

## Information Sheet – Trafficking and Modern Slavery

United Nations figures suggest there are over 40 million people globally being exploited or trafficked at this time. UK Government data in 2014 suggested there were between 10,000 and 13,000 slaves in the UK however in 2018 the National Crime Agency and the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner stated they believed the true number of victims to be much higher. Last year 7,000 people entered the government system seeking support as victims of slavery. This is the highest number ever demonstrating that this is a growing problem which is now affecting all cities, towns and villages.

Trafficking and modern-day slavery is caused by numerous complex issues but at its core are the criminals who exploit the weak and vulnerable for huge profit. Globalisation and a demand for cheap and fast goods, migration caused by war and famine and changes in the way people are employed and paid make it easier for criminals to take advantage of those seeking a better life.

Modern slavery takes many different forms, from sexual exploitation, to forced or coerced labour, organ harvesting and criminal exploitation. It affects rural agricultural workers, seafarers and fishers, domestic workers in homes and people engaged in prostitution in our towns and cities.

Victims of slavery can be men, women or children. In the UK victims come from a variety of nationalities, religions and ethnic backgrounds. In 2018 victims came from 130 different countries with the UK being the most common nationality. This demonstrates that this is a crime that not only affects people who have recently arrived but people who were born here. The rise in the figures suggests it is likely that someone close to your local community is being exploited and may need your help.

Victims of slavery may not be able to speak up for themselves, they may not trust the police or other state agencies and in some cases, victims do not even realise they are in an exploitative situation. Whatever the circumstances, victims are vulnerable people. There is therefore a need for us within the Catholic Church safeguarding community to help, support and protect them.

No one case is identical to another and no one victim is the same as another, but below are some typical indicators which *may* suggest that someone has been trafficked or is being exploited:

- Fearful of police/authorities.
- Fearful of the trafficker, believing their life or the lives of family members are at risk if they escape
- Show signs of physical and psychological trauma e.g. anxiety, lack of memory of recent events, bruising, untreated conditions
- Anxious about telling others of their situation
- Be unaware they have been trafficked and believe they are simply in a bad job
- Have limited freedom of movement
- Look malnourished or unkempt
- Be unpaid or paid very little
- Have limited access to medical care
- Seem to be in debt to someone

- Have no passport or mention that someone else is holding their passport

People who have been trafficked may be severely traumatised and could be suffering from mental health issues. It is therefore important that as professional safeguarders, we take steps to keep the potential victim, the wider community and ourselves safe. You may need to initially consider if it is safe for you to step in to deal with the situation. You may find that the person does not speak English as a first language or does not readily want help from you or others. They may deny they are in any form of danger and may not disclose the problems they face when spoken to.

If you or others suspect a person is a victim of modern slavery or are approached by someone seeking help, then deal with this as a safeguarding matter and treat the potential victim as a vulnerable child or adult. Before acting ensure it is safe for you and others to do so. If possible, listen to the account given and record what is said. If an interpreter is required, try to use an independent person not associated with the victim. Try to ascertain what the person wants as they may not be ready to leave their trafficker or even know they are being exploited. If the person is in immediate danger and it is safe to do so, take them to a place of safety and report the matter to the police.

If the person is safe and requires advice there are many organisations, professionals and experts working within modern slavery arena who can assist you including your diocesan safe guarding coordinator or others within their office. One organisation who can help is the Santa Marta Group (SMG) which was established by the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales. This is a unique initiative created between senior Church and Law Enforcement leaders which works to raise public awareness, educate and protect the vulnerable, support those who have fallen into slavery and help agencies prosecute those responsible for this heinous crime.

For more information on the work of the SMG can be found on our website at [www.santamartagroup.com](http://www.santamartagroup.com)

Further information on modern slavery can be found by visiting the following websites;

[www.modernslaveryhelpline.org](http://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org)

[www.gla.gov.uk](http://www.gla.gov.uk)

[www.salvationarmy.org.uk/modern-slavery](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/modern-slavery)