

Child Trafficking and Modern Slavery

Introduction

Human trafficking, is defined in the [UN Protocol on trafficking](#), adopted in 2000, as the acquisition of a person, by means of deception or coercion, for the purposes of exploitation. Human trafficking, or modern day slavery, as it is often referred to, is a crime and safeguarding issue affecting millions across the world and in the United Kingdom. Trafficking can be better understood by reference to the [AMP \(Action, Means, and Purpose\) Model](#) from the Polaris Project.

The British Government estimates that there are around 13000 people in modern day slavery in the UK, a significant number of which are under 18. Nearly 1000 children were referred to British authorities as potential victims of slavery in 2015, a 40% increase on 2014. Legislation was introduced in July 2015 in the form of [The Modern Slavery Act](#), under which the maximum custodial sentence for the most serious offences is life. The legislation created the post of [Anti-Slavery commissioner](#) and placed a duty to notify on specified public authorities, including local authorities to report potential victims of trafficking to the National Crime Agency via the [National Referral Mechanism \(NRM\)](#). Read the Government guidance on the duty [here](#).

Types of Modern Day Slavery

Examples of industries and services where slavery exist in the UK today, the victims of which include children and young people are:

- Sex industry, including brothels;
- Retail – e.g. nail bars, hand car washes
- Factories – e.g. food packing
- Hospitality – e.g. fast-food outlets
- Agriculture – e.g. fruit picking
- Domestic labour – e.g. cooking, cleaning and child minding
- Drugs industry – e.g. cannabis cultivation

Additionally, victims can be forced into criminal activities such as theft or begging.

Who can be affected?

It is an issue that transcends age, gender and ethnicities. It can include victims that have been brought to the UK from overseas or vulnerable people in the UK being forced illegally work against their will. Children and young people have an increased vulnerability to slavery.

Poverty, limited opportunities at home, lack of education, unstable social and political conditions, and war are some of the situations that contribute to trafficking of victims and slavery.

Safeguarding Issues

Slavery can be linked to a number of safeguarding issues, including child sexual exploitation, but normally includes at least one of the following specific situations:

- **Child trafficking** – young people being moved internationally or domestically so that they can be exploited.
- **Forced labour** – victims are forced to work through physical or mental threat, against their will, often very long hours for little or no pay, in conditions that can affect their physical and mental health. They are often subjected to verbal or physical threats of violence against them as individuals or their families.
- **Debt bondage** – victims forced to work to pay off debts that they will never be able to. Debts can be passed down to children. Extreme examples include where a victim may be owned or controlled by an ‘employer’ or sold as a commodity.

Signs and Indicators

Possible signs and indicators that someone is a victim of modern slavery that anyone working with children and young people should be aware of include:

- Physical appearance – poor physical condition, malnourishment, untreated injuries, and looking neglected.
- Isolation – victims may not be allowed out on their own and may appear to be under the control or influence of people accompanying them, with the absence of a parent or legal guardian. They may not interact and be unfamiliar in their local community.
- Poor living conditions – victims may be living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation, with multiple children living and working at the same address/premises.

- Personal belongings – few possessions, wearing the same clothes each day, and no identification documents.
- Restricted Freedom – victims have little opportunity to move freely and may be kept from having access to their passport.
- Unusual travel times – victims may be dropped off or collected from work on a regular basis either very early or late at night.
- Reluctant to seek help – victims may avoid eye contact, appear frightened or hesitant to approach people and have lack of trust or concern about making a report should they be deported or fear of violence on their family.

The property of where a victim of modern slavery may be held could feature bars on the windows, reflective film or coating applied to the glass or permanently closed curtains. The entrance may have CCTV, multiple locks and have a sealed letterbox to prevent use. There may be evidence of services e.g. electricity being sourced from neighbouring premises or directly from power lines.

Criminal Exploitation

County lines is the police term for urban gangs supplying drugs to suburban areas and market and coastal towns using dedicated mobile phone lines or “deal lines”. It involves child criminal exploitation (CCE) as gangs use children and vulnerable people to move drugs and money. Gangs establish a base in the market location, typically by taking over the homes of local vulnerable adults by force or coercion in a practice referred to as ‘cuckooing’.

County lines is a major, cross-cutting issue involving drugs, violence, gangs, safeguarding, criminal and sexual exploitation, modern slavery, and missing persons; and the response to tackle it involves the police, the National Crime Agency, a wide range of Government departments, local government agencies and VCS (voluntary and community sector) organisations. County lines activity and the associated violence, drug dealing and exploitation has a devastating impact on young people, vulnerable adults and local communities

Signs to look out for

A young person’s involvement in county lines activity often leaves signs. A young person might exhibit some of these signs, either as a member or as an associate of a gang dealing drugs. Any sudden changes in a young person’s lifestyle should

be discussed with them. Some indicators of county lines involvement and exploitation are listed below, with those at the top of particular concern:

- Persistently going missing from school or home and / or being found out-of-area;
- Unexplained acquisition of money, clothes, or mobile phones
- Excessive receipt of texts / phone calls
- Relationships with controlling / older individuals or groups
- Leaving home / care without explanation
- Suspicion of physical assault / unexplained injuries
- Parental concerns
- Carrying weapons
- Significant decline in school results / performance
- Gang association or isolation from peers or social networks
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being

Trafficking

Human trafficking involves men, women and children being recruited, harboured or brought into a situation of exploitation through the use of violence, deception or coercion and forced to work against their will. It is a form of modern slavery.

It isn't necessary for someone to have been moved across an international country border for them to be a victim. They can have been moved, harboured and transported within the UK.

When children are trafficked, no violence, deception or coercion needs to be involved: simply bringing them into exploitative conditions constitutes trafficking.

Trafficked people have little choice in what happens to them and often suffer abuse due to violence and threats made against them or their families. In effect, they become commodities owned by traffickers, used for profit.

People can be trafficked for many different forms of exploitation, including:

- **Sexual exploitation** – includes the abuse of children for the production of child abuse images/videos. Take a look at our dedicated Child Sexual Exploitation section for further information.
- **Domestic servitude** – involves a victim being forced to work in usually private households, usually performing domestic chores and childcare duties. Their

freedom may be restricted and they may work long hours often for little or no pay, often sleeping where they work.

- **Forced labour** – victims are forced to work long hours for little or no pay in poor conditions under verbal or physical threats of violence to them or their families. It occurs in various industries including construction, manufacturing, hospitality, food packaging, agriculture, maritime and beauty (nail bars). Often victims are housed together in one dwelling.
- **Criminal exploitation** – exploitation of a person to commit a crime, such as pick-pocketing, shop-lifting, cannabis cultivation, drug trafficking and other similar activities that are subject to penalties and imply financial gain for the trafficker.

Prevention

Children's services and partners across Dorset are working to safeguard young people and build on the existing good work around CSE, to prevent Young People experiencing any form of exploitation. Whilst the most familiar form of exploitation is CSE, we are also working to protect Young People from exploitation in regards to drug dealing, building up drug debts or bonds, being drawn into serious criminality themselves and pressured into carrying weapons or into sexual activity.

Professionals, parents and children themselves may hold vital information around those individuals who are dealing drugs and those children who are being exploited in some way. If this information can be gathered, channelled and properly assessed then we can improve the wellbeing of all children in Dorset. You can help in passing relevant information to agencies who are charged with safeguarding our children, and help us focus on the most vulnerable and target those causing the most harm.

Useful links

- [Modern Slavery Act 2015](#)
- [Modern Slavery Briefing, HM Government, 2014](#)
- [National Referral Mechanism \(NRM\) – National Crime Agency](#)
- [Victims of modern slavery – frontline staff guidance, Home Office, March 2016](#)
- [Report to Parliament from the Anti-Slavery Commissioner, October 2016](#)
- [Modern Slavery – How Britain is leading the fight, Leaflet, Home Office, 2014](#)
- [I am not a slave, Leaflet, Migrant Help](#)
- [Modern Slavery Infographic](#)

- [Royal College of Nursing Guide for Nurses and Midwives – Modern Slavery – 2017](#)