

Modern slavery and human trafficking

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Modern slavery

Modern slavery includes:

- human trafficking
- slavery
- servitude
- forced or compulsory labour

Victims of modern slavery are deceived and coerced into abusive situations which they cannot escape. A person is in slavery if they are:

- forced to work through mental and/or physical threat
- owned or controlled by an 'employer', usually through mental or physical abuse
- dehumanised and treated as a commodity or bought and sold as property
- physically constrained to have restrictions placed on their freedom of movement

Human trafficking

Human trafficking is the fastest growing form of slavery today. It can include movement of a person from one place to another with deception or coercion, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability into conditions of exploitation, including:

- sexual exploitation
- forced or compulsory labour
- domestic servitude / slavery
- exploitation of human tissue (organ harvesting)
- benefit fraud (National Insurance details and ID cards are taken from victims and used to claim benefits)

Human Trafficking does not have to involve persons from abroad or movement across a border. A person can be a UK National and be trafficked around the UK.

Identifying victims

Victims often do not recognise or realise that they are victims, which can make it very difficult to identify them. Common signs that a claimant may be a victim of human trafficking or slavery include:

- employed for no or minimal wages
- residing in communal accommodation
- identity documents held by their landlord or employer

- applications for National Insurance numbers or benefits facilitated by a third party
- always accompanied by a third party who answers questions on behalf of the claimant
- groups of people of the same nationality whose entry to the UK and or employment seems to be controlled by a third party
- common mobile numbers or addresses from apparently unrelated individuals

DWP Support

The DWP aim is to identify victims of modern slavery and human trafficking at the earliest opportunity by gathering information and directing them to the agencies who are able to support them.

If you suspect a claimant may be a victim of modern slavery, take appropriate action to refer them.

Universal Credit staff have a duty to protect vulnerable people and should be alert to possible signs of harm and abuse. If necessary, the appropriate authorities must be alerted to safeguard the claimant, their children or anyone they come into contact with.

If the claimant thinks they are in immediate danger, they must be advised to contact the police immediately.

If staff believe someone is in immediate danger, they should alert their manager and call the emergency services.

There are full instructions for DWP staff on how to refer potential victims.