



How can we recognise modern slavery?

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There is no typical victim or single type of modern slavery.

There might be someone trapped in a private home on your street, in a car wash nearby, or cleaning your office each evening.

Modern slavery can take many forms, including forced sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, county lines drug smuggling or forced labour on farms, in food processing, on construction sites, in shops, nail bars, car washes, hospitality or manufacturing.

What does modern slavery look like?

Modern slavery doesn't always look the same.

You may have walked past someone being forced to beg and then hand over their takings. You could have been sitting next to a child on a train who's involved in county lines drug trafficking. Or perhaps you've been served in a restaurant, had your nails done or your car washed by someone who has had their passport taken and has to hand over most of their wages to their abuser. How do you know who picked or packed your fresh flowers or fruit and veg and how they are being treated? Any one of these seemingly trivial day to day events could involve a victim of modern slavery.

How can someone control another person in that way?

Exploiters could be individuals or well organised gangs - either way they are well practised and use a range of methods to control victims, including:

- actual violence or threats of violence toward them or their loved ones
- substance addiction
- debt bondage
- withholding identity documents and controlling bank accounts
- deceit and coercion so victims don't realise they are being exploited and controlled
- creating a fear of authority so victims don't know where to go/who to turn to.

As a result, victims may hide the signs themselves out of shame, fear of retribution or fear of the authorities. Or, they may not seek help because they don't see themselves as a victim or they lack knowledge about their rights.

Signs to look out for

It can be incredibly hard to spot modern slavery. There can be many signs or few and they can be different for every situation. Some clues include:

- **Physical appearance** - signs of malnutrition, being frightened or withdrawn, having injuries, being unwashed, wearing the same clothes every day.
- **Few or no personal effects** - having few or no personal belongings or documentation, no money, little or no food, little or unsuitable clothing.

- **Isolation and control** - workers rarely on their own and appear under the control or influence of others who speak on their behalf, interpret for them, present their documents or take them to and from work.
- **Reluctance to seek help** - workers avoid eye contact, appear afraid to talk, generally fearful or reject help when offered.

Many exploiters do their best to ensure there are no obvious signs and that their slaves look presentable. Sometimes the clues are in the 'absence of normal' instead. For example, if there are signs of a co-worker regularly bathing or shaving at work, or perhaps they never share personal information, never have any weekend plans or appear to have no life outside work.

Where might we encounter victims of modern slavery?

There are many situations in our day to day lives where victims of modern slavery may be closer than we realise. Here are just some of the ways we can all be vigilant:

- Volunteers working in projects for vulnerable and destitute people, such as food banks and homeless shelters, should understand the signs to look out for when dealing with service users. It is not uncommon for potential victims to use the support provided by such projects.
- People working in cleaning, social care, hospitality agriculture, harvesting and food processing can be alert to warning signs among co-workers.
- **We can all be alert to unusual activity in our neighbourhood: young people making excessive and unexplained outings; comings and goings to a property at all hours of day and night; high levels of condensation on windows and constantly covered/blacked out windows; concerns about delivery drivers and door to door sellers or signs of people living in squalid, overcrowded or unsuitable conditions or on sites such as car washes.**

This introduction to Identifying Modern Slavery is taken from [The Clewer Initiative website](#).