

Guidance: National Referral Mechanism

Modern slavery is a complex crime and may involve multiple forms of exploitation. It encompasses human trafficking, slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour.

1. What is the NRM?

- The National Referral Mechanism is the national framework for identifying and referring victims of *modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support.
- The Single Competent Authority (SCA) administers it, which is part of the Home Office.

2. What is a First Responder?

- The people who can make a referral to the NRM are known as '**first responders**'.
- Some statutory and non-statutory organisations are designated as '**first responders**'. Only staff at designated first responder organisations can make referrals (see [NRM guidance: section 4](#)) – this includes the Local Authority and Police.
- You can still report modern slavery if you are not a first responder via the helpline on 0800 0121 700 or [report it online](#) (via modernslaveryhelpline.org).

3. NRM referral or a Duty to Notify referral (DtN)

- The [online referral system](#) is to be used for referrals into the NRM and for Duty to Notify referrals (DtN).
- The difference between an NRM referral and a DtN referral relates to the consent of the adult involved.
- If the potential victim is under 18, an NRM referral must be made – children cannot be referred in using a DtN referral.
- **Child victims do not have to consent** and must first be safeguarded and then referred into the NRM process.
- Consent is required for an adult to be referred to the NRM. If an adult does not consent to enter the NRM, a DtN referral should be completed.
- Where an adult lacks capacity then a [Best Interests Decision](#) should be made.

4. When do I refer into the NRM / notify the Home Office?

If you have 'a reasonable cause to believe that you may have encountered a victim of Modern Slavery' then you must notify the Home Office.

There are two elements to consider:

1. The fact that you may have encountered a victim of Modern Slavery is a LOW threshold.
2. Modern Slavery is a serious crime and victims are likely to suffer or have suffered significant harm. The information in the notification to the Home Office should therefore reflect the gravity of these concerns.

[See: The components of modern slavery](#)

- **Referring a potential victim can give them access to support (such as counselling, housing and legal advice).**
- [Section 45](#) is a defence available for a person (adults and children) who plead they have committed a criminal offence, because they were compelled to do so by virtue of slavery or exploitation.)

5. How do I refer into the NRM?

- If you suspect a child or adult may have been victim of modern slavery you should speak to your manager and make a referral to the MASH who will guide you through the process.
- They will also consider whether a referral needs to be made any other services.
- Once a referral has been made, trained decision makers will assess and make a decision on whether an individual is a victim of trafficking or modern slavery.

Reasonable Grounds (RG):

- NRM decision makers, the Single Competent Authority (SCA) and Immigration Competent Authority (IECA) now have to consider whether there are reasonable grounds to believe, based on objective factors, that a person is a victim of modern slavery or human trafficking
- This replaces the previous “suspect but cannot prove” RG threshold.
- It is therefore essential that when policing (or any other First Responder) makes an NRM referral they include objective evidence to support the referral.

6. Things to remember.

- Where there are concerns for a potential victim under 18 years of age, the Local Authority should be completing an NRM referral.
- You **do not need consent** to send a referral for any potential victim **under 18 years** of age.
- If you are working with an adult or young person **over the age of 18 years** old, and believe them to be a potential victim, **you will need consent** to send a referral to NRM. **If no consent given, submit DtN referral** instead. If the adult **lacks capacity** to consent, then a [Best Interests Decision](#) should be made.
- Consideration to the information that is being shared within the referral and ensuring that it is factual, and specific in highlighting areas of potential exploitation.
- If a case is due in court it is important to communicate dates to the SCA so they can liaise with defence.

7. Further information and resources

- [NRM Guidance and online form](#) – also contact via email or call 0207 0355 689
- [NCLCC - National Referral Mechanism - Awareness Video](#)
- [NCLCC Section 45 Defence awareness video](#)
- The Home Office: [Training and awareness raising resources](#)
- Border Force: [how to spot the signs of exploitation and how to raise concerns](#)
- [National Referral Mechanism Analysis Briefs](#)
- [The Children Society: NRM Plain Language Guide](#)