

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 from which they cannot escape. A person is in slavery if they are:

- forced to work through mental 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 or to have restrictions placed on their freedom of movement

Victims of Modern Slavery who have been identified by the Home Office may be eligible for subsistence payments through the Victim Care Contract.

For the purpose of Universal Credit, these payments are disregarded. A benefit claim can be made while the claimant is receiving subsistence payments.

Human trafficking

Human trafficking is the fastest growing form of slavery today. It can include movement of a person from one place to another by deception or coercion, abuse of power or because the person is in a position of vulnerability – for the purpose of exploitation. This may be due to:

- sexual exploitation
- forced or compulsory labour
- domestic servitude or slavery
- exploitation of human tissue, organ harvesting
- benefit fraud, National Insurance details and Identity 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 wages 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 their behalf
- 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 must protect vulnerable people and 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 a claimant thinks they are in immediate danger, they must be advised to contact the police immediately.

If an agent believes someone is in immediate danger, they must alert their manager and call the emergency services.

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