

MODERN SLAVERY

MODERN SLAVERY: A BRIEFING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Modern slavery can take many forms including the trafficking of people¹, forced labour, servitude and slavery. Recent statistics show that 47% of all potential victims who cite the UK as the location of exploitation, were trafficked into forced labour.² Traffickers and illegal/unlicensed gangmasters target a range of industries including those involved in construction.

HOW YOUR INDUSTRY IS AFFECTED

In 2014, the construction industry in the UK contributed £103 billion in economic output. In Q2 2015, 2.1 million jobs or 6.2% of the UK workforce total were in the construction industry, making it a huge employer.³

Within this massive workforce, 71 potential victims of trafficking who cited the UK as the location of exploitation were referred to the authorities in 2016, but slavery's hidden nature means actual numbers are likely to be much higher.⁴

While it may be unlikely large companies are directly employing trafficked people, contractors and sub contractors (or the agencies supplying labour) could find themselves targeted by unscrupulous gangmasters who may be offering a ready supply of labour at knocked down rates.

MAKE-UP OF MODERN SLAVERY VICTIMS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Anyone can become a victim of modern slavery. However, victims of this crime are often Eastern European men who are promised a job in the UK and then forced by traffickers to work as labourers, or in factories for instance, for little or no money. Through threat, violence or coercion they may be forced to live in squalid accommodation and have their identity documents taken from them.

Indicators of modern slavery in construction

All employers involved in the construction industry should make proper background checks on the agencies who supply them with labour, including where the agency is operating in a supervisory role. The Association of Labour Providers and the Recruitment and Employment Confederation are the two main recruitment industry associations, and work with the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority to tackle slavery.



¹ Defined in Directive 2011/36/EU as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or reception of persons, including the exchange or transfer of control over those persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person', for the purpose of exploitation. The consent of a victim of trafficking in human beings to the exploitation, whether intended or actual, shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in paragraph 1 has been used or if the victim is a child

² National Referral Mechanism Statistics 2016

³ House of Commons Library. The construction industry: statistics and policy. October 2015

⁴ National Referral Mechanism Statistics 2016

SIGNS TO SPOT POTENTIAL VICTIMS

Legal documents

Is the person in possession of their legal documents (passport, identification and their own bank account details) or are these being held by someone else? Victims will often be forced to use false or forged identity documents.

Pay

Are there a group of workers who have their wages paid into the same bank account? This may be sign of the illegal gangmaster collecting all their wages. Are they having wages taken off them for accommodation, food or to repay supposed debt?

Transport

Are a group of workers dropped off or picked up at unusual times of the day, are they all taken to the same property?

Appearance

Does the person look malnourished, unkempt, or appear withdrawn? Are they suffering physical injuries? Do they have few personal possessions and often wear the same clothes? What clothes they do wear may not be suitable for their work.

Behaviour

Is the person withdrawn or appear frightened, unable to answer questions directed at them or speak for themselves and/or an accompanying third party speaks for them? If they do speak, are they inconsistent in the information they provide, including basic facts such as the address where they live? Do they appear under the control/influence of others and rarely interact with colleagues?

Medical care

Does the person have old or serious untreated injuries? Have they delayed seeing a healthcare professional, and are they vague, reluctant or inconsistent in explaining how the injury occurred?

Fear of authorities

Is the person afraid of the authorities (police, immigration, the tax office)? Are they scared of removal or what might happen to their families?

Debt bondage

Does the victim perceive themselves to be in debt to someone else or in a situation of dependence?

If you think you've identified a trafficker or illegal gangmaster call the police on **101**

For advice on how you can avoid employing victims of trafficking and how you can help ensure your supply chain is slave free visit **stronger2gether.org**

If you think you work with or employ someone who may be a victim of Modern Slavery or forced labour you can call a helpline on **0800 0121 700** and talk through your concerns or visit **modernslavery.co.uk**

ENSURE YOU ARE MAKING THE FOLLOWING CHECKS TO PROTECT WORKERS:

Contract

Check that all staff, including agency workers, have a written contract of employment and that they have not had to pay any direct or indirect fees to obtain work.

Right to work

Make sure staff are legally able to work in the UK. Does the recruitment agency provide assurance that the appropriate checks have been made on the person they are supplying?

Shared occupancy

Check the names and addresses of those working for you. If you have a number of people listing the same address it may indicate high shared occupancy, often a factor for those being exploited.

Statutory rights

Make sure your workers know their statutory rights including sick pay, holiday pay and any other benefits they may be entitled to.

Assess quotes and fees

Use indicative pricing statistics to assess quotations and fees from agencies offering or charging suspiciously low rates.