural communication, support and care**
2.1 Gain knowledge of historical and current trajectories of modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT)	2.1 Delve into factors shaping trafficking trajectories, such as economic conditions, political instability, conflict, and cultural shifts. Explore how narratives around MSHT in different contexts/countries have evolved over time. Compare and contrast trafficking trends from different regions and consider the impact of global events on trafficking patterns.
2.2 Understand vulnerabilities and risk factors associated with MSHT	2.2 Explore case studies depicting various vulnerabilities that can lead to human trafficking, prompting participants to identify risk factors and discuss preventive measures. Expand understanding of the challenges encountered by survivors from various ethnic groups, who frequently encounter obstacles in reporting or seeking help due to factors such as language barriers, immigration status, societal stigma, and a lack of trust in authorities.
2.3 Familiarise oneself with legal rights and entitlements for various cohorts	2.3 [For Practitioners] Legal rights seminars focusing on the rights and protections available for different cohorts, including survivors of MSHT, asylum seekers and refugees.

2.3   [For Survivors] Access to Public Legal Education sessions to explore law and culture, to support survivors familiarise themselves with the UK legal system and the myriad of legal systems that they might be navigating. |
| 2.4   Explore values, beliefs and customs of others | 2.4   Cross-cultural immersive/sharing experiences that expose participants to diverse cultural practices, fostering an understanding of different value systems [e.g., attending cultural festivals, community-led events]. |
| 2.5   Gain knowledge on family and societal structures in countries of origin | 2.5   Cultural mapping workshops where participants explore the family and societal structures in different countries, discussing how these structures may impact individuals vulnerable to MSHT. |

2.6 Expand understanding of integration and acculturation processes	2.6 Role-playing exercises modelling the experiences of individuals integrating into new cultures, followed by reflection and discussions on the challenges and approaches for positive acculturation.
2.7 Develop knowledge about diverse religious and spiritual practices	2.7 Workshops on religion and spirituality providing an overview of various religions, followed by discussions on the role of religious and spiritual beliefs in the context of MSHT.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY	**Activities under this domain focus on establishing and nurturing culturally sensitive and compassionate relationships and services**
3.1 Foster culturally sensitive and compassionate relationships	3.1 Interactive and Survivor-led Workshops on cultural sensitivity and communication styles, emphasising the importance of building trust and rapport with survivors from diverse backgrounds.
3.2 Acknowledge individual expressions of suffering and healing, recognising their uniqueness	3.2 Explore case studies that highlight diverse expressions of suffering and journeys of healing. Follow these with reflection sessions to promote understanding and empathy among participants.
3.3 Address language and cultural barriers through interpretation and cultural mediation/ culturally matching practitioners	Develop/maintain connections with services that consistently offer reliable and culturally sensitive assistance to diverse survivor groups. Incorporate methods into your own practice that enhance effective cross-cultural communication to address language and cultural barriers. Stress the importance of active listening, empathy, and adapting approaches [e.g., for counselling] to diverse cultural backgrounds. Enhance the skills of staff who are working with interpreters and cultural mediators and need to advocate on behalf of the survivor, when necessary.
3.4 Provide culturally sensitive services, such as counselling	See above.
3.5 Commit to EDI values (Equality, Diversity, Inclusivity)	3.5 EDI Workshops and Reflective Sessions to discuss the importance of these values in promoting a culturally competent and inclusive environment.
3.6 Recognise and address the impact of structural and institutional inequalities	3.6 Critical Discussions on inequalities, exploring their impact on individuals and communities. Increase knowledge on diversity and its various intersections. Learn how to limit structural and institutional inequalities by engaging with community organisations, by hiring staff representing the cultures of MSHT survivors, establishing community advisory boards, and regularly revising practices based on survivors' feedback.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE	
4.1 Implement culturally competent and compassionate needs assessments, integrating Trauma-Informed Code of Conduct principles	4.1 Engage in role-playing scenarios modelling needs assessments with survivors from diverse cultural backgrounds. Emphasise the integration of Trauma-Informed Code of Conduct principles in the assessment process.
4.2 Provide culturally competent comprehensive care, protection, and consider prevention measures	4.2 Reflect on case studies and develop culturally competent care plans, considering protection and prevention measures, tailored to diverse cultural needs.
4.3 Facilitate survivor reflection and learning through cultural humility	4.3 Co-produce workshops with survivors focused on fostering cultural humility in survivor interactions. Use reflective exercises and discussions to explore the concept of cultural humility and how it is understood/embodied by survivors.
4.4 Foster Community Engagement	4.4 Engage in a Community Mapping Exercise to become familiar with community resources available in their locality, that would be beneficial for survivors of MSHT.
4.5 Advocate against discrimination, injustice, and racism	4.5 Enhance the skills of staff and develop strategies to address discrimination, injustice, and racism, affecting survivors of MSHT. Encourage discussions on the role of cultural competence in effective advocacy.
4.6 Commit to Continuous Professional Development	4.6 Create / maintain personal Professional Development Plans (PDP), identify specific areas of cultural competence improvement and outline actionable steps.

Appendix B: Visual Representation of Key Themes

The visual representation below provides a simplified overview of the pivotal elements examined in this study, as part of the literature review, stakeholder and survivor consultations and the practitioner survey. It includes the evaluation of cultural barriers encountered by survivors, the exploration of existing culturally competent approaches, and the identification of relevant practices, tools, and training methods.
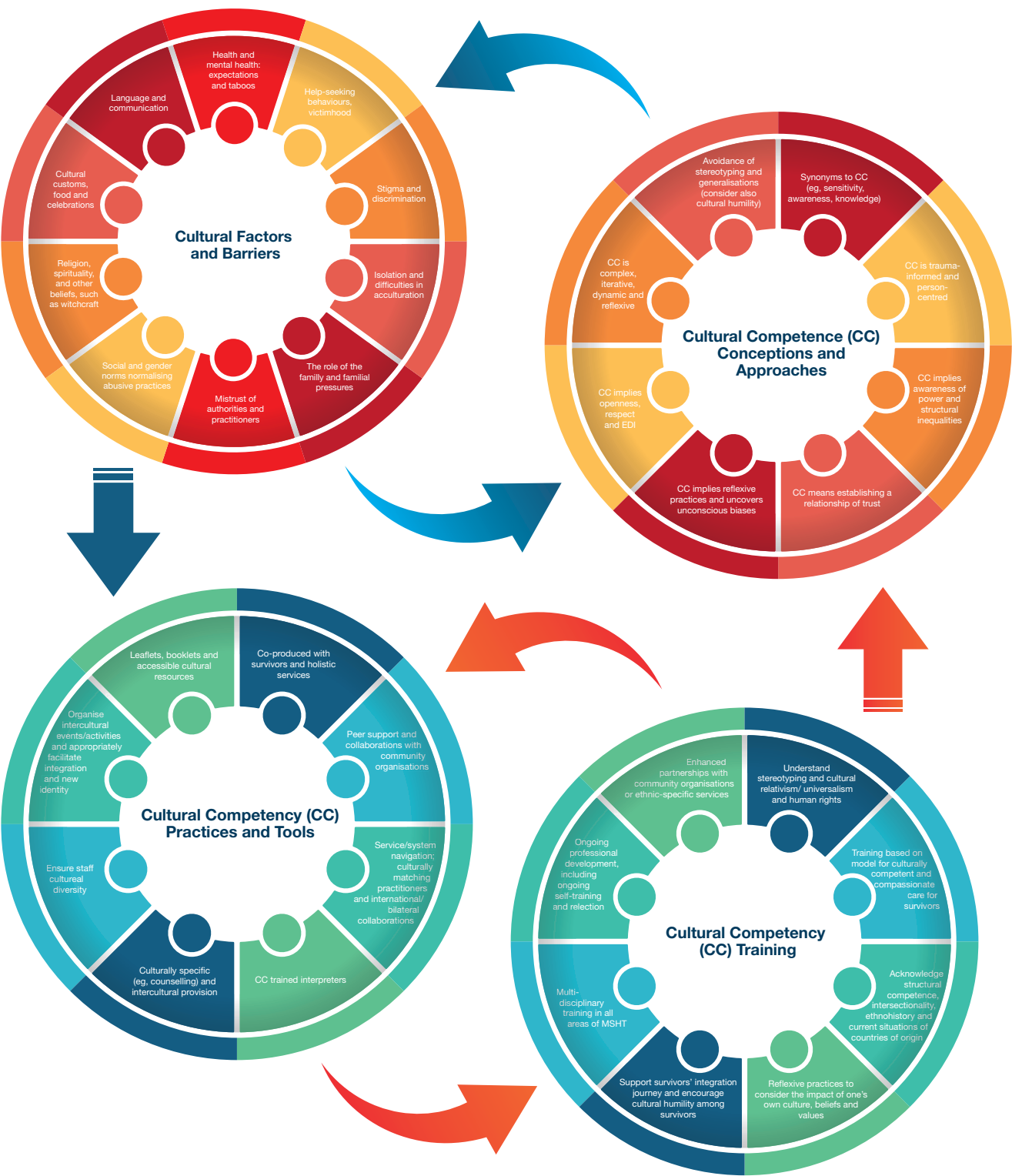
Appendix C: Mapping Good Practice

✓ **Cultural exchange between practitioners** in the UK and those in Albania: A one-week induction program covering the culture and history of Albania, conducted in collaboration with SHKEJ[146], Different and Equal[147], and Mary Ward Loreto[148]. The aim of this was to build relationships, share knowledge and challenge the existing mindset in the UK that assumes a comprehensive understanding of Albania simply through desk-based research. Unfortunately, this was stopped 5 years ago and is recommended for reinstatement.

✓ Employing **culturally matching practitioners**: Organisations like Medaille Trust and Women at the Well have employed culturally matching practitioners to work with Albanian survivors.

✓ Partnership to offer **culturally sensitive counselling** online: Mary Ward Loreto and Medaille Trust have worked collaboratively to offer online counselling sessions to Albanian survivors accommodated in safehouses across the UK.

✓ Albanian organisations have played an instrumental role in assessing the risks for individuals seeking asylum in the UK. An illustrative case involved an Albanian national granted permission to stay in the UK after risk evaluations. **Different and Equal collaborated closely with the Albanian representative at the Home Office**, ensuring that the highlighted risk factors were duly considered.

✓ An IOM UK led project[149] **supporting foster carers looking after Albanian and Vietnamese unaccompanied children** achieved the creation and publication of a Foster Carer Handbook with information about administrative processes for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, MSHT as well as Albanian and Vietnamese culture, tailored to foster carer needs and based on the training content.

✓ Compact, practice-focused tools designed for professionals in policing, the criminal justice system, and survivor support services, specifically tailored for those working with individuals from Albania and Vietnam. This includes **Cultural Booklets with insights into Vietnamese and Albanian cultures.**[150] The tools were the results of a multi-stakeholder partnership and consultations which included Vietnamese and Albanian people with lived experience.

✓ A similar resource accompanied by a webinar was designed by Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Unit, which aims to **provide an insight into the Romanian and Roma cultures**. The resource was tailored for police officers but has been disseminated more widely.[151]

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146 SHKEJ – https://www.shkej.org/
147 Different and Equal – https://differentandequal.org/en/
148 Mary Ward Loreto – https://marywardloreto.net/
149 IOM UK. (2019) *Strengthening responses to child trafficking and modern slavery: A Pilot Project to support foster carers looking after Albanian and Vietnamese unaccompanied children* [CHILD TRAFFICKING PROTECTION FUND PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT]. IOM UK and CROYDON. Link to the report, p. 2.
150 West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network. (2022). *Vietnamese and Albanian Cultural Information Booklets*. Link to the booklets.
151 Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime (2023) *Romanian and Roma Cultural Resource*

Appendix D: Training available on Cultural Competence

The list below features trainings relevant to cultural competence, as identified in the survey. It is crucial to note that the information on these trainings is limited, and detailed content was not always available.

International Organization for Migration (IOM). Training and Capacity Building
https://www.iom.int/training-and-capacity-building

International Centre for Parliamentary Studies (ICPS) Training
https://www.parlicentre.org

Online training as part of an EU project named PROTECT

Hibiscus Initiatives Training on Culture Mediation
https://hibiscusinitiatives.org.uk/resource/cultural-mediation

Beyond Training (focus on China)

UMatter therapy workshop focusing on culture
https://umattercounselling.co.uk/about-us/#:~:text=U%20Matter%20Counselling%20is%20a,and%20
trauma%20of%20their%20experiences

Shpresa Programme Training
https://shpresaprogramme.org/services/training

Identification, support and care for survivors of modern slavery course delivered by the Bakhita Centre
https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/short-courses/modern-slavery/identification-of-victims.aspx

'Removing Racism from the Modern Slavery Research Agenda' Workshop by Bakhita Centre
in partnership with BASNET, with input from some organisations with expertise in a specific culture
https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/events/2022/06/bakhita-centre-workshop