



Modern slavery

A young man from Eastern Europe was looking for a new start in life. One day he met someone who said that he could get him a job in a factory abroad where he'd earn a good wage and be able to build the life that we wanted. He said that there was lots of work and that there would be a job and accommodation waiting for him.

The man thought about it for a while and then decided to take up the offer.

But when he arrived, he found that he'd been tricked. The traffickers took his passport and held him captive. He was physically threatened and forced to work as a cleaner for virtually no money. His captors also made him steal petrol, make false benefit claims and open bank accounts in his name which were then used for illegal purposes by his captors.

Unfortunately, stories like this are not uncommon. Let's have a look at some of the ways victims are forced into modern slavery and how they're exploited.

Victims of forced labour are often, but not always, trafficked from poorer countries. They're usually threatened with physical violence if they don't cooperate, or sometimes the traffickers threaten their families in their home countries instead.

Bonded labour occurs when labour is demanded as a means of repayment for a 'debt', a debt which the victim has usually been tricked into.

Many victims of bonded labour are forced into domestic servitude and made to do household chores, while working for little or no pay, being poorly treated, and without access to things like health care.

Bonded labour is also used to sexually exploit women, young girls, boys and men.

Victims are often recruited with promises of well-paid work abroad, but when they arrive, they're forced to work in the sex industry to pay off their debt. The so called 'debt', is said to come from things like the victim's recruitment, transportation and upkeep expenses.



Victims are often threatened with being beaten, or worse, and they feel that there's no way out other than by complying.

Not all victims of sexual exploitation are trafficked from abroad, however. Many are nationals who are groomed, sometimes drugged, and usually threatened in some way to make them compliant.

Criminal exploitation involves taking advantage of vulnerable people and forcing them into criminal activities such as theft, benefit fraud, or cultivating drugs like cannabis.

There are millions of victims of modern slavery in the world today who are working as forced or bonded labourers, being sexually exploited, or are being made to commit crimes for others, and they're being abused in our communities right now, and often right under our noses. So here are some of the things to look for which could help you identify a victim of modern slavery.

There may be signs of malnutrition and psychological or physical abuse.

As victims are likely to live in dirty, overcrowded accommodation they may appear unkempt and wear the same clothes every day.

They often have few or no personal possessions.

They may be withdrawn and allow others to speak for them.

They're rarely allowed to be on their own so they're usually accompanied when travelling and dropped off and collected from work.

Modern slavery is a global problem and while some victims are trafficked to affluent parts of the world, others are exploited in their own countries, for instance, by being forced to work in the fishing, agricultural or manufacturing industries.

The goods they produce can then end up in our shops and factories, either by being supplied directly or through a chain of producers, manufacturers and suppliers.



The longer the supply chain is, the more opportunities there are for exploitation to occur, or to go unnoticed.

Thoroughly checking supply chains and making sure you know who's involved in them, significantly reduces the potential for exploitation and also lessens the risk of organisations being implicated in modern slavery because they failed to take adequate precautions to prevent it.

If you see signs of modern slavery in an individual, or suspect it's occurring where you work, or within a supply chain, you should report it to someone who can investigate further. There are confidential online forms and phone numbers, or you might be able to use your organisation's whistleblowing procedures.

Many organisations now have a modern slavery policy which states their approach to ensuring that slavery and human trafficking are not taking place within the organisation or its supply chains.

When young children learn about the slave trades of the 17th and 18th centuries, one question they often ask is, 'How could anyone let this happen'?

The fight to eradicate slavery in the 21st century is a fight to win back the freedom for those who are currently enslaved, to prevent others from becoming victims and to make sure the children of the future don't have to ask the same question.