

Modern slavery introduction

This page is from APP, the official source of professional practice for policing.

First published 28 July 2015 Updated 18 December 2019

Written by College of Policing

5 mins read

The [**Modern Slavery Act 2015**](#) encompasses two key offences, which are:

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

These are detailed in [**The Act part 1**](#).

Slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour

A person commits this offence if they:

- hold another person in slavery or servitude and the circumstances are such that the person knows or ought to know that the other person is held in slavery or servitude
- require another person to perform forced or compulsory labour and the circumstances are such that the person knows or ought to know that the other person is being required to perform forced or compulsory labour

Human trafficking

A person commits this offence if they arrange or facilitate the travel of another person with a view to that person being exploited. It is irrelevant whether the person, adult or child, consents to the travel.

Modern slavery concerns the [**exploitation**](#) of people who are coerced, deceived, forced into, or expected to accept, a life of abuse, servitude, inhumane and degrading treatment.

People who become victims of modern slavery are exploited for many reasons including sex, labour, organ donation, domestic servitude, financial benefit to the exploiter, and other criminal

purposes. They may become victims through circumstance or association, and are vulnerable.

For the exploiters, modern slavery is a means of financial gain, and of exerting power and control over another human being who is used as a commodity. It is a profitable method of criminal activity for organised crime groups. Victims are often paid less than the minimum wage but do not recognise that they are exploited because the sum is more than they would otherwise be paid in their home country.

Meaning of exploitation

Section 3 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 defines a person as a victim of exploitation if one or more of the following apply to them:

- slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour
- sexual exploitation
- removal of organs
- securing services etc by force, threats or deception
- securing services etc from children and vulnerable persons

If a person acts with the intention of committing one or more of the above offences, including by aiding, abetting, counselling or procuring, they are guilty of perpetrating modern slavery.

The consent of a person (whether an adult or a child) to exploitation is not relevant in determining whether or not a person has been exploited.

The modern slavery of children is child abuse, and the correct safeguarding protocols and procedures must be followed.

Investigations into modern slavery offences must be victim-focused but must also maximise the opportunities to identify and successfully prosecute, or otherwise disrupt, those responsible. The primary objective is to safeguard and support victims.

APP on modern slavery explains how to identify modern slavery, its scope, and the legislation currently available to investigate and prosecute relevant offences. It also directs police officers and staff to relevant charities and non-governmental organisations which are equipped to provide support to victims in partnership with the police service and wider law enforcement.

For case studies of modern slavery investigations, refer to the [**Knowledge Hub Modern Slavery community**](#) (this link is available to authorised users who are logged on to the Knowledge Hub).

Tags

Modern slavery