

The National Referral Mechanism

A guide for parents

What is the NRM?

The NRM or 'National Referral Mechanism' is a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking and Modern Slavery.

Through this process it should ensure that victims receive support and that their experiences are recognised.

What is human trafficking?

A child should be recognised as a trafficking victim if the following two things have taken place:

1.

The child has been **recruited** (for example through promises of money, gifts, social status and/or giving them a sense of belonging and identity – we call this '**grooming**');

OR

the child has been **transported** from A to B (this could be over long distances or short ones, including in the same village, town or city);

OR

the child has been **harboured**. Harbours means holding and hiding someone, for example on a farm for manual work, or in a house which has been taken over as a base to deal drugs from (often called a 'trap house').

2.

This has been done for the **purpose of being exploited**.

So for example, a young person is sent on a train from one place to another to transport and deliver drugs. We call this **criminal exploitation**.

Another example might include a young person's bank account being used to hold money which has been gained illegally. We call this **financial exploitation**.

An example of **labour exploitation** may include a young person being made to 'work' without being paid.

Or **sexually exploited** as they have been forced to have sex with one or more people.

As with all child exploitation, this involves an imbalance of power between the young person and those who are controlling them (for example because of age or status).

If a child is treated as if they are 'owned' (like a piece of property) by someone or if they are made to work somewhere and are unable to leave then this is called Modern Slavery.

It is important to note that any child, from any background can be groomed into exploitation. There is no shame in this, however the important thing is to spot the signs and report it to make sure the child gets the right support. The NRM is not an alternative to the normal safeguarding procedures, rather the NRM process should complement these. Therefore reporting concerns to the police and your local social services is still crucial.

The NRM referral process

Parents cannot make NRM referrals themselves but certain organisations such as the police and social care, have a duty to make a referral to the Home Office if they suspect someone could be a victim of human trafficking. The professionals who have a duty to make a referral are called **first responders**.

- If signs of trafficking (also known as indicators) are present, this should be enough for a first responder to make a referral to the Home Office.
- The Home Office will then make a decision to decide if that person should be recognised as a victim of trafficking.
- Some charities can also make NRM referrals and can provide you with advice. For example you can call the [NSPCC helpline](#) or the [Modern Slavery helpline](#) for support.

What does the NRM decision mean?

The decision making process has two steps:

1. A **Reasonable Grounds decision** should be made within five days. This means '**suspect but cannot prove**', they are a victim.
2. Following this, a final **Conclusive Grounds decision** should be made. This means '**It is more likely than not**' they are a victim.

Additional information can be sent to the Home Office up until they make their final Conclusive Ground decision. Any relevant new information will help them with their decision. While parents cannot make an NRM referral, you can send in new information after the referral. We would encourage for this to be done in partnership with the person or organisation who initially made the referral, if possible. New information should be sent to nationalreferralmechanism@homeoffice.gov.uk.

The Children's Society

If a person is identified as a victim of trafficking, this should affect the way they are treated if they are arrested or facing charges for a crime committed, because the young person was being exploited. In this situation trafficking victims also have the right to use a legal defense called the Modern Slavery Defense and should discuss this with their lawyer.

If a child receives a positive Conclusive Grounds decision from the Home Office then they should be provided with access to support to help them recover from their experiences, such as therapy. This support should be provided by social services and the NRM decision should be part of their safeguarding decision making. As a parent you can use the positive decision to advocate for support from social services. Your child may also be able to access the support from the [Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship Service](#).

If your child is seeking asylum or protection in the UK then the NRM decision may be relevant to this. In some cases a positive NRM decision may lead the Home Office to grant your child discretionary leave to remain in the UK. It is important that you involve your child's immigration solicitor at the earliest opportunity, ideally before the NRM has been submitted. They can then provide advice on the NRM and its connection to your child's protection claim.

What if you are not happy with the NRM decision?

You or your child are entitled to ask for the NRM decision to be reconsidered by the Home Office if you are not happy with it. You also have the right to legal representation to challenge the decision and this would need to be done by a Public Law solicitor (legal aid may be available for this depending on your circumstances). You can find a Public Law solicitor [here](#).

Where to get help

To get help or talk through any concerns you have you can call the Modern Slavery Helpline on **08000 121 700** or the NSPCC helpline on **0808 800 5000**.

If your child doesn't want to talk to you about their situation, or even if they do let them know that they can always call Childline on **0800 1111** or can chat to them online, with details provided [here](#). In some areas of the UK children can access the support of the Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship Service. To find out if your child can receive this support you can call Barnardo's 24 hour support line on **0800 043 4303**.

If you are concerned that your child is at risk of harm, please call the police on 101 or 999 in an emergency and explain you are concerned your child is being trafficked.

We would also encourage you to call your local social care team, details are available on your local council website. You can find your local council [here](#).