



Royal College
of Nursing

2020 | International Year
of the Nurse and Midwife

Modern Slavery and Trafficking

Guidance for nurses and midwives



Over **40 million** people are trapped in modern slavery across the globe

Global Slavery Index, 2019
www.globalslaveryindex.org

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 (2019)

Modern slavery or trafficking is defined in 3 phases

Phase 1

recruitment or acquisition of a man, woman or child.

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.

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

www.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- is withdrawn and submissive, seems afraid to speak to anyone in authority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, including case studies and has further information on modern slavery which is available at:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-slavery-awareness-booklet

The role of the nurse/midwife

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.

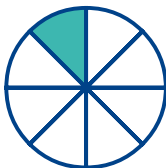
Remember:

- 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.

The RCN has produced a flyer on modern slavery which outlines what modern slavery is, the key signs and what nursing staff should do if they suspect it is happening. Available at: www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/publications/pdf-006745



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

Modern Slavery helpline

www.modernslaveryhelpline.org
or phone: 0800 0121 700

Modern Slavery UK Government resources

www.gov.uk/government/collections/modern-slavery

Forced marriage and honour-based violence

www.gov.uk/guidance/forced-marriage

NHS England Network

www.england.nhs.uk/safeguarding/workstreams/modern-slavery-human-trafficking-network

Human Trafficking Scotland

www.gov.scot/policies/human-trafficking

Northern Ireland Modern Slavery Strategy 2019-2020

www.justice-ni.gov.uk

For more information go to:

www.rcn.org.uk/clinical-topics/modern-slavery

National helplines

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

https://1q7dqy2unor827bqjlsoc4rn-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/For-Survivors_COVID-19-Advice.pdf#page=4 “Safety and wellbeing advice for survivors - national helplines



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