

Children, Young People and Modern Slavery

A guide for professionals

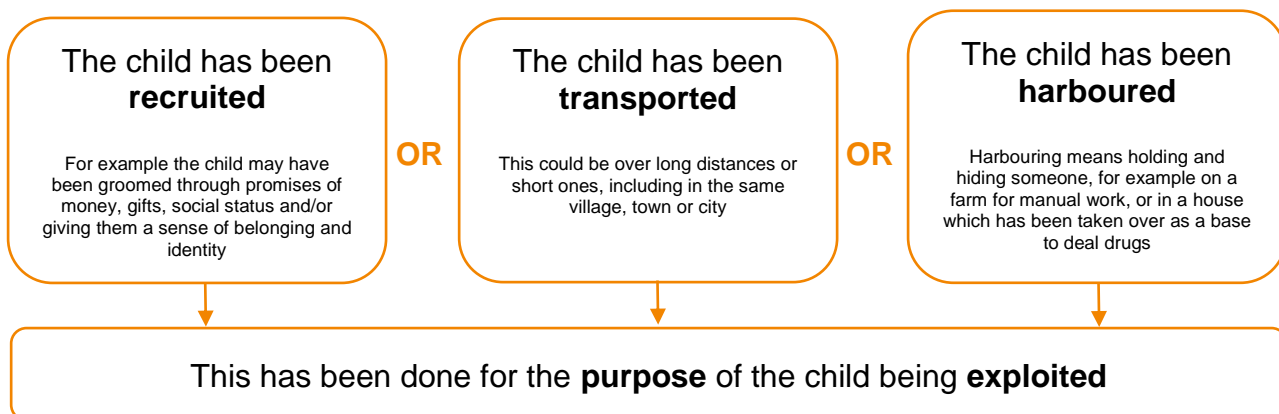
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Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

Understanding Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

Modern Slavery – If a child is treated as if they are ‘owned’ (like a piece of property) by someone or if they are made to work somewhere and are unable to leave then this is called Modern Slavery.

Human Trafficking – A child should be recognised as a trafficking victim if the following two things have taken place:



Trafficking and Modern Slavery are forms of child abuse and are a serious violation of human rights. This abuse can happen anywhere and the number of victims identified has grown each year since 2015.

As with all forms of child exploitation, it involves an imbalance of power between the young person and those who are controlling them (for example because of age or status).

International trafficking - Some children and young people are trafficked internationally into the UK from other countries. These children have often experienced exploitation and abuse in their own country, on the journey and when they arrive into the UK. They are commonly deceived about life in the UK through promises of safety, education and well paid work only to instead experience horrific abuse.

Many young people’s identity documents are created and controlled by their traffickers and they are told that they have debts incurred from bringing them into the country which they need to work to repay. As a result of arriving into a new country, facing language barriers and having little or no support network the young people are often totally reliant on their traffickers.

Domestic trafficking – British children and young people are also targeted for grooming and exploitation and trafficked around the UK. Young people internationally trafficked into the UK can also be re-trafficked within the UK.

Grooming

Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of abuse or exploitation. Children and young people may be groomed online or in person. Anyone could be a perpetrator, even parents or carers.

All children and young people's experiences will be different but perpetrators may use similar strategies to build connections and trust and can play on their needs and vulnerabilities. Anyone can be targeted and perpetrators use power imbalances and a range of techniques to exert control over children and young people including force, threats, coercion and deception.

Forms of child exploitation

Modern slavery of children and young people in the UK can take a variety of forms including:

Sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group forces, manipulates or deceives a child or young person into any sexual activity for their own benefit. It could include the young person being forced or coerced to engage in direct sexual contact or send indecent photographs or videos.

Example: Ali is 16 years old and believes she is in loving relationship with Morgan who is 24. Morgan is controlling and threatening towards Ali, and uses physical abuse to manipulate her. Morgan is involved in arranging parties where sexual exploitation takes place. Morgan regularly transports Ali to these parties and provides her with alcohol while there. One day Ali finds out that Morgan has taken several videos and photographs of her being sexually assaulted at the parties. Morgan threatens to post the photos and videos online if Ali doesn't introduce more young people to him and bring them along to the next party.

Criminal exploitation

Child criminal exploitation is when children and young people are forced or manipulated to commit crimes for the benefit of their exploiter(s). This could include the young person being coerced or forced into drug trafficking, cannabis cultivation, forced begging, money laundering, ATM/credit card theft, pickpocketing or carrying out robberies and acts of violence.

Example: Charlie is 15 years old and is being exploited by an organised crime group to distribute drugs. The group have been using Charlie to move drugs around the local area for several months now. Charlie has been physically assaulted and has now been provided with a train ticket and told to travel to an address in another area. Charlie is fearful of further violence from the perpetrators and feels unable to disclose what is happening.

Financial exploitation

Perpetrators of criminal or sexual exploitation may also financially exploit children and young people, for example by blackmailing them for money. In addition, children and young people can be groomed to hold, store, move or transfer money on behalf of an organised crime group.

Example: Sam is 17 years old and was groomed online via a social media platform Sam was exploited to send indecent images to an adult perpetrator. The perpetrator then blackmailed Sam into sending them increasing amounts of money and further sexual activity.

Forced labour

Forced labour is when a child or young person is forced to work under the menace of any penalty for little or no money. They may be forced to work in environments such as farms, shops, building sites, nail bars, car washes or takeaways.

Example: Vu is 14 years old and from Vietnam. Vu is living with a Vietnamese couple they met recently. Vu regularly appears tired and anxious, struggles to concentrate in school and rarely completes homework. Vu has disclosed working in a nail bar since entering the UK but says they are 'only training' despite being in the nail salon most days.

Forced or child marriage

Forced/child marriage when a child or young person is forced to marry against their will. They are viewed as something to be traded and used for sexual activity and housework.

Domestic servitude

Domestic servitude is when a child is confined to a home to do housework such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare.

Example: When 17 year old Elvira arrived at Heathrow she thought she had escaped the abuse she'd faced as a domestic worker in Qatar. Elvira was taken to a luxury flat in Kensington, where her abuser, the sister of her "madam" in Qatar, made her work 20 hours a day, allowing her only one piece of bread and no wages. She was trapped in a life of servitude, while metres away central London bustled with shoppers.

Signs and indicators

Children and young people who are being exploited may not always appear vulnerable. Changes in young people's behaviour could indicate exploitation. Look for things that don't seem right and listen to your instincts, **if something doesn't feel right, it may not be.**

Some signs that you might notice could include the child or young person:

Physical

- Having unexplained or untreated injuries
- Giving varying accounts for injuries or accounts that do not reflect the injury
- Appearing malnourished, unkempt or dishevelled
- Experiencing sexually transmitted infections or unwanted pregnancies
- Standing out from other family or household members in terms of their presentation and quality of clothing
- Having poor living conditions and staying in environments that are cramped or overcrowded

Travel and movement

- Staying out late or going missing, even for short periods of time
- Being found in areas far from their home
- Being transported to or from the scene of a crime
- Possessing train tickets or other travel documents to areas they have no connection to
- Being found repeatedly 'fare-dodging' outside of their local area
- Travelling in private cars or taxis at unusual times for no known reason
- Being unable to leave the house on their own or having their movements monitored
- Being locked in a room or otherwise having their movement restricted

Behaviour and emotional wellbeing

- Appearing angry, fearful, anxious, withdrawn or confused
- Expressing anger, aggression and overconfidence or not caring what happens to them
- Displaying increasingly disruptive or aggressive behaviour, this could be a sign of trauma
- Experiencing significant changes in their emotional wellbeing
- Becoming secretive about their whereabouts and activities
- Appearing under the control or influence of others

Gifts and unexplained items

- Talking about gifts or money they have received
- Having a new phone or possessing more than one phone
- Having unexplained or out of character acquisition of money, clothes, accessories, credit, jewellery and other items or gifts
- Carrying lots of cash

Education

- Not attending education
- Going missing from their education setting
- Arriving late to school/college or having unexplained absences
- Struggling to concentrate and not completing homework

Communication

- Appearing worried about being away from their phone or controlled by their phone
- Receiving a large number of calls or messages
- Appearing anxious to immediately respond to texts, messages or phone calls
- Using sexual, drug related or violent language that you wouldn't expect them to know
- Avoiding eye contact and letting others talk for them, even when addressed directly
- Giving accounts which seem coached or rehearsed

Other

- Not having access to their identity documents
- Being reluctant or unable to give details of accommodation or other personal details
- Having large, unexplained gaps in their personal history
- Expressing excessive concern about their family (in the UK or their country of origin)
- Unusual sleeping patterns
- Being found begging, in a cannabis factory or cuckooed property.

Please note, this is not an exhaustive list.

Responding to concerns

If you suspect that a child or young person may be a victim of modern slavery:

- Seek support and talk through your worries. Some organisations that can provide advice are listed at the end of this document.
- Remember the child is not to blame. Anyone can be targeted for grooming and exploitation and perpetrators will use a variety of tactics to manipulate, coerce and control victims.
- Think about how to discuss your concerns with the young person – where would be most appropriate for this conversation to take place and who is best placed to initiate the conversation?
- Report your concerns and any evidence or intelligence.

Reporting

Reporting concerns and sharing intelligence:

- Make a **safeguarding referral** to children's social care.
- You can find contact details for your local council's children's social care department via <https://www.gov.uk/report-child-abuse>.
- If you suspect modern slavery, report to the police on **101**.
- In an emergency always contact **999**.
- Contact the **Modern Slavery Helpline** on **08000 121 700**.

Intelligence can also be reported to police using the following websites:

- **Northumbria Police:** <https://beta.northumbria.police.uk>
- **Cleveland Police:** <https://www.cleveland.police.uk>

If you would rather remain anonymous, you can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers online via www.crimestoppers-uk.org or call **0800 555 111**.

National Referral Mechanism

The **National Referral Mechanism (NRM)** is the process used to identify and support victims of trafficking in the UK. The NRM is also a useful tool for disrupting perpetrators of exploitation. To be referred to the NRM the young person first needs to be referred to an organisation with 'first responder' status, for example police, children's social care and some charities.

Statutory agencies (including police and local authorities) have a duty to report suspected trafficking cases under Section 52 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

This means if they are dealing with a potential victim of Modern Slavery or Human Trafficking they **must** refer them.

The referral form can be accessed via this link: <https://www.modernslavery.gov.uk/start>

The importance of multi-agency working

It is important to remember that the NRM is an **evidence gathering process**. A nominated lead agency should make the referral, ensuring that they receive input from all other relevant agencies who have information regarding the child's experiences as a victim. This will often include statutory agencies but it is also vital to include relevant information from third sector partners. Providing more detailed information will help improve decision making and outcomes within the NRM. It also helps to avoid multiple NRM applications being made for the same individual, which can contribute to delays in the system.

Submitting information to the NRM should be an ongoing process. Following completion of the initial referral, any professional working with the child can submit additional information or evidence that would be helpful in making a decision about whether the child is a victim of modern slavery. This could include further indicators that have been observed, disclosures or incidents which have happened since the initial referral. New information should be sent to nationalreferralmechanism@homeoffice.gov.uk.

What does the NRM decision mean?

The decision making process has two steps:

1. A **Reasonable Grounds decision** should be made within five days.

This means '**I suspect but cannot prove**', they are a victim.

2. Following this, a final **Conclusive Grounds decision** should be made.

This means '**It is more likely than not**' they are a victim.

Support for young people

If a child receives a positive Conclusive Grounds decision from the Home Office then they should be provided with access to support to help them recover from their experiences, such as therapy. This support should be provided by social services and the NRM decision should be part of safeguarding decision making.

Criminal decision making

A positive conclusive grounds decision in the NRM is a crucial piece of evidence to guide criminal decision making.

If a person is identified as a victim of trafficking, this should affect the way they are treated if they are arrested or facing charges for a crime committed in connection with their exploitation. In this situation, trafficking victims also have the right to use the Section 45 defence as set out in the **Modern Slavery Act 2015**. It is the responsibility of professionals to identify situations where the Section 45 defence may be relevant as children cannot be expected to understand or recognise that they have been trafficked.

There are some crimes which fall outside of the scope of the Modern Slavery Defence as set out in Schedule 4 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. However, the young person's trafficking status should still be considered as a possible mitigating factor in sentencing decisions.

Reconsideration requests

A negative NRM decision does not mean the child or young person is not a victim of trafficking, it means that on the information available at the time, a balance of probability is not in the favour of them being a victim. First responders are provided with a detailed 'decision-minute' which explains the reasons for the negative decision. The decision can then be challenged via a **reconsideration request**.

The reconsideration request should:

- Provide details of any relevant events which have occurred since the initial referral
- Point out any inappropriate application of guidance or misunderstanding of grooming and exploitation in the decision minutes
- Include any additional trafficking indicators
- Include any views of the young person they want to be taken into account

As a professional, you should also explain to children and their families, (where relevant and appropriate), that they also have the right to legal advice where they are unhappy with a decision. This area of law is overseen by Public Law solicitors. Legal aid may be available for this depending on their circumstances. A directory of reputable Public Law solicitors can be found [here](#).

Note: a child does not have to consent to be referred into the NRM, but once they turn 18, they can withdraw the referral.

Advice and further information

Useful organisations and websites:

- **The Children's Society** – www.childrenssociety.org.uk
- **Modern Slavery Helpline** – www.modernslaveryhelpline.org
- **ECPAT** – www.ecpat.org.uk
- **Unseen** – www.unseenuk.org
- **Stop the Traffik** – www.stopthetraffik.org
- **NSPCC** – www.nspcc.org.uk
- **Hestia** – www.hestia.org
- **Anti-Slavery** – www.antislavery.org