

Victim and witness strategy

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The purpose of a modern slavery investigation is to safeguard and protect the welfare of the victim or witness by reducing the risk of harm to them, improving their safety, health and wellbeing and enhancing their trust and confidence in the police so that they feel **able to disclose**. Victims and witnesses may feel more able to do this when offenders have been arrested.

Officers should conduct a risk assessment of children and adults, and consider **special measures** that may be needed to support a victim or witness in giving evidence at court. If the victim or witness wishes to return to their home country, officers should consider making arrangements with the police or third sector organisations in the home country to provide victim or witness support and care. Ongoing contact with the victim or witness should be made if they wish to support criminal proceedings in the UK. Early applications may be needed to enable them to give evidence through a TV link from their home country.

It is important that all victims and witnesses, child and adult, are clear about who will be hearing their evidence in court.

For further information see:

- [**APP Investigation, Working with victims and witnesses**](#)
- [**Crown Prosecution Service: Safeguarding Children as Victims and Witnesses**](#)
- [**Human Trafficking Foundation: Trafficking Survivor Care Standards**](#)

Care

Multi-agency reception centres can be used to provide care to victims and witnesses. For information on how to establish these, contact the MSHTU tactical advisors on +44 (0)84 4778 2406. The following should be arranged for and provided.

Medical assistance

- Adult victims **must consent** in writing before a medical examination takes place so that the results of the examination can be disclosed to the police service.
- A child cannot be forced to undergo a medical examination if they refuse consent, either personally or via a parent, appropriate adult or child advocate. The purpose of and need for the medical examination should be explained to them in a sensitive and appropriate manner. It should also be explained that the results of the examination will be shared with other agencies to help keep them safe. The results will be disclosed to the police service automatically.
- Victims of sexual assault or exploitation should be referred to a sexual assault referral centre (SARC) for a full examination. This includes those who are or may be pregnant, or have experienced a forced abortion.
- Victims may be experiencing mental ill health, for example, **Stockholm syndrome**, trauma, post-traumatic stress, and may require counselling.
- Consider a forensic medical examination for all victims to capture older injuries.

Place of safety for potential victims

- When identifying accommodation for victims, officers should consult with The Salvation Army to decide whether it would be best for victims to be housed locally or elsewhere. Housing victims locally may expose them to risk from perpetrators of modern slavery, while accommodation elsewhere may hamper the effectiveness of the **investigation**.
- Victims may use mobile telephones given to them by their exploiters, and reveal the address of their safe accommodation. This must be carefully managed and prevented, as it would expose the victim and others to greater risk.

Suitable clothing

- Only seize the victim's clothing for forensic examination when suitable alternatives become available.
- Ensure that suitable alternative clothing is provided.
- This must be basic and standard, for example, from charity shops, to avoid allegations of inducing the victim.
- Do not replace the victim's clothing with forensic suits or prisoner clothing.

Toiletries and sanitation

- Victims may not have been allowed to wash. Ensure that facilities are provided where appropriate.

Food and drink

- It is possible that a victim has been living on a poor diet. If malnutrition is suspected, seek advice **before** providing food. Incorrect initial feeding could cause serious medical consequences (refeeding syndrome).
- **Do not** offer a rape or sexual assault victim food or drink before a medical examination.

Religious needs

- Consider provision of a suitable room and facilities for worship.

Transport

- Avoid transporting victims far away from the local area in the first instance, as this may hamper the effectiveness of the investigation.
- Do not give the victim finance to arrange their own transport, for example, money for train tickets. It is best to provide transport directly.
- Use different transport for suspects and victims to avoid risk of evidential cross-contamination.

Ongoing and consistent victim support from partner agencies should be arranged by the police service. Officers must, however, also maintain regular contact with the victims and ensure face-to-face meetings take place when appropriate.

Charities and non-governmental organisations

To provide victim and witness care in modern slavery investigations, partnership working and relationship building with charities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is important. Victims may be more likely to confide in staff from these organisations in private rather than in a joint interview with staff and police officers. Partnership working also allows officers to further invest in case building, thereby increasing the likelihood of a successful prosecution.

It is important, however, that the work of charities and NGOs with victims is regulated and monitored. It is recommended that a memorandum of understanding be agreed between the police

force and supporting organisations to clarify roles and responsibilities, and to ensure that correct procedures are followed. As certain charities and NGOs are more effective and reputable than others, they should be selected carefully according to the specific needs and circumstances of the victim(s) and the reputation of the organisation. Guiding a victim to an effective organisation can encourage them to assist with the investigation. For information on local agencies, contact your local authority.

Charities and NGOs overseas are able to work in partnership with, and provide investigative support to, the police. They can also help victims after they return to their home country.

Support leaflets

The UK government and partner agencies have produced leaflets in different languages to offer advice and support to victims and witnesses of modern slavery offences, which can be distributed as part of victim and witness care.

Ministry of Justice

Support for victims of human trafficking – available in Albanian, Czech, English, French, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Luganda, Mandarin, Polish, Romanian, Slovakian, Vietnamese, Yoruba.

Department of Justice Northern Ireland

Human Trafficking: Know Your Rights – available in English, Chinese (Cantonese), Chinese (Mandarin), Spanish, French, Romanian, Czech, Polish, Urdu.

ECPAT UK

Advice on obtaining compensation for children trafficked into the United Kingdom – available in Arabic, Chinese, Czech, Edo, English, Farsi, French, Kurdish, Pashto, Romanian, Slovakian, Vietnamese.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority – available in English.

Victims of Human Trafficking and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme.

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)

Information for victims of human trafficking – available in Czechoslovakian, English, Lithuanian, Mandarin, Polish, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Urdu.

Tags

Modern slavery