



Freephone 24-Hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline: **0808 2000 247**

or visit www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk (access live chat Mon-Fri 3-10pm)

Human trafficking and modern slavery

Refuge supports victims of human trafficking and modern slavery across its national services. Many victims of modern slavery are trafficked into the UK from overseas and many others (including a significant number of British nationals) are trafficked within and across the UK and held in conditions of slavery.

Victims often feel unable to tell anybody what has happened to them because they are afraid – of deportation, the authorities, and their abusers. Traffickers may keep their victims enslaved by telling them they will be arrested if they seek help. Using victims' fear about their immigration status to control them is a common tactic used by traffickers and perpetrators of other forms of gender-based violence. Refuge understands this fear.

Some people see modern slavery as an unfortunate by-product of migration. This is wrong: modern slavery is a crime, it is a violation of a person's human rights and victims need and deserve protection and support.

What is human trafficking and modern slavery?

Slavery was officially abolished many years ago – yet it still goes on today in most countries around the world, including in the UK. So-called 'modern' slavery includes:

Human trafficking, which is the movement of a person from one place to another, within a country or across borders, into conditions of exploitation against their will.

Child trafficking, where children are moved either internationally or domestically so they can be exploited.

Sexual exploitation, where victims are forced to perform non-consensual or 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 with the threat of force or another penalty.

Domestic servitude, where 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.

Early and forced marriage, is when women are married without consent, often while still girls, and forced into sexual and domestic servitude.

Debt bondage, where victims are forced to work to pay off debts which realistically they will never be able to. Low wages mean not only that they cannot ever hope to pay off the loan, but the debt may be passed down to their children.

Forced labour, where victims are forced to work against their will, often working for very long hours, for little or no pay and in dire conditions. They may also be working under verbal or physical threats of violence to them or their families. It can happen in many sectors of our economy, from mining to tarmacking, hospitality and food packaging.

Criminal exploitation, where victims are forced into crimes such as cannabis cultivation or pickpocketing against their will.

Organ trafficking, which involves trafficking people in order to use their internal organs for transplant.