



Chinese Cultural Resource

Within the UK, law enforcement agencies investigating Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking deal with a high proportion of victims who are foreign nationals (75% of victims referred into the NRM in 2023 were non-British citizens). NRM referrals from Chinese nationals featured in the top 10 nationalities referred into the NRM in 2023. NRM statistics for the first three quarters of 2024 recorded 252 Chinese potential victims of modern slavery. There is a demand therefore, for cultural competency. Police officers and staff who are equipped with tailored cultural resources that acknowledge and appreciate specific cultural needs are better positioned to gain the necessary trust of modern slavery victims and support them appropriately.

This resource, accompanied by the webinar launch aim to provide an insight into the Chinese culture and has been collated using the expertise of any individuals credited below. It is important to note that people within a single country can have a range of experiences, attitudes and cultural practices, as such, individuals may not conform to every generalisation about their culture. China has many cultures within its state and it is not possible to include all the intricacies of these cultures within this guide.



Introduction and historical background:

The People's Republic of China (PRC) has a population 1.4 billion in 2020 (Source IOM). China has a rich and embedded history. The Feudal System saw landowners exploit peasants and those working the land. The ancient philosophy of Confucianism reinforced this dynamic, emphasising the need to obey authority and accept a given role in society. Imperial China again reinforced disparities by insisting that states contributed labour, taxes and goods to maintain the central, ruling power and justified harsh labour practices such as mass mobilisation for projects such as the Great Wall and the Terracotta Army. In the 19th and 20th centuries, China faced exploitation from Western powers and Japan via the Opium Wars and various treaties, that contributed to national resentment and a drive for sovereignty. The Chinese Communist Party led the revolution that established the People's Republic of China in 1949, which created land reforms and collectivisation but also forced labour and political persecution. Rapid economic growth and industrialisation took place from the late 1970s. China became known as the world's factory. This has led to marginalised communities facing the brunt of exacerbated disparities and workers being exploited, working in harsh conditions to produce cheap goods for shipment abroad.

The proximity of South China to the sea and to Hong Kong and Macau, means that the population in that region tends to be more open minded than in the North. Confucianism however is still followed generally, emphasising hierarchical relationships, unquestioning submission to authority and power imbalances, making exploitation more likely. Calling for peace and balance to be maintained, there is a focus on politeness and not causing embarrassment. Maintaining dignity is important in social interactions. Similarly, Daoism philosophy emphasises simplicity, balance and lack of materialism, some say this aligns to justify exploitation by encouraging acceptance of one's position.

Waves of mass migration to the UK include Post WWII decolonization, 30,000 from Hong Kong New Territories and 2,000 student nurses from Malaysia and Singapore. After the Tiananmen massacre and Hong Kong handover hundreds of PRC students were granted long term stay in UK and British nationality was given to tens of thousands Hong Kong citizens.

Chinese nationals are significant participants in the global market for human smuggling, smuggled to, and through, Southeast Asia and further to North America, Europe and other parts of the world. The demand for smuggling services remains high because of economic ambitions and work opportunities in other countries. Some companies in China operate unethically, issuing wages that are inadequate to meet basic living expenses. Sometimes, exploitation and coercion are involved. Smugglers promise employment opportunities beforehand but force their victims to work in the sex industry and to marry upon arrival at their destinations. Forced labour and abuse is also well-documented in the fishing sector. Fishers have reported experiencing wage withholding, food deprivation, physical and sexual violence, restricted movement and debt bondage, and other abuses at sea. (Source: profile on China, published in the Global Organized Crime Index 2023 covering events in 2022)

The UK Home Office's National Referral Mechanism (NRM) statistics for 2023 stated there were a total of 301 Chinese potential victims of modern slavery referred to the NRM, mainly for labour and sexual exploitation.

Most people in China have been touched in some way by organised crime, due to its prevalence, this is often viewed as part of life and accepted.

The 2023 Global Slavery Index (GSI) estimates that 5.8 million people were living in modern slavery in China on any given day in 2021.



Greetings:

Respect for elders is key, so greeting elders first would be important. The use of formal greetings with Mr/Mrs/Ms and surnames for older people can be used, Chinese may use 'aunty' or 'uncle' as signs of respect too but for younger people first names would be acceptable or ask what they would like to be called. A nod or small bow would also show respect.

Being mindful of physical contact would be advised, especially of females and those that have experienced trauma. Avoid handshakes, unless initiated first. Often Chinese prefer respect of personal space. Positioning your fist and open hand over the top and a little bow instead can sometimes be used, (although not generally used for the younger generation).

Avoid prolonged eye contact as this may cause discomfort. The Chinese are often softly spoken, especially women who are often very controlled, they can often try to make themselves 'smaller'.

Tone is very important, different tones for the same word are common. Speaking slowly with a gentle, calm tone on first engagement is advisable and slang words are to be avoided.

Asking how they are, how their family are and asking if they have eaten will all assist with engagement by showing compassion. Keeping the conversation light whilst trust is starting to build is crucial.

Most Chinese will speak Mandarin as the national language but Cantonese is also widely spoken in Hong Kong, Guangdong and Macau. There are also regional dialects such as Hokkien, spoken by Fujian OCGs. Victims are often from mainland China, so having an interpreter from Hong Kong for example may minimize any further trauma. Native Chinese interpreters may not understand the trauma and may not wish to 'let their country down' by explaining the full extent of the suffering. The victim might view the interpreter as being untrustworthy or colluding with the Chinese government. The victim could also feel they are 'losing face' by speaking with a native Chinese person. Chinese victims may trust more the use of non-native Chinese as interpreters but there is a need to balance out the language barrier. Consistency of the interpreter used is key to build trust. Exploiters may be female too, do not assume they were male. A male interpreter may be preferred if a female has been exploited by a female, always ask and check. The following phrases are in Mandarin:

Hello - Nǐ hǎo 你好 How are your parents? Pinyin: nǐ fù mǔ hǎo ma? 你父母好吗?

Are you okay? - Nǐ hái hǎo ma? - 你还好吗?

Where in China are you from? - Ni lai zi Zhong Guo na - li? 你来自中国哪里?

Have you eaten? - Ni chi fan le ma? - 你吃饭了吗?

You like to eat flour-based food? Ni xihuan chi mian shi, hai shi mi fan? - 你喜欢吃面食还是米饭?

TIP: The above phrase is a useful way to distinguish people from south to north part of China, with the former having strong preferences for rice.

!TIPS: Offer warm water, Chinese people will often be used to this. When communicating with a victim, ensure that you state they are not a suspect upon initial contact, they will need this reiterated to start to feel safe.

Attempt to mirror the person you are speaking to, for example, speak softly, if they are sitting, then sit too, avoid the use of exuberant gestures or speech.

Key Cultural Elements



Chinese people are often quiet, reserved, polite, controlled and hardworking. They tend to have a strong **sense of honour**; harmony is important and they will often avoid conflict. Communication style tends to be indirect, especially when discussing sensitive topics. They usually do not like to be singled out or targeted.

There is often a reticence to share; they keep amongst their own. **Compatriotism** is important, this can lead to risk of exploitation when traffickers tell them they will take care of them, providing food and accommodation. Traffickers might say they are of the same culture and how they are undocumented, but they are still prepared to take the risk and look after them.

There is a Chinese concept of '**GuanXi**' meaning connections, where it can be said that without GuanXi with the other party, they will not do anything for you, however with GuanXi with the other party, the other party will do anything for you. The level of GuanXi differs according to personal and or professional connections with the other party and therefore how obligated you are to that person.

Respect and '**not losing face**' are huge, someone exploited and in debt bondage will consider returning to their trafficker to preserve honour. There is often a gap between what is shown to the outside world and what is reality. As a victim of sexual abuse for instance, they will likely be more concerned about 'saving face' with their community and family. The face-saving culture is even more apparent in rural areas where the ability to earn enough money is so much harder.

Chinese society is very **hierarchical**, Chinese people can still face oppression within state systems. There is a great fear of the Police. There is a focus on the collective good; a communal culture and how they are viewed by others. Children are taught to do what they are told and respect authority. Chinese people are very family focused, with family or 'jiātíng 家庭' at the heart of almost everything.

There is generally a **strong identity** with Chinese ethnicity, if they identify as Chinese British, Chinese American, Chinese has the strongest influence by far. Over 50 ethnic groups exist with Han Chinese as the majority group. They tend to be a tolerant culture, unless they have been upset/disrespected.

Chinese tend to be **work-centred**, both by necessity and tradition. Work brings the family together and separates them too when parents go to the city to work and children are left with grandparents. Informal transactions are preferred for money lending and building businesses. They often prefer to borrow money from family and friends, than to use formal channels. There can be a mentality to cut corners and look for the best deal and often a belief that they will benefit by not going down the formal route. Chinese people can often be very **frugal** on the one hand but by contradiction will place emphasis on affording luxury brands as a sign of success. Those in the South do not tend to place so much emphasis on wearing branded clothes and showing off. They tend to have less to prove than in the North, which tends to be more traditional and respectful of authority.

There is great respect for **traditions** within Chinese culture such as festivals, lucky number symbolism and cats as symbols of good fortune. Tradition can be seen within the triad system where new triads will claim lineage from older, more established groups for credibility.



!TIPS: Hospitality is important as is reciprocity. There is a need to give back, earn what you have and pay your way, especially if you have been helped by someone higher up in society. Chinese value of 'Chiku' – means eating bitterness, which emphasises perseverance through hardship, this can again normalise exploitation and can have an impact if the victim believes they are in debt bondage. They do not like owing a favour or a 'Ren Qing'. They can also struggle to say no.



Migration:

People leave China for many reasons, such as education and work opportunities. Historically, males were considered the main breadwinner, now both men and women are regarded almost equally as bread winners. China's job market is highly competitive, the pull of higher wages, more opportunities or a better job life balance abroad is high. A key reason for migration is to earn money to support children's future education, which is regarded as the key to upward economic/social status mobility and to earn funds to purchase houses when sons marry. Escaping domestic abuse might be another reason for migration. This is viewed as a family affair; police will not get involved or interfere. Some might flee to escape political persecution and to gain some autonomy or independence from family.

There is a belief that more money can be made abroad. Migrants will be expected to send money and gifts home. They may feel pressure to return home to care for elderly relatives. Migrants from rural areas will know the kudos their relatives gained to have family working abroad. Working conditions in Chinese cities for many rural migrants are often much worse than in the UK's informal industries.

Women who have been sexually exploited here in the UK often state they left China because their husband was in debt to loan sharks, due to their business collapsing or from gambling addiction. When the family could not pay the debt, the loan sharks started threatening their family. The wife has been forced to work in the UK to pay off the debt, but believed this would be work looking after children or housework. Many migrated from Fujian province. Women in the sex industry in the UK will get moved between locations under the same ownership. Even if their debt has been paid back, some will stay on as they feel they need to support their now ageing parents and have no other way of making the same amount of money.



Women have often arrived by air, recruited by links to the loan shark, their passports being removed on arrival and taken to a place of work. The initial location might be factory or restaurant, but they have then been coerced into working in a brothel to earn more money. Some women will look to take on a managerial role within the brothel to increase earnings, often seeing it as becoming 'part of the system rather than the system crushing them'. Those working in the sex industry may be supportive of each other, but others will see each other as competition. They will often be within a restricted circle and slow to trust other Chinese, lest word get back of their situation in the UK.

Illegal workers in other countries (apart from those in the sex industry) would generally not be seen as shameful, but instead seen as hard working, enduring hardship and praised. Construction sites have been found to have bunk bed accommodation on site for labourers. This is a cultural norm to save money on accommodation, so more money can be sent home to repay debt. Bunk beds are sometimes a luxury, labourers will often carry their own sleeping bags and set up on the floor of the site, this fits into their frugal nature and wanting to obtain the best deal.

!TIP The UK Diaspora are mainly in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds and Liverpool. Areas near universities also have significant Chinese communities with large number of students. They will seek out support from links in China Towns, generally unused to NGO support they may need to have this role explained on how they can assist. ONS census records have recorded the Chinese population in the UK rising from 146,462 in 1991 to 445,619 in 2021.

Migration continued:

Chinese nationals exploiting those from their own ethnicity may see it as 'doing them a favour'; giving them some status in the UK and making them better off than if they were back in China. Exploitation in this way can be viewed very differently by both victim and exploiter. Law enforcement must seek to understand this, whilst gathering evidence and applying the law to the situation. Certain circumstances may increase the risk of a person being abused or re-trafficked should they be returned to China, such as the person being homeless, disabled, suffering from a mental illness or those from a rural area and with a lack of education.

Migrants are frequently not aware of the full extent of the risks of moving abroad, especially in more rural and poorer areas where access to information is more restricted. They may be more susceptible to exploitation, they feel pressure to migrate to improve their opportunities, making it harder to question the risks. Instead, they focus on fulfilling family expectations, listening to friends and neighbours or being influenced by WeChat, the messaging, social media and payment app widely used in China. News is controlled by the State, so they have limited opportunities to fact check and bad experiences are not often retold due to the pain and shame. They may occasionally hear some experiences in the media but reports of long hours and harsh conditions are expected and considered a 'fair trade' for higher wages. The underground market in China means that if the confidence in their agent wains and things are not working out, then it is easy to source another.

The UK's education system has been particularly attractive to Southeast Asian citizens and has played a role in the influx of Southeast Asians moving to the UK over the last 20 years. There is a particular increase of student visa overstayers at New Year and the start of new university terms, with students staying after being tied into debt.

Morecambe Bay, Lancashire – on 5th February 2004 at least 21 Chinese undocumented migrants drowned by incoming tide, whilst harvesting cockles. The investigation revealed that the migrants were inexperienced, spoke little or no English and were unfamiliar with the area.

The Chinese Gangmaster was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to 14 years plus 6 years for facilitating illegal immigration (served concurrently) and 2 years for conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. 2 associates also received sentences.

Dover 58 – on 18th June 2000, 58 Chinese migrants were found dead in a Dutch lorry at the port. The Chinese migrants had each paid £20,000 to be smuggled into the UK. They had come from Zeebrugge in Belgium, after flying from Beijing to Belgrade. This was one of the largest mass deaths in British criminal history. The driver was arrested and later sentenced to 14 years for manslaughter, conspiracy to facilitate the entry of irregular migrants and his part in a smuggling operation coordinated by a Chinese snakehead (Shétóu, 蛇头) or Chinese smuggling gang or läobǎn 老板 (Boss).

Internal migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation in China, migrant workers are known as the 'floating population' often working in poor conditions, on low wages in cities. Unable to find work, rural populations migrate to areas such as Guangdong and Shanghai to take up low- paid jobs. Internal migrants typically lack equal access to social benefits under the hukou (household registration) system (Source: Global Slavery Index 2023 report on China), that can then drive individuals to live and work illegally abroad.

!TIPS: The International Social Service Hong Kong branch can support those wishing to return to China safely and assist with adaptations within the UK: www.isshk.org Those that have been living in the UK for a while often speak Cantonese, especially those from Hong Kong, those newer arrivals tend to speak Mandarin. They may not wish to learn English and feel more confident speaking to those from their own background. Ask as this will be down to the individual. More information on dialects and phrases can be found in the Useful Contacts & Further Reading document to accompany this resource.

Taboo subjects/prejudices:

When speaking with a Chinese victim there are many taboo areas you may wish to avoid. Firstly, to be in trouble or even have contact with the Police in China can be viewed as shameful. If contact with the authorities is linked to their immigration status then there will also be a real fear of being sent back to China, of how they will be viewed by their family and community and not meeting their obligations. This can all cause dishonour.

Dishonour can also be caused by having financial dependence on the family, especially if the family has supported and contributed to the investment of their education and career aspirations. At the same time not being able to support your family will also be seen as shameful as can choosing not to marry and continue family lineage. Being disrespectful to anyone is a big taboo, especially to your elders or someone in authority.

Those working in the sex industry would likely be seen as shameful, they would likely not tell their relatives. Women are seen as mothers and daughters, in a dutiful, demure role that stems from Confucianism. Women who have been exploited in this industry would unlikely be seen as victims. They are viewed as having a choice that they entered that line of work. Often they are afraid that anything they say to authorities would get back to the loan sharks and their families would suffer.

Elements of racism exist, for instance people from Hong Kong and Macau can look down on mainland China. The former were often seen as having more opportunities, being better educated and less controlled by the government. This has changed somewhat with Shanghai and other cities modernised, but some racism exists. Some prejudice can also be seen against ethnic minorities such as Tibetans & Muslims from Western China. Prejudice also exists towards LGBTQ+ community.

Disabled people can face stigma, this taps into the face-saving influence. People with special needs can be hidden away and can be a target for exploitation. Mental health is often seen as a taboo, they will believe they will be viewed as 'being crazy' and need to hide any symptoms as a result.

Addictions and gambling are huge issues both legal and illegal (horse racing in particular), not repaying debts would be shameful. Chinese migrants in the UK may gravitate to casinos, casino chips commonly found in brothels.

Some OCGs own casinos in China Towns but also some illegal ones in night clubs and bars. Loan sharks are a huge problem and involvement brings shame and lets people know about China's failings, again linked to the face-saving culture.



The use of chopsticks is solely for eating, otherwise should not be touched and you should not point them at people as this is considered **bad manners**.

!TIPS Officers should refrain from mentioning working in the sex trade from the outset, so as to avoid feelings of judgement. Instead, mention their situation indirectly until they feel safe to speak. Gradually officers can ask about the victim's family, how they are doing, if are they receiving any money from their work and if they are in contact. Use the term 'those working the sex trade', as opposed to 'sex worker'. Women working in the industry may refer to themselves as working in a massage parlour (as opposed to a brothel) but say they offer a 'full service' or 'happy ending'. Punishment for trafficked women returned to China is feared amongst victims but the All-China Women's Federation <https://www.womenofchina.cn/> as an organisation responsible for promoting government policies on women, and protecting women's rights within the government can assist. Victims of trafficking may well be reluctant to seek help from the authorities for fear of punishment for crimes they have committed as a consequence of their exploitation. There is a need to be aware of the non-punishment principles set out in Section 45 of the Modern Slavery Act: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/30/section/45>

Family Structure / gender dynamics:

Multi-generational living is common. There is huge respect for the elderly, with younger generations having an obligation to listen and look after the extended family unit, who in return will help with childcare. These close ties and obligations are influenced by Confucian values and reinforced by society and in law. Looking after your relatives is seen to honour the family.

Family businesses are common with jobs given to relatives first. One family member's earnings are the whole family's. Unemployment is low, even in rural areas as they work on the land. Have a real work ethic to improve their status, gain a larger car and property. China lacks a comprehensive social welfare system with not everyone who needs support being able to gain access, with families having more of a role to play. Typically, when a woman marries, she becomes part of the husband's family and she will often be expected to take care of his parents.

Males tend to hold the power, in rural areas especially, parents will buy a house and give expenses to the son to get married, then the wife/daughters are subject to the husband/father/in-laws. Women will often tolerate suffering as they feel they need the male's support, believing they are there to serve men. (Men in brothels – women will need to ask permission to engage with NGOs etc when they visit). Women may be less submissive in cities but may still be expected to have a job closer to the family home so they can juggle family duties.

Marrying outside the family's expectations can bring even greater dishonour. This might include marrying someone from a different social class, ethnicity, religion, or cultural background. The concept of family reputation is crucial in Chinese society, and these unions may be seen as a threat to the family's status. Tradition of keeping a life-time marriage is widely eroded while extramarital affairs are now widely accepted, in part due to large population migration and separation of couples. Husbands and wives working in different cities is common.

In a rural area, the whole neighbourhood will be involved if a family member migrates abroad. The migrant will act as a supporter for the family and will feel obligated not to let the family down. There is less cohesion in urban areas but still a communal spirit, work colleagues may take the place of the village.

The 1 child policy rescinded in 2015, but families still rarely have more than 1 or 2 children. A gender imbalance has meant brides have been trafficked from SE Asia to China, especially in rural areas to be married due to a shortage of single women. Daughters generally not being valued as much as sons, may marry young as a result.



Religion, beliefs and festivals:

Religion would not be discussed in public generally, religious persecution still exists in China to varying degrees, although this can now be more subtle. The Chinese constitution prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion and guarantees freedom of religion for 'normal religious activities', a term which is undefined. People's rights are not protected in the same way as they are in the UK. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is officially atheist and demands members are likewise. Those under the age of 18 are not allowed to enter a church. The government recognizes 5 official religions – Buddhism, Daoism, Islam, generic Protestantism, and Catholicism, religious organizations must register with the government. Mainland China mainly identifies as Buddhist but many may well not be practicing or have strong beliefs. Triads are rooted in Buddhism and Daoism. Religion has been a cause of conflict in the past, not least in Tibet in 1959 when the Chinese government troops dissolved the Tibetan government headed by the Dalai Lama and the cost of many deaths of Tibetans.

Festivals celebrated include:

Chinese New Year or Spring Festival (Chūnjié 春节) in late January/ early February - Chinese travel to see relatives for feasts and gifts. The worship of ancestors is of special importance.

Mid Autumn Festival – (中秋节, Zhōngqiū Jié), celebrated on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month (normally September or October). The festival historically involves worshipping the moon, symbolizing unity, harmony, and prosperity. Moon cake is eaten with family.

Dragon Boat Festival occurs on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Chinese calendar (late May/June)



!TIP: If someone has a registration plate or reference number with multiple 8s included then this often signifies they are of a higher level in society.

Food:

Food is of great importance, it is how people connect and build relationships, can symbolize tradition, storytelling and family. Often, they view the willingness to dine together as both an honour and gesture of trust. It is common to go out to eat and order for the whole group to share and also to eat cooked and hot food as opposed to eating cold, raw items.



Rice and noodles are popular as is dim sum, (jiaozi, 饺子) dumplings for breakfast and New Year made with pork and vegetables that symbolise wealth and prosperity. Sticky rice dumplings (zongzi, 粽子) wrapped in bamboo leaves are also eaten. Fish (yú, 鱼) represents abundance.

Tea is a popular drink, as is brandy and beer. Chinese are deficient in a certain enzyme, meaning they struggle to break down alcohol and they often suffer from a red faced effect.

Pregnant women avoid "cold" foods like crab or raw fish.

!TIPS: 2 fingers tapping the table can mean 'thank you'. It is respectful to pour a drink for everyone else before yourself. Those from Central China and SW China – 'the spicy provinces' often eat a lot of chilli. Those in the North tend to use less spice and more salt and oil.

Education/career prospects:



Education and status are very important. Education comes at a price. Those highly educated are very well regarded but there is much competition for the places at the top universities. To secure a place at a more coveted university or a better paid job, you may need to use 'GuanXi' because of the bureaucracy system.

Chinese mothers are also known as 'Tiger Mothers', they can be super strict, demanding that their children achieve in education, whether that be in academia or learning a musical instrument. Children are often dressed immaculately when going to school. Respect is very important with children being taught to respect their elders and to raise their hand to speak. Chinese children are sometimes told when they misbehave they will be taken away by the Police.

In Chinese culture, success is not viewed as an individual achievement but as a family success. The entire family's reputation is often tied to the accomplishments of one member, so any perceived failure or not meeting of expectations can reflect poorly on the whole family.

Education is important if it translates into being successful & having money. Wealth is important to display, Chinese people often like to wear Rolex watches, own a large house and drive expensive cars. Males in particular feel shame if they have not succeeded and there has been heavy investment from the family into their education, they may feel traumatised if they have been seen to 'fail'.

If you have not performed well academically, then migration is seen as another option. Chinese students in the UK can be vulnerable and are often groomed by social media into exploitative practices. WeChat is used by migrants for seeking jobs and information, but this is heavily monitored by the Chinese government.

There is fear that if students speak out about Chinese government policy this will be reported back by fellow students and if they were to be sent back to China, could result in serious repercussions. Overseas students without a support network are more vulnerable and may be asked to launder money, import drugs and become involved in sexual and other exploitation.



!TIP: More details on the mechanics and risk of WeChat, how it is used to recruit students in particular and the importance of the platform for investigations can be found in the Law Enforcement Supplementary Pack.

Interaction with authority:

Chinese people are hesitant to engage with police, who are viewed as a last resort and whose role is to apprehend criminals, not protect victims. Chinese will often opt to sort out issues themselves, thinking that others will not understand if they speak out. Time and perseverance are needed to build trust. It is important to set out clear expectations and ensure these are adhered to. Following a report to the Police, the Chinese community may observe how this is handled and if expectations are not met, they may be unlikely to report again.

!TIPS: Advise that the Police is not the same as Immigration. Chinese migrants often arrive with little knowledge of our legal system, in China, government bodies are perceived as interconnected entities, leading to mistrust. Many undocumented migrants may not have visited a GP for over a decade, due to lack of address proof and be very fearful they would be at risk of arrest and deportation, along with being judged for their line of work and any conditions they have been exposed to, as a result. Language barriers and unfamiliarity with their rights to report a crime can hinder engagement. The cultural tendency to avoid confrontation, can also reduce engagement. Chinese may judge each other for speaking to the Police and not empathise with victims, feeling they have been 'foolish'. Visible presence of community police officers and campaigns focused on building trust with communities, help bridge the gap, but can take time. Community organisations can also support with explaining the Police's role.

Within China Police are respected and feared; with huge control by the State, Chinese people often do not trust the judicial system, but will see little point in objecting. There are perceptions of high-level corruption in the Chinese government, that China is not a free country and has very sophisticated surveillance of its citizens. Those in the sex trade often believe the Police are there to punish and deport them. They may believe the whole of the UK is controlled by the trafficker, as the UK is so much smaller than China and they are likely to be found. Some Chinese undocumented migrants may claim they have no family support in China, in the hope that they will not be deported. The majority of potential Chinese victims found in brothels refuse the NRM and often a DtN is not submitted. The NRM is not a reliable indicator of the amount of exploitation of Chinese females.

!TIPS: Some women may not trust the interpreter, preferring to use online translation and will say they do not understand the Police questions even with an interpreter there. Cue cards have been produced as part of this resource, but it is important to hand these over with 2 hands as a sign of respect. After a few visits, women may like to offer small gifts such as sweets or small charms and can be seen as a sign of disrespect if refused and can assist with rapport building. Officers need to be mindful to disclose any gifts as per organisational policy.

Brothels are commonly owned by Triads and managed by Alpha victims. Sex workers will often be made to have multiple bank accounts from online banks, such as Monzo and Starling Banks. Transactions may feature rapid deposits and withdrawals at unsocial hours to or from accounts held by males and in rounded amounts and this type of activity should be viewed as suspicious.

! TIPS:

Those working in brothels often have high value fashion items, but this should not be mistaken for them being higher up in the OCG. Daigou is the purchase of luxury branded goods in the UK and elsewhere, which are then transported back to China covertly in containers where they avoid having to pay tax but rather be sold on for huge profits. They may be exploited as shoppers as part of the poly-criminality process. Many women in brothels barely leave at all, working extremely long hours. The subservient culture means women may well see this work as 'just what they do'. Officers need to be aware that any covert tactics used to identify locations of brothels to conduct safeguarding visits, may hinder engagement from victims because of the 'deceit' involved and may damage trust.

Interaction with authority (continued)

A bau mu (madam) may gas-light women, advising those that are new to the work, that now they have started they might as well continue; how they will not earn as much money elsewhere and normalising abuse encountered. Brothels may be part of a cell structure, if a brothel is not earning as much as the others in the same cell there will be pressure from the OCG on the managers to increase turnover.

There are known Triad groups, organised crime groups originated in China but operating in other parts of the world including the UK. Law-abiding individuals will generally not be targeted by Triads but if you have a business they may collect 'taxes' from you that they feel are owed and use violence if there is a refusal. Drug use in particular opium has historically been an issue especially with the elderly, although more likely to be ecstasy, LSD, methamphetamine and amphetamines with younger Chinese people. Triads were historically involved with drug shipments from Europe and Australasia. OCGs now will opt out of crimes involving Class A drugs, firearms, OIC (organised immigration crime), that which can be detected, to avoid police involvement and stay below the radar. OCGs are involved in sophisticated criminality with their own lawyers, doctors and business consultants.

Effective safeguarding during investigations is vital. An ABE/VRI interview should be offered where appropriate and MSHT concerns raised early on so victim support can be given according to vulnerabilities. Learning can be gained from past incidents.

Learning from Dover 58 – The first report from the media branded the victims as undocumented migrants, which set the tone for interactions with the Police and the public later. The Chinese community were asked to assist in identifying victims, but in the enquiry forms they were asked about their own immigration status and why they felt their relatives were amongst the deceased. The communities felt incriminated and compromised. NGO's were later recognised as being able to complete initial screenings, asking about identifiable marks etc. The importance of having Chinese officers was invaluable; 2 were seconded in from Hampshire Police. An article on the incident can be found in the further resources document.

Learning from Morecambe Bay – Locating and prosecuting the Gangmasters was the focus of the investigation. The victims, upon seeing the tide coming in called a local Chinese woman who had been supporting the cockle pickers in the area for some time, rather than the Police as they trusted her. The local Chinese woman was then treated as a suspect. This had a negative impact on the cockle picking community going forward and how they viewed the Police, many assumed they were not acting within their best interests. Extra information can be found in the further resources document.

The Chinese government has attempted to assist modern slavery victims but its limited definition of trafficking means that not all are identified, some are arrested for crimes committed as a result of their exploitation. Joint working with Chinese and UK Police opportunities are available with International Liaison Officers based at Interpol Hong Kong and Interpol China who are open to working together.

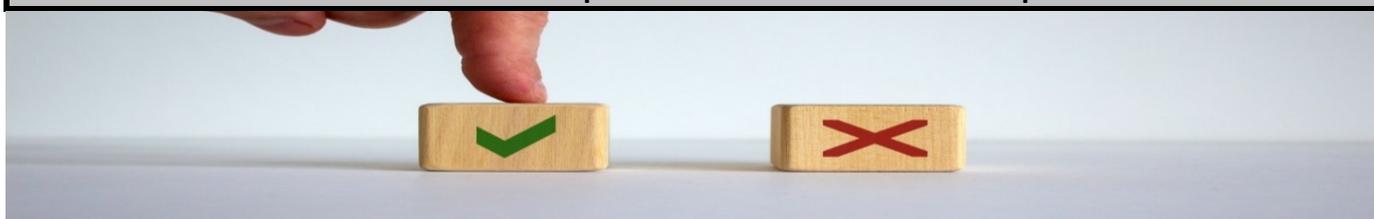
!TIPS: Challenges for forces include sourcing reputable interpreters and a lack of UK officers of Chinese descent/heritage within forces. OCGs operate within cells across different cities, operating on a huge scale, sometimes across 15 different force areas so inter force and inter regional cooperation is essential.

Chinese OCGs are known to record all the crimes they have been involved in on their phones, they may also be known to carry around print outs of previous bank statements. Business is often carried out via WeChat.



Do's	Don'ts
Set out clear and realistic expectations of what you are going to do and ensure they are stuck to, advise you are there to determine the facts and will keep an open mind.	Assume a sex worker is not a victim just because they are not seeing themselves as one or just purely because they have high value goods.
Persevere with engagement, be patient and respectful	Dismiss their silence or lack of answer, as this often reflects thoughtfulness or discomfort, not necessarily agreement.
Reiterate that victims are not a suspect upon initial contact.	Jump to conclusions or make assumptions about a potential victim's circumstance.
Dig deeper in terms of investigations but be mindful of how relatives and friends of victims are treated too as this will impact how the Police are viewed by the Chinese Community as a whole.	Criticise China or the Chinese.
Consider sex workers to be victims and advise them of this, so they do not assume you are going to arrest them.	Ask sensitive questions straight away and certainly not where others can overhear. Privacy is very important in the culture.
Attempt to clear up myths and lies stated by traffickers and instead educate on rights and the system here.	Be overly casual or informal in your behaviour, this might be misinterpreted as a lack of professionalism or respect.

!TIPS: Acknowledge cultural differences and sensitivity to customs, such as the importance of family or face-saving culture (mianzi) to assist with breaking down barriers and make your conversations more effective. Have NGOs present on visits to brothels and parlours.



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following for their contributions and insight into this resource along with Lived Experience Consultants for their valued feedback:

DC David Hung, Metropolitan Police

David Ley, Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Unit

David Wilson, Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Unit

Dr Fuk Ying Tse, University of Birmingham

PC Huang Yan, West Yorkshire Police

Jabez Lam, Hackney Chinese Community Services

Karen Anstiss, Caritas Bakhita House

Limin Wang, Caritas Bakhita House

Liya Dong, British Consulate-General Guangzhou

Louise Brown, Black Country Women's Aid

Miriam Hargreaves, Vista/Harbour Church

Philippa Southwell, Southwell & Partners

Ruby Chan, Tamar