

MODERN SLAVERY

What you need to know

Most of us think of slavery as an issue confined to history, or an issue that only exists in certain countries. But the truth is that slavery is closer than you think and is something that is still happening today.

Modern slavery is a serious and brutal crime in which people are treated as commodities and exploited for criminal gain.

It's an international problem, and due to the nature of the crime, the true extent is unknown. What we do know is that it's a growing issue, affecting men, women and children.

This handout is designed to help you understand what modern slavery is, who is affected, and what you should do if you spot the signs.

WHAT IS MODERN SLAVERY?

Modern slavery is an international crime, affecting an estimated 29.8 million people around the world.

This largely hidden crime transcends age, gender and ethnicity.

There are lots of different types of slavery but, put simply, someone is in slavery if they are:

- Forced to work – through mental or physical threat
- Owned or controlled by an employer, usually through mental or physical abuse, or 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

Examples include:

- Women forced into prostitution
- Children and adults forced to work in agriculture, factories or sweatshops
- And girls forced to marry older men

So, sadly, slavery did not end with abolition in the 19th century. It's an illegal practice that still blights our contemporary world.

WHO IS AFFECTED?

There is no typical victim of slavery.

Because modern slavery takes various forms, it affects males and females of all ages and races.

But there are circumstances that make certain people more vulnerable to this crime.

Poverty, limited opportunities at home, lack of education, unstable social and political conditions, economic imbalances and war – these are just some of the key drivers that contribute to it.

What's more, victims can often face more than one type of abuse and slavery.

Before we continue, let's explore some of the different types of slavery:

CHILD TRAFFICKING

Young people (under 18) are moved either internationally or domestically so they can be exploited.

DEBT BONDAGE

Victims are forced to work to pay off debts that realistically they never will be able to. Low wages and increased debts mean not only have they no hope of paying off the loan, but the debt may be passed down to their children.

FORCED LABOUR

Victims are forced to work against their will, often working very long hours for little or no pay in dire conditions under verbal or physical threats of violence to them or their families.

It can happen in many sectors of our economy, from mining and tarmacking, to hospitality and food packaging.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Victims are forced to perform non-consensual or abusive sexual acts against their will, such as prostitution, escort work and pornography. Whilst women and children make up the majority of victims, men can also be affected.

Adults are often coerced under the threat of force, or another penalty.

CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION

Often controlled and maltreated, victims are forced into crimes such as cannabis cultivation or pickpocketing against their will.

DOMESTIC SERVITUDE

Victims are forced to carry out housework and domestic chores in private households with little or no pay, restricted movement, very limited or no free time and minimal privacy (often sleeping where they work).

HOW TO SPOT THE SIGNS

Victims of modern slavery may be unwilling to come forward to law enforcement because they might not see themselves as victims, or they might fear further reprisals from their abusers.

So you play a key role in preventing this crime by identifying and supporting potential victims.

The signs are often hidden, making it very hard to recognise the victims around us. But there are some common signs which you can be aware of.

NUMBER 1 - PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Victims may show signs of physical or psychological abuse, look malnourished or unkempt, or appear withdrawn.

NUMBER 2 - ISOLATION

Victims may rarely be allowed to travel on their own, seem under the control / influence of others, or rarely interact or appear unfamiliar with their neighbourhood or where they work.

NUMBER 3 - POOR LIVING CONDITIONS

Victims may be living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation, and / or living and working at the same address.

NUMBER 4 – FEW OR NO PERSONAL EFFECTS

Victims may have no identification documents, have few personal possessions and always wear the same clothes day in, day out. What clothes they do wear may not be suitable for their work.

NUMBER 5 – RESTRICTED FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Victims have little opportunity to move freely and may have had their travel documents retained, e.g. passports.

NUMBER 6 – UNUSUAL TRAVEL TIMES

They may be dropped off / collected at work on a regular basis either very early or late at night.

NUMBER 7 – RELUCTANT TO SEEK HELP

Victims may avoid eye contact, appear frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers, and fear law enforcers for many reasons, such as not knowing who to trust or where to get help, fear of deportation, fear of violence to them or their family.

REPORTING SUSPICIONS

If you suspect modern slavery is happening near you, you can report it in a number of ways.

In emergency situations, you should always contact the police.

In the UK, you can also contact the Modern Slavery helpline. It's completely anonymous and calls from landlines and most mobiles are free. **0800 0121 700**

Alternatively, you can report your suspicions online using the dedicated home office website.

<https://modernslavery.co.uk/contact.html>

And finally, you can always speak to your line manager or safety representative if you need more information on the topic of modern slavery.

But remember – if you think slavery is happening, do not attempt to let the victim know you have reported it and do not confront the traffickers. You need to ensure their safety and your own.

FINAL SUMMARY

Your company is committed to the prevention of all types of modern slavery.

This is why they have a clear policy in place.

The policy is designed to prevent exploitation and human trafficking, and to protect the workforce, profits and company reputation.

Your employer takes its responsibilities very seriously, so it's really important that you familiarise yourself with the policy to ensure you play your part.

Remember that you can always speak to your line manager or safety representative for more information and support.

Thank you for reading the handout, and if you do spot something that doesn't seem right, be sure to report your concerns.