

One day at a time

A report on the Recovery Needs Assessment
by those experiencing it on a daily basis

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group report

The **Anti Trafficking**
Monitoring Group

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Executive summary

“I was told I was not entitled to things. That I should not expect free things. I was advised I should take perpetrators to court to get compensation and then go back home”

Survivor

This report is the first independent review of the Recovery Needs Assessment, the mechanism through which, since 2019, survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking¹ in England and Wales have their support needs assessed and provided for. The research team includes people with lived experience of the RNA.

The RNA is conducted after a person has been confirmed as a victim of modern slavery. It allows a support worker within the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC) to work with a survivor to develop recommendations for support and for the Home Office to assess and provide for the survivor's ongoing recovery needs arising from their modern slavery experiences. RNAs are time limited and a survivor may need to submit multiple assessments to continue receiving support.

The RNA forms part of the UK government's framework for combatting modern slavery and trafficking, and for identifying and supporting survivors. The UK has domestic and international legal obligations to adhere to, enshrined primarily in the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings and the UK Modern Slavery Act.

Through roundtables, panels and participant interviews with survivors, support workers and NGOs, the research found that the RNA is failing survivors. They told of getting lost in the RNA's bewildering bureaucratic demands, of feeling untrusted and upset during invasive questioning, being destitute and at risk of re-exploitation, of impossible dilemmas regarding childcare, and of losing essential financial or emotional support through no fault of their own.

Some survivors are being exited from the process before they are ready, which they found disheartening and disempowering. This risks survivors not being able to access vital support when they need it, increasing their vulnerability to further exploitation.²

These and other weaknesses in the RNA process could have been avoided had there been meaningful consultation with survivors and the anti-trafficking sector in the development of the RNA.

This report is intended to raise awareness among policymakers, parliamentarians, practitioners and survivors, as well as members of the general public. It is also intended to be a guide for ensuring that the UK's anti-trafficking system is fit for purpose, that survivors are identified and supported in their recoveries and, where possible, prosecutions of perpetrators are facilitated.

The report calls for an urgent review and overhaul of the RNA so that it can realise its objective of meeting the needs of survivors and be consistently in line with the UK's obligations under international law. A series of robust, but achievable, recommendations are presented in the conclusion which we hope will inform policy, guidance and training on the RNA.

¹ Explanations of terms.

<https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/human-trafficking/> and <https://www.antislavery.org/slavery-today/slavery-uk/>

² The Causes and Consequences of Re-trafficking: Evidence from the IOM Human Trafficking Data base. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/causes_of_retrafficking.pdf

Key findings

- **The RNA is exceptionally complex, inefficient, and unclear.** Most survivors reported that they did not know if they were in the RNA process or not, and of having to make very important, impactful decisions with little understanding of their consequences.
- **There is inadequate guidance and inconsistent training.** Support providers need a better understanding of the RNA decision making process and the ability to access clear guidance on it. Training varies across organisations, leading to varying opinions and decisions, and inconsistent levels of support.
- **The needs of children are not met.** Support is generally denied for children of trafficking victims as those needs do not fall into the narrow 'arising out of trafficking experience' category. In turn, this means that survivors have no option but to bring their children to appointments where they have to talk about their trafficking and exploitation, which all parties find distressing. The alternative is to miss meetings and have their future support disrupted.
- **Every survivor said that they had, at times, been destitute.** By failing to provide for basic needs, the RNA hinders recovery, increases debt and heightens the risk of re-trafficking.
- **The RNA is not trauma-informed or person-centred.** The focus is on meeting procedural requirements and providing evidence which can be traumatic and challenging. Survivors say they felt mistrusted and that information demands are invasive. There was a stark lack of consultation with survivors and the anti-trafficking sector in the development of the RNA. The Home Office publicly commits to embedding survivors' voices into policy making, but there is scant evidence of this. The UK is failing to uphold the Trauma-informed Code of Conduct (TiCC), which it has endorsed.

"A client was allocated two MSVCC support workers because their needs are so complex. A support worker submitted an RNA requesting financial support and support worker contact for at least six months. Evidence was provided by a variety of sources attesting to their need for significant ongoing support. The decision came back, refusing financial support and extending support worker contact for just six weeks. The SCA refused to extend the support for any longer because 'The SCA bases RNA decisions on the current recovery needs of a recognised victim of trafficking and not on their future circumstances'. The exit date from all support was just days before Christmas. Charities and other services (who the SCA say the survivor can rely on) are really limited.

The client only received £8 from the Home Office and was unable to eat meals provided due to digestive problems. The advice from the SCA was for the support worker to advocate for the client's individual requirements to be taken into consideration by the Home Office, without acknowledging that his recovery needs were separate to his essential everyday needs. The SCA asks support workers to explain delays which are caused by another part of the same government department – for example, why someone hasn't been moved or received their Biometric Residence Permit.

As support was only granted for a further six weeks, the client had to repeat this process over and over again. A third RNA request was made, requesting three months of support worker contact. On this occasion, contact was extended but only on a limited basis, despite evidence being provided of the client having outstanding recovery needs and being a person with disabilities.

The decision only allowed for limited contact, stating that 'RNA guidance does not contract a general provision for chaperoning' and therefore support worker contact was not granted for the client to access health care services. It only granted to allow the person to source trousers that were lost when he moved accommodation."

**An NGO worker who supports survivors going through the RNA process
Some details have been amended to protect anonymity**

Key recommendations

- **Improve procedures.** Survivors should not be required to repeatedly provide the same documentation, and at least three months should be allowed after they have been confirmed as a victim of trafficking (known as a conclusive grounds decision) before the first RNA is submitted.
- **Extend support.** There should be standardised timeframes with a minimum of 12 months support that is tapered down in line with a person's recovery.
- **Provide better and consistent training.** All support workers and decision makers should receive standardised training.
- **Improve survivor understanding of, and engagement in, the RNA.** Survivors should know at the earliest possible stage what will happen to their support when they receive their conclusive grounds decision and be provided with copies of all their RNA documents.
- **Ensure that the assessment of needs is holistic, person-centred and recognises the fundamental best interests of adults and their dependent children,** rather than being unfairly limited to needs arising out of their trafficking experience and current needs.
- **Involve the anti-trafficking sector and, above all, survivors of trafficking in this review of the RNA in any subsequent development of policies and practices affecting victims and survivors of trafficking.**



Illustration: Survivor finds directions difficult to navigate

For further information please see the full report, *One day at a time*.
[RNA One Day At A Time.pdf \(antislavery.org\)](https://antislavery.org/OneDayAtATime.pdf)