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One Minute Guide: Raising Awareness of Modern Slavery within the Public Sector

What is modern slavery?

Modern slavery is a crime under the [Modern Slavery Act 2015](#) in which people are exploited for criminal gain. It encompasses human trafficking, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and forced labour. Examples include a young person trafficked for sexual exploitation, an adult coerced into domestic servitude or a child used by a criminal gang for begging. The [Home Office Research Report – A Typology of Modern Slavery Offences in the UK](#), published in 2017, provides an insight into the different forms of modern slavery identified in the UK.

Why is awareness of modern slavery important to the Local Authority and other public sector organisations?

Modern slavery is happening in the UK today, but this abusive crime can be difficult to spot and can often go unreported. It is estimated that there are around 13,000 potential victims in the UK alone – some of whom are at risk of their life or will suffer life-long consequences of the abuse. Public sector organisations and their workforce come in regular contact, through service delivery, with children and adults who may be at risk and could be well-placed to recognise and respond to the signs as part of their duty to safeguard. Local Authorities and some other public bodies also have a [Duty to Notify](#) the Home Office of potential victims of modern slavery under the [Modern Slavery Act](#).

Who can be affected?

Modern slavery is a safeguarding issue that transcends age, gender and ethnicity. It can include victims who have been brought into the UK from overseas, trafficked across the country or vulnerable people in the UK being forced to work against their will. 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 or slavery.

What are the signs to look out for?

Victims of modern slavery can be found anywhere but in certain industries there is greater prevalence, such as agriculture, nail bars, car washes and building sites. Indicators of a potential victim can include but are not limited to:

- physical signs of neglect, poor health, abuse, poor hygiene, sexually transmitted infections or unwanted pregnancies;
- psychological signs of trauma, fear, poor mental health or substance abuse;
- going missing or poor school attendance; or

- no access to identifying documents, social isolation, always being accompanied by someone who is not a relative or friend, and distrust of authorities.

Why don't victims self-report?

Some victims of modern slavery are not aware that they are a victim, or if they are, don't believe there is any help or support available to them. They may not have the opportunity, freedom, understanding or the language to make a report. It is likely that they will have a fear of repercussions for both themselves or their families, or the impact on their immigration status or sanctions for being involved in crime. They may blame themselves, not want the stigma attached to being recognised as a victim or have developed a dependence or involvement with the perpetrator. Victims may well be traumatised and there are a number of barriers that could make it difficult for them to come forward. However, this should not stop information being passed on about potential modern slavery and victims to the police and other authorities.

What guidance is there for me?

The Home Office published [guidance](#) in October 2017, in a booklet form, aimed at a broad range of public sector staff, including those working in education, health, local authorities, who could potentially witness indicators of modern slavery. The guidance is intended as a resource providing clear and up to date information on the key facts, and to help public sector workers who may not routinely come across modern slavery recognise the signs and respond so that more victims get help and perpetrators are brought to justice.



How can I find out more?

Aside from reading the [Home Office guidance](#), there is a [short film \(2.5 minutes\)](#) made by the UK Anti-Slavery Unit which identifies how modern slavery relates to public sector workers. There is also information available on the [LSCB website](#). You may also find it helpful to attend a [Modern Slavery Awareness Briefing](#), commissioned as part of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) [Training Programme](#), or undertake the free ECPAT UK e-learning module '[In Your Hands – Safeguarding Child Victims of Trafficking](#)' for which you will need to [register](#). A new elearning module specifically for the Local Authority workforce is due to be published by the Association of the Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) shortly.

What should I do if I believe a child or an adult is a victim of modern slavery?

If there is immediate risk of harm, contact the Police via 999. If there is no immediate risk to the individual, call the Police on 101 or the Modern Slavery Helpline on 08000 121 700. If the victim is a child or young person under the age of 18, you should also contact the Local Authority Child Protection and Assessment Team (CPAT) via CPAT.Referrals@redbridge.gov.uk or by calling 020 8708 3885 (or 020 8708 5897 evenings and weekends). For adults, you should call 020 8708 7333 (or 020 8554 5000 evenings or weekends) or e-mail Adults.Alert@redbridge.gov.uk. The Local Authority will then undertake the necessary enquiries, complete a [MS1 form](#) (Notification of a Potential Victim of Modern Slavery) or the [National Referral Mechanism \(NRM\)](#), as appropriate, and take action to safeguard the victim.