



# One minute guide

## Modern Slavery and the National Referral Mechanism

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### What is Modern Slavery?

Modern slavery is defined within the [Modern Slavery Act 2015](#) and categorises offences of slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking. Modern slavery forces someone into the position of exploitation. This may involve: forced labour (in agriculture, construction, hospitality etc.); domestic servitude; [sham marriage](#) (one party seeks immigration advantage); removal; begging; drug cultivation; forced marriage; illegal adoption; adult sexual exploitation; [child sexual exploitation](#); and organ harvesting. Modern slavery and human trafficking are linked with people smuggling, but there are fundamental differences; people smuggling involves migrants being helped with entry into a State through illegal means.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, human trafficking is defined as a process that is a combination of three basic components:

1. Movement (including within the UK) - WHAT
2. Control, through harm/threat of harm or fraud - HOW
3. For the purpose of exploitation – WHY

Signs that someone is a victim of modern slavery could include: a lack of identity documents or passport; reluctance to give an address or information; lack of basic necessities; little or no money; language barriers; living in insecure or overcrowded accommodation; showing signs of trauma or mental ill health; acting as if they were instructed or coached; others speaking on their behalf; limited social interaction; and/ or limited freedom of movement.

A child or adult has been trafficked if he or she has been moved within a country, town or city, or across borders - whether by force or not - by someone whose intention is to exploit them for their own profit. Any form of [child trafficking](#) is abuse and requires a response. The trafficking of children involves coercion or exploitation by others even when a child appears to be willingly engaged in an act or a situation. Children cannot consent to their own exploitation.

### What is the National Referral Mechanism?

The [National Referral Mechanism \(NRM\)](#) was introduced in 2009 to meet the UK's obligations under the [Council of European Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings \(2012\)](#). At the core of every country's NRM is the process of locating and identifying 'potential victims of trafficking'. It is available to all victims of modern slavery in England and Wales.

The NRM is a victim identification and support process. It is designed to enable agencies including the police, UK Border Agency, local authorities, and non-governmental organisations to co-operate, to share information about potential child and adult modern slavery victims and facilitate their access to advice, accommodation and support.

The NRM includes:

- A framework to identify potential victims of modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT) in the UK;
- A process to ensure that victims receive appropriate support and protection;
- A tool that allows us to monitor and record the scale of MSHT as well as to map themes and trends; and
- A mechanism for informing the national response to MSHT.

## When do we refer?

Under Section 52 of the [2015 Modern Slavery Act](#), if there are signs or indicators of Modern Slavery first responders must submit an NRM referral. The local authority is a [First Responder](#), along with the Police, Probation, [UK Visa and Immigration](#), the [Modern Slavery Human Trafficking Unit](#) and the [Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority](#).

**A child does not need to consent to an NRM referral.**

**Section 45 defence:** Where a child commits an offence and they do so as a direct consequence of being or having been a victim of slavery or trafficking, then section 45 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 provides a defence. This means that the NRM process helps a child to be seen as a victim, and they are less likely to be criminalised as a result of their exploitation. For further information, please see: [Statutory defence for child victims of trafficking and slavery – section 45 Modern Slavery Act 2015](#).

## What should practitioners do?

All practitioners who are concerned that a child or adult may be a possible victim of modern slavery or human trafficking have a responsibility for identifying the person as such and putting them in touch with the responsible authorities and support providers. In Leeds, this means that for:

- Children or young people up to the age of age 18 – practitioners should immediately contact the [Duty and Advice team](#), and the Police on 101 or 999 depending on the urgency of the situation. An NRM form for potential child victims of modern slavery should be completed. The Police and Children's Social Work Service should agree who is best placed to complete the NRM form. The form must be completed for all children, whether they consent or not.
- For adults aged 18 and over – the practitioner should seek the consent of the potential victim for a referral to the NRM. If consent is provided, the practitioner should contact the Police on 101 or 999, depending on the urgency of the situation. A discussion should determine who will complete the NRM form for potential adult victims of modern slavery.
- If an adult does not give consent for an NRM referral, there is a legal Duty to Notify (DtN) and the NRM online form should still be completed – there are mandatory fields to indicate whether or not consent is given. This process does not name the person or provide identifying details. These DtN referrals are required nationally to gain a comprehensive understanding of modern slavery and human trafficking and enable the effective targeting of resources and services.

## For more information

The NRM forms and further information are available from the Government's [Modern Slavery NRM guidance](#). There is also a Modern Slavery [webpage](#) and helpline tel: 08000 121700.

Further information about child trafficking is available from the [one minute guide](#), and the [NSPCC website](#).