

# Modern Slavery and Trafficking Guidance



# Over **49.6 million** people are trapped in modern slavery across the globe

## **Global Slavery Index, 2023**

[walkfree.org/global-slavery-index](https://walkfree.org/global-slavery-index)

### **At the end of 2021 there were:**

\*12,727 potential victims of modern slavery – the highest number of referrals since the records began in 2009

\*43% of all of these were children – meaning there were 5,468 potential child victims

\* 31% of people referred were British nationals (Anti Slavery UK, 2023)

[antislavery.org/slavery-today/slavery-uk](https://antislavery.org/slavery-today/slavery-uk)

Slavery and human trafficking are often used collectively.

### **Someone is in slavery if they are:**

- forced to work – through coercion, or mental or physical threat owned or controlled by an 'employer', through mental or physical abuse or the threat of abuse dehumanised, treated as a commodity or bought and sold as 'property', physically constrained or have restrictions placed on their freedom of movement.
- Human trafficking involves recruitment, harbouring or transporting people into a situation of exploitation through the use of violence, deception or coercion and forced to work against their will.

Slavery in the UK, Anti-Slavery International (2023)

# Modern slavery or trafficking is defined in 3 phases

## Phase 1

recruitment or acquisition of a person/people of all ages.

## Phase 2

means ie, through the use of force, deception, or coercion.

## Phase 3

purpose ie, for the purpose of exploitation or forced labour.  
United Nations Palermo Protocol (UN, 2003)

### Key legislation

- Modern Slavery Act 2015 (England and Wales)
- Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015
- Human Trafficking and Exploitation Criminal Justice and Support for Victims Act (Northern Ireland) 2015



### Modern slavery helpline

You can call 08000 121 700 to get confidential help, report a suspicion or seek advice. Or visit: [modernslaveryhelpline.org](https://modernslaveryhelpline.org)

# Why people are trafficked

- Domestic work.
- Rural work, farms and agricultural work, factories, construction, food processing, hospitality industries, plantations, fishing, beauty industry, shops.
- Sex workers/prostitutes.
- Criminal activity including cannabis cultivation, street crime, forced begging and benefit fraud.
- Forced or sham marriages.
- Organ removal.



**13,000**

men, women and children are trafficked for exploitation in the UK

[antislavery.org/slavery-today/slavery-uk](https://antislavery.org/slavery-today/slavery-uk)



# Signs of trafficking

## If the person:

- is accompanied by someone who appears controlling, who insists on giving information and speaking for them
- is withdrawn and submissive, seems afraid to speak to anyone in authority
- provides vague and inconsistent explanations of where they live, employment or schooling
- has old or serious injuries left untreated
- provides vague information, is reluctant to explain how the injury occurred or reluctant to provide a medical history
- is not registered with a GP, nursery or school
- has experienced being moved locally, regionally, nationally or internationally
- appears to be moving location frequently
- appearance suggests general physical neglect
- struggles to speak English
- has no official means of identification or has suspicious looking documents.



# In addition, children and young people might show the following signs:

- has an unclear relationship with the accompanying adult
- goes missing quickly (sometimes within 48 hours of seeking care) and repeatedly from school, home and care
- gives inconsistent information about their age
- displays an unusual attachment to those around them.

**1 in 5**



victims report having come into contact with health care services during the time they are trafficked



# Health issues may include:

- long-term multiple injuries
- mental, physical and sexual trauma
- sexually transmitted infections
- pregnant, or a late booking (over 24 weeks)
- disordered eating or poor nutrition
- self harm, including attempted suicide
- dental pain
- fatigue
- non-specific post-traumatic stress disorder
- psychiatric and psychological distress
- vague symptoms such as back or stomach pain, skin problems, headaches and dizzy spells.

The Home office has published a booklet (which applies to **England and Wales**), including case studies and has further information on modern slavery which is available at: [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](https://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)

In **Scotland**, please refer to: [gov.scot/policies/human-trafficking](https://gov.scot/policies/human-trafficking)

In **Northern Ireland** please refer to: [nidirect.gov.uk/articles/modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking](https://nidirect.gov.uk/articles/modern-slavery-and-human-trafficking)

# The role of the nurse/midwife/ registered nursing associate

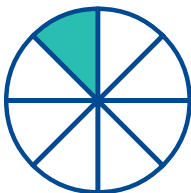
**If you suspect that a person is a victim of modern slavery, this is a safeguarding issue.**

Trust and act on your professional instinct that something is not quite right. It is usually a combination of an inconsistent story and a pattern of symptoms that may cause you to suspect trafficking.

If you have any concerns about a child, young person or adult take immediate action to ask further questions and get additional information and support.

Remember:

- trafficked people may not self-identify as victims of modern slavery
- trafficking victims can be prevented from revealing their experience to health care staff through fear, shame, language barriers and a lack of opportunity to do so. It can take time for a person to feel safe enough to open up
- be cautious regarding age. If a person says they are under 18 or says they are an adult, but you suspect not, take action as though they were under 18 years old
- support for victims of human trafficking is available.



## 1 in 8

NHS staff in England think they have seen a victim of trafficking in their clinical practice (NHS England, 2016)



# What to do next

- Try to find out more about the situation and speak to the person alone and in private.
- Reassure them that it is safe for them to speak.
- Only ask non-judgmental relevant questions.
- Allow the person time to tell you their experiences do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Do not let concerns you may have about challenging cultural beliefs stand in the way of making informed assessments about the safety of a child, young person or adult.
- Speak to your manager, colleagues or local safeguarding leads for advice.

## **In all cases for children, young people and adults:**

- do not raise your trafficking concerns with anyone accompanying the person
- think about support and referral
- think safeguarding and safety.

# Useful resources

## National helplines

All national helplines are free to call and can provide interpreter services if English is not your first language.

## Modern Slavery helpline

[modernslaveryhelpline.org](https://modernslaveryhelpline.org)  
or phone: 0800 0121 700

## Modern Slavery UK Government resources

[gov.uk/government/collections/modern-slavery](https://gov.uk/government/collections/modern-slavery)

## Forced marriage and honour-based violence

[gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage](https://gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage)

## NHS England Network

[england.nhs.uk/safeguarding/workstreams/modern-slavery-human-trafficking-network](https://england.nhs.uk/safeguarding/workstreams/modern-slavery-human-trafficking-network)

## Human Trafficking Scotland

[gov.scot/policies/human-trafficking](https://gov.scot/policies/human-trafficking)

## Northern Ireland Modern Slavery

[justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/human%20trafficking%20trifold%20leaflet-21.pdf](https://justice-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/justice/human%20trafficking%20trifold%20leaflet-21.pdf)

## Royal College of Nursing (2023) Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

[rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/modern-slavery](https://rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/modern-slavery)

## RCN quality assurance

### Publication

This is an RCN practice guidance. Practice guidance are evidence-based consensus documents, used to guide decisions about appropriate care of an individual, family or population in a specific context.

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### Description

More than 49 million people are trapped in modern slavery across the globe. This guidance has been reviewed and updated to help nurses and midwives identify victims of slavery and help people find the assistance and support they need.

### Evaluation

The authors would value any feedback you have about this publication. Please contact publications.  
[feedback@rcn.org.uk](mailto:feedback@rcn.org.uk) clearly stating which publication you are commenting on.

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