

Modern slavery

RCN guide for nurses
and midwives



Royal College
of Nursing

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

(Global Slavery Index, 2016)

Trafficking or modern slavery is defined in three phases

1

recruitment or acquisition of a man, woman or child

2

means ie, through the use of force, deception, or coercion

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

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.



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- is withdrawn and submissive, seems afraid to speak to anyone in authority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.



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 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.

Trust and act on your professional instinct that something is not quite right

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.

Modern slavery

13,000

men, women and children are trafficked for exploitation in the UK

1 in 5

victims report having come into contact with health care services during the time they are trafficked

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

Home Office (2014)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-slavery-strategy

Modern slavery

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

NHS England

www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/safeguarding/our-work/modern-slavery

Draft Northern Ireland Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery Strategy 2016-2017

For further information go to:

www.rcn/modern.slavery

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