

Modern slavery is a hidden crime, and its victims may be especially isolated during the coronavirus outbreak. It is not the health professional's job to decide if someone is a victim, but if you do have concerns, raise them with your safeguarding lead or contact one of the organisations below.

## WHAT IS MODERN SLAVERY?

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour, and human trafficking. Traffickers prey on the vulnerable, and those who are alone or lack strong support networks.



The 'Modern Slavery Wheel' illustrates the main types of Modern Slavery. It includes the key signs to look out for if you believe someone may be a victim. You can find it here: [www.rcn.org.uk/-/media/royal-college-of%20nursing/documents/publications/2018/may/pdf-006745.pdf](http://www.rcn.org.uk/-/media/royal-college-of%20nursing/documents/publications/2018/may/pdf-006745.pdf)

## MODERN SLAVERY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

During the pandemic, criminal gangs may exploit people's vulnerabilities, such as sudden unemployment or loss of earnings, by drawing them in to Modern Slavery.

Victims who are living in secure accommodation may be feeling particularly anxious and lonely, as a result of social distancing. Some of them may feel so desperate that they decide that life will be better if they return to the people who were exploiting them.

## SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF MODERN SLAVERY

### Adults

Adult victims can access a range of health services, including a GP, NHS 111, and A&E.

If they give their consent to enter the National Referral Mechanism, they can access a wider range of support.

### Children

Support for child victims of Modern Slavery is provided through Local Authorities. Any potential child victim must be referred to local children's services urgently, and a referral made to the NRM, once the child is safeguarded.

The Royal College of Nursing has produced this useful pocket guide, [Modern Slavery and Trafficking: Guidance for Nurses and Midwives](#), to help staff identify victims of slavery and help people find the assistance and support they need.

## THE NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM

The [National Referral Mechanism](#) helps to identify victims of modern slavery, and refers them to the organisations that can help them. Victims receive safe and secure accommodation, financial support, and physical and psychological medical care.

Healthcare staff cannot refer a person to the NRM directly; they should contact a First Responder organisation (such as the police), or the Modern Slavery Helpline (see below).

The [National Referral Mechanism Handbook](#) was published in January 2022, and has a dedicated healthcare chapter.

## HOW TO GET HELP

If you, or someone you know, is in immediate danger, you should call 999 and ask for the police.

If you are being trafficked, or suspect someone you know is being trafficked, contact a First Responder, such as the police.

You can also call the 24 hr **Modern Slavery Helpline** on **08000 121 700**. The Helpline's trained Advisors can help you access services that can help.

More information is available here: <https://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org>

**Doctors of the World** offer health care to excluded people, such as asylum seekers and undocumented migrants. They also have advice on staying safe during the pandemic. <https://www.doctorsoftheworld.org.uk>.

The Home Office updated its [Statutory Guidance on Modern Slavery](#) in March 2022.



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