COUNTER – TRAFFICKING TOOLKIT:

Combatting Human Trafficking Through Intervention and Safeguarding



About the Toolkit

A21's Counter-Trafficking Toolkit ('Toolkit') serves as a resource for frontline sectors, seeking to increase understanding of human trafficking in the UK. Frontline sectors for purposes of this Toolkit refer to certain industries which by virtue of their type of work are in positions more likely to encounter a victim of human trafficking. Frontline professionals as used in this toolkit refers to the forward facing employees in these frontline sectors most likely to encounter a victim of human trafficking. Through the 'tools' provided in this Toolkit, frontline sectors can apply practical strategies in employing human trafficking intervention efforts, such as implementing counter-trafficking policies and processes for identifying and engaging with victims and potential victims of human trafficking.[1]

This central guide in the Counter-Trafficking Toolkit is designed to provide a broad overview of human trafficking as well as the basic principles of intervention and safeguarding. The 'tools' or supplemental resources referenced in this central guide provide further in-depth information regarding the principles set forth in this document.

[1]The term 'potential victims' is used to encompass those who have not yet been exploited but are in the process of being initially approached, groomed, or recruited. The term can also refer to certain vulnerable populations such as refugees, irregular migrants, and certain marginalised ethnic groups that have been historically targeted by traffickers.

What is Human Trafficking?

Across the world, men, women and children are being used as commodities, with fundamental human rights stripped away for the financial gain of exploiters. Human trafficking is a violation of basic human rights that centres on the exploitation of another human being, through force, fraud or coercion, or through the exploitation of a child, whether for labour, sexual or other commercial gain. While the essence of this crime remains the same, globalisation and the growth of the online world has resulted in new methods to exploit and traffick people.

Where does Human Trafficking happen?

Human trafficking, or modern slavery, is a rapidly growing criminal industry, affecting every country and global economy across the world. Few countries, if any, escape its effects either as points of departure, destination, or transit, or a combination of the above. Human trafficking can occur in every system and structure globally; this can be seen in practical terms as labour exploitation in a company's supply chain or in the exploitation of people in the commercial sex sector. Complex supply chains in business structures, from retail to agriculture, mean these chains become less and less transparent, and paired with the increasing demand for more goods and cheaper labour, makes human trafficking and labour exploitation more probable.

Human Trafficking in the UK

- The United Kingdom is primarily a destination country with victims transported into the UK.
- Labour exploitation is the largest exploitation type in the UK, most commonly affecting industries such as agriculture, construction, manufacturing and food processing, and in places such as nail bars and car washes.
- While the majority of victims referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the government's support system for victims, are foreign nationals, there is evidence to show that UK nationals are also being trafficked domestically as they comprise at least 30% of all identified victims annually. This is particularly prevalent with 'county lines' drug exploitation where young people are being manipulated and coerced into exploitation, trafficking drugs across the UK. Minors trafficked through forced criminality are often also subjected to extreme levels of violence and sexual exploitation by the same organised crime groups that force them into drug distribution.[2]
- According to the NRM, some of the top countries of origin for victims trafficked into the UK from overseas are Albania, Vietnam, Eritrea, Sudan and India.[3]

While the data from the NRM is the most robust data source currently available in the UK, it is important to note that the true reality of the scope of trafficking in the UK is probably more diverse. For example, law enforcement and counter-trafficking non-governmental organisations (NGOs) routinely encounter victims of certain nationalities that have been omitted from the NRM.



HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE UK:
Provides more in-depth information regarding human trafficking in the UK.

THE NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM[4]

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the UK Government's framework for identifying and providing support for victims of trafficking. The government identification process begins when a designated First Responder (including law enforcement, local authorities and other organisations identified by the UK Government) refers a potential victim to the NRM.[5] The potential victim must expressly consent to enter the NRM for consideration to be deemed a victim of human trafficking.[6] A minor is not seen as eligible to give consent, therefore all potential child victims of trafficking must be referred to the NRM.[7] The Single Competent Authority then considers the referral through a two-step decision process. The first step is a 'reasonable grounds' decision which is most likely made within five business days to provide short term support.[8] When an NRM referral has been made for a 'reasonable grounds' decision, the case will also be referred to the police as there is a strong possibility that a crime has taken place. However, there is no obligation for the potential victim to cooperate with the police to access support. A positive 'reasonable grounds decision' indicates that the government has preliminarily determined the individual is likely to be a victim of trafficking.

This preliminary decision allows the victim to access emergency support while pending a 'conclusive grounds decision', whereby a thorough review of the case occurs and determines whether the individual is recognised conclusively as a victim of trafficking under the law. The emergency support provided by the 'reasonable grounds decision' includes assistance such as accommodation and psychological support for a 'reflection period' of at least 45-days. Once a 'conclusive grounds decision' has been reached, the victim will have access to further long-term support and may be granted discretionary leave to remain in the UK to support cooperation in any investigation or legal proceedings against the trafficker, or may be offered repatriation assistance.

Please note that a determination of a 'negative grounds decision' under the NRM does not mean that the individual has not been exploited. At times, the NRM may not consider an individual to qualify as a victim of human trafficking, despite a self-identification or identification by another entity, such as an NGO. Such a finding assesses the individual's 'victim' status solely under UK law. This could be a result of a number of factors such as insufficient information provided at the time of the referral to demonstrate evidence of human trafficking or modern slavery. In these cases, eligibility for government support terminates after receipt of a negative 'conclusive grounds' decision. At this point, the potential victim exits the NRM process and is no longer eligible for government services specific to human trafficking victims. The potential victim may still qualify for services from NGOs, such as A21, or other service providers on a case-by-case basis. Where the potential victims are foreign nationals, the respective home country may recognise an individual as a victim of trafficking under its domestic law, irrespective of the NRM's finding.

[2]*National Crime Agency. County Lines. Available at: https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/what-we-do/crime-threats/drug-trafficking/county-lines#:~:text=County%20Lines%20is%20where%20illegal,take%20the%20orders%20of%20drugs.*

[3]*Home Office (2024) Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism and Duty to Notify statistics UK, end of year summary 2024 Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/modern-slavery-nrm-and-dtn-statistics-end-of-year-summary-2024/modern-slavery-national-referral-mechanism-and-duty-to-notify-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2024#national-referral-mechanism-referrals*

[4]*Home Office (2024) National Referral Mechanism Guidance (England and Wales) https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/human-trafficking-victims-referral-and-assessment-forms/guidance-on-the-national-referral-mechanism-for-potential-adult-victims-of-modern-slavery-england-and-wales*

[5]*The information in this section is reflective of the NRM Guidance for England and Wales. Separate guidance on the reporting process for the NRM in Scotland and Northern Ireland can be found on UK.gov.*

[6]*If an adult does not consent to enter the NRM, designated first-responder authorities are required to fill out a Duty to Notify (DtN) to alert the Home Office that a potential victim has been identified but does not consent to receive government support. A comprehensive list of first-responder organisations can be found on UK.gov.*

[7]*Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs) are available in the majority of local authorities to support the needs of child victims referred to the NRM. A referral of a child to an ICTG can be made via UK.gov.*

[8]*In the case that an individual requires immediate support prior to a 'reasonable grounds' decision has been made, the Salvation Army 24-hour helpline can be contacted on 0800 808 3733.*

How Can 'Frontline Sectors' Combat Human Trafficking?

In the same way, that modern slavery can occur in various industries, 'frontline sectors' also play a pivotal role in identifying and combatting human trafficking within their particular sector. See below for just a few examples of how different sectors can make an impact within their area of influence.

TRANSPORTATION

- As the facilitation of human trafficking often includes the movement of a person from one place to another, the transportation sector places a vital role in the facilitation of a victim's movement from origin to destination locations. With appropriate training and the right procedures in place, the transportation sector can play a vital role in raising public awareness, identifying trafficking situations and safeguarding victims in transit in various stages of exploitation.

HOSPITALITY

- The hospitality industry often unwittingly harbours victims in transit or being actively exploited. With increased training on recognising potential key indicators and red flags, along with established protocol and resources to assist trafficking victims once encountered, the hospitality industry can significantly assist in safeguarding victims.

FINANCIAL INDUSTRY

- Banks may unknowingly facilitate the financial exploits of trafficking, and traffickers often use the credentials of victims to open bank accounts or access credit cards to launder money and avoid detection. Through closer monitoring of financial transactions, and increased training on human trafficking and fraud detection, the banking sector can stop the monetary profit that is the core motive of human trafficking.

MEDICAL FIELD

- Victims have limited, if any, time apart from the perpetrator. However, such occasions may arise when victims require medical care as a result of ongoing exploitation. Health care workers in hospitals, General Practices (GPs) and sexual health clinics are in a unique position to observe, identify and engage with potential victims.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Victims often come into contact with law enforcement as a potential suspect of a crime, while they are actively being trafficked. For example, a child may be forced to assist in the cultivation of cannabis or distribution of illicit drugs. Many victims have had negative experiences with law enforcement who may have unknowingly treated the victims as perpetrators. Proper training of law enforcement officers both in recognising and responding to potential victims may result in the discovery of both victims as well as the arrest of the actual perpetrator.

IMMIGRATION

- In a typical trafficking scheme of foreign national victims, traffickers offer to pay for travel expenses and complete visa paperwork for individuals they intend to exploit. However upon entry to the UK, victims realise they lack the appropriate visa, and are subjected to the manipulations and threats of the trafficker concerning their immigration status. Through greater awareness of the role that traffickers play in facilitating the undocumented entry of victims and increased training, employees in immigration detention centres, or those providing immigration advice or assisting with asylum applications might be able to detect potential victims.

EDUCATION SYSTEM

- Educators often have the best insight into the well-being of students in their classrooms, including potential changes in behaviour that signal the existence of a possible exploitative situation. As educators have the unique ability to observe students almost daily, those in the education system may be able to safeguard and intervene to assist a student who is being groomed or actively being exploited.

The list above is not exhaustive, but merely highlights the multiple industries that might encounter a potential victim of human trafficking.

INCREASING AWARENESS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Understanding the modus operandi of human trafficking, such as vulnerability factors, recruitment and grooming, will assist frontline professionals to safeguard victims and potential victims. As anyone can be exploited, this understanding of vulnerability is vital to prevent trafficking. Frontline sectors can utilise public awareness campaigns and general education, as a method of both prevention and intervention, for those who utilise their services, including the general public and those at risk, of the warning signs of possible trafficking. Such background information will also aid frontline professionals understand the best way to approach and engage with potential victims once the situation suggests that an individual may be in danger.

LEARN MORE >>

DEVELOPING A COUNTER-TRAFFICKING STRATEGY:
Provides guidance on creating an organisational counter-trafficking strategy, including the importance of awareness and the use of awareness campaigns to educate on human trafficking.

A21'S SAMPLE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN - *CAN YOU SEE ME?* RESOURCES

→ **OVERVIEW OF THE *CAN YOU SEE ME?* AWARENESS CAMPAIGN:** Provides an overview of the purpose and the methodology of A21's *Can You See Me?* awareness campaign. The resource also provides guidance on how to implement the campaign to spread awareness and support intervention efforts.

→ ***CAN YOU SEE ME?* INDICATORS POSTER:** Summarises the key signs and exploitation types for each type of trafficking illustrated in the campaign scenarios; these posters can be placed in strategic locations such as on the backs of toilet stall doors.

→ ***CAN YOU SEE ME?* SCENARIO GUIDE:** Explanatory handout accompanying each scenario to be utilised in a training context which provides further insight into the specific scenario as well as general information about the featured type of trafficking.



UNDERSTANDING HOW HUMAN TRAFFICKING CAN HAPPEN

VULNERABILITY

Traffickers often prey on those most vulnerable in society to recruit and exploit as victims. Certain vulnerability factors explored below may make individuals or communities more vulnerable to exploitation. Understanding this intersection between vulnerability and human trafficking allows for a better understanding of survivors and implicitly supports preventative and safeguarding efforts.

VULNERABILITY FACTORS

Vulnerability factors include but are not limited to:

- Age
- Homelessness
- Substance misuse
- Lack of education
- Unemployment
- Legal status
- Poverty
- Mental health
- Unstable political and/or social conditions
- Substance addictions

Lack of employment options, or dysfunctional and abusive home environments may lead people to seek alternative employment away from home. In this way, many people are exploited in attempts to improve personal financial situations, where economic turmoil can increase vulnerability to trafficking through desperation and acceptance of unregulated or informal work. Conflict or unstable political conditions also increase vulnerability, as seen in migrant and refugee situations.

While these external factors provide some context, it is important to note that there are wider cultural, political and socio-economic barriers that may also play a role in exploitation. Namely, it may be the lack of socio-economic protections to combat vulnerabilities that leads to trafficking. For example, many don't have access to further education, may lack social support networks or do not have access to social protection measures that may safeguard against potential exploitation. Newer studies suggest a minority of victims are from the LGBTQ+ community, who suffer from social exclusion and are often not afforded adequate protections or are excluded from gaining equal opportunities, affecting economic mobility.

RECRUITMENT AND GROOMING

Traffickers utilise a variety of recruitment methods to deceive and coerce victims into exploitative situations. A common method may include posting a false job opportunity online with little to no information regarding the details of the employment opportunity in another country, but a competitive salary with accommodation and a guaranteed work visa included. Another may involve a trafficker profiling and targeting an emotionally vulnerable youth to engage in a romantic relationship with the ultimate goal of emotionally manipulating the youth into sexual exploitation. As the romantic relationship doesn't happen immediately, the trafficker will set aside time to 'groom' the victim - that is establish a relationship for the sole purpose of manipulating and exploiting the victim at a later time. The grooming process in that romantic relationship situation, also known as 'loverboy scenario', may involve the trafficker/'boyfriend' showering the targeted victim with gifts and building a fast emotional connection. The trafficker may also isolate the targeted victim from friends and family so that the trafficker soon becomes the targeted victim's sole emotional support.



While the grooming process can happen quite quickly, it can also take place over long periods. The trafficker builds trust during this critical grooming period so that at a later date, the trafficker can create a future situation where the targeted victim will be trapped with minimal to no opportunity to seek assistance. They utilise methods of deception and manipulation to make their victims feel ashamed or responsible for their own exploitation, and in the process create the perception of a willing victim. After a victim has been groomed, traffickers are able to control their victims' every movement.

The prevalence of the online world has increased the ease with which vulnerable people can be manipulated and exploited, and has created other avenues to facilitate the crime of human trafficking. As a result of the online world, victims of human trafficking no longer need to be recruited and exploited in person; social media expands the reach of perpetrators from local to global. For example, a young man could be offered a job opportunity in another country through an online job advertisement that turns out to be false, or a new friend request on social media could lead to a young person being groomed and trafficked for sexual exploitation.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTION EFFORTS

As frontline sectors have an increased probability of encountering potential victims of trafficking through regular work-based activities, such organisations may consider developing their own counter-trafficking strategy to incorporate training and best safeguarding practices.

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DEVELOPING A COUNTER-TRAFFICKING STRATEGY:
Provides an overview of the best practices in adopting a holistic counter-trafficking strategy, including identification and safeguarding efforts by frontline sector organisations.

IDENTIFYING A HUMAN TRAFFICKING SITUATION

Internal organisational training for frontline professionals should include guidance on identifying a possible trafficking situation, and the potential victims being exploited. Identifying a victim of trafficking requires understanding the nuances and complexities as to a victim's self-identification process. As explained in the previous 'Recruitment and Grooming' section, manipulated victims may either blame themselves for their victimisation, or alternatively they may still be trauma bonded to their trafficker. Often these complex issues underlying the exploitative situation may manifest so that a victim appears to be complicit in the exploitation. At other times, self-blaming victims may not realise that the trafficker had planned every step resulting in their exploitation. There are numerous reasons why an individual may not self-identify. In some cases, individuals may recognise that they are a victim of abuse or exploitation, but they may not perceive that the harm they are experiencing is actually human trafficking or modern slavery.

Certain vulnerability factors may make a victim feel as if they are unable to leave an exploitative environment. For example, a victim may be aware of the unfair treatment but may be hesitant to leave because of an inability to return home, likely homelessness or the lack of alternative employment options. Foreign national victims face additional hurdles such as immigration status, language barriers and unfamiliarity with a foreign country. Therefore, a victim may perceive it may be better, or in some ways safer, to stay in a hostile or exploitative situation rather than to leave and face the unknown. Individuals who have been 'identified' as human trafficking victims, may continue to be re-victimised if certain vulnerability factors are not adequately addressed. While identification may be the first step, without further support, the likelihood of re-victimisation remains high.

LEARN MORE >>

RECOGNISING HUMAN TRAFFICKING:
Explores how to recognise a possible trafficking situation, illustrating red flag indicators and guidance on engaging with a potential victim.

IDENTIFICATION VS RECOVERY:
Provides insight into the barriers of victim identification. Explains the point of identification and recovery as two distinct parts of a survivor's journey out of a trafficking situation and the nuances of each stage.

ENGAGING WITH A POTENTIAL VICTIM OF TRAFFICKING

Training should also contain guidance on proper engagement with potential victims of trafficking. Frontline professionals may find interaction with potential victims to be challenging when a victim may refuse to self-identify despite clear signs of trafficking. Understanding that victims of trafficking may also be predisposed to ongoing complex trauma which could impact their memories, their behaviour or social interactions, will assist when engagement actually occurs. The impact of trauma varies by person, and can be compounded when an individual does not recognise their own victimisation. The coping responses to trauma could be detected through observing intense outbursts of emotion, or for others it might be that they are completely emotionally detached. Utilising a victim-centred approach requires considering the impact of trauma by interacting in a compassionate and sensitive manner so as to prioritise the victim's needs above all else.

LEARN MORE>>

VICTIM-CENTRED APPROACH:
Explains the use of the victim-centred approach when engaging with potential victims of trafficking. The victim-centred approach involves taking a trauma-informed perspective to support victims of human trafficking and ensure the needs and concerns of a victim are prioritised.

SAFEGUARDING INDICATORS:
Provides guidance on some of the key indicators or red flags that might suggest a potential trafficking situation. This resource can be placed in easily accessible locations to act as a quick reference guide for frontline professionals.

SECURE HOUSING GUIDANCE:
This resource offers guidance for frontline professionals on addressing the housing needs of trafficking victims in the UK. It covers the types of housing available, key considerations, and information for local authorities.

Once engaged with a potential victim of trafficking, the potential victim may or may not want further assistance. Often a potential victim may express a desire not to further engage. In either situation, you can provide resources for access at a later date.

LEARN MORE>>

WORKER RIGHTS IN THE UK SAFEGUARDING CARD:
This practical preventative resource is tailored to support identification efforts and provide relevant safeguarding information for those coming to work in the UK. This card can be distributed to the individuals exhibiting vulnerability factors, or potential victims who have refused other assistance.

PREVENTATIVE LABOUR EXPLOITATION PASSPORT:
This resource provides information about labour exploitation in the native language of the five nationalities at greatest risk of exploitation in the UK. This resource can be disseminated to potential victims of labour exploitation and at-risk communities.

RESOURCE GUIDE



Learn more about Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

The resources in this category will provide an in-depth understanding of modern slavery in the UK, the complexities of victim identification, the basic foundations of a counter-trafficking strategy, including the importance of incorporating a trauma-informed, victim-centred approach when creating a strategy for your organisation.

→ **HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE UK:**
Explains the human trafficking law in the UK, as well as the types of trafficking, and the means of methods of trafficking most prevalent in the UK.

→ **RECOGNISING HUMAN TRAFFICKING:**
Explores how to recognise and identify a potential victim, illustrating red flag indicators and guidance on engaging with a potential victim.

→ **A VICTIM-CENTRED APPROACH:**
Explains the use of the victim-centred approach when engaging with potential victims of trafficking. The victim-centred approach involves taking a trauma-informed perspective to support victims of human trafficking and ensure the needs and concerns of a victim are prioritised.

→ **IDENTIFICATION VS. RECOVERY:**
Explains the point of identification and recovery as two distinct parts of a survivor's journey out of a trafficking situation and the nuances of each stage.

→ **DEVELOPING A COUNTER-TRAFFICKING STRATEGY:**
Provides an overview of the best practices in adopting a holistic counter-trafficking strategy including how to approach identification and safeguarding efforts in frontline sector organisations.

Resources for Potential Victims of Trafficking and Safeguarding Operations

The resources in this category are designed for frontline professionals who might encounter a potential victim of trafficking.

→ **SAFEGUARDING INDICATORS:**
Provides guidance on some of the key indicators or red flags that might suggest a potential trafficking situation. This resource can be placed in easily accessible locations to act as a quick reference guide for frontline professionals.

→ **WORKER RIGHTS IN THE UK SAFEGUARDING CARD:**
Explores how to recognise and identify a potential victim, illustrating red flag indicators and guidance on engaging with a potential victim.

→ **PREVENTATIVE LABOUR EXPLOITATION PASSPORT:**
Practical material that provides information and advice on labour exploitation, including safeguarding information available in a range of languages. This resource can be handed out to potential victims of labour exploitation and at-risk communities.

→ **SECURE HOUSING GUIDANCE:**
This resource offers guidance for frontline professionals on addressing the housing needs of trafficking victims in the UK. It covers the types of housing available, key considerations, and information for local authorities.



Public Awareness Campaign – Can You See Me? Resources and Training Material

Can You See Me? is a global awareness campaign that can be seen across transportation hubs around the world. The resources in this section provide information regarding the campaign and real-life examples of trafficking that A21 has encountered first-hand. The resources can be utilised to implement the campaign or to be used as training material.

→ **OVERVIEW OF THE *CAN YOU SEE ME?* AWARENESS CAMPAIGN:**
Provides an overview of the purpose and the methodology of A21's *Can You See Me?* awareness campaign. The resource also provides guidance on how to implement the campaign to spread awareness and support intervention efforts.

→ ***CAN YOU SEE ME?* SCENARIO GUIDE:**
Explanatory handout accompanying each scenario to be utilised in a training context which provides further insight into the specific scenario as well as general information about the featured type of trafficking.

→ ***CAN YOU SEE ME?* INDICATOR POSTERS:**
Highlights the key signs for primary forms of trafficking illustrated in the campaign scenarios; these posters can be placed in strategic locations such as behind the stalls in the toilets.

→ **ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (SEXTORTION SCENARIO) - ADULT AND YOUTH GUIDES:**
Age appropriate information about online child exploitation, and safeguarding methods.



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