

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL REFERRAL MECHANISM AND HOW CAN I MAKE A REFERRAL?

FEB 2023

What is the National Referral Mechanism (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.

What is Modern Slavery?

Modern slavery is defined as the recruitment, movement, harbouring or receiving of children, for the purpose of exploitation (known as Trafficking), and includes holding a person in a position of slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour.

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', such as the Local Authority, Police and Barnardo's in Warwickshire.

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

When do I notify the Home Office?

If you have think that you have encountered a victim of Modern Slavery then you must notify the Home Office via the online referral form that can be accessed [here](#).

There are two elements to consider:

1. The fact at you think you have encountered a victim of Modern Slavery is a LOW threshold. You do not need evidence of this, reasonable grounds to believe will suffice.
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.

What happens to the NRM?

From 20th February 2023, Warwickshire are taking part in a pilot of devolved decision making, which means that making the decision about whether a child has been subjected to modern slavery or human trafficking sits with the local decision-making multi-agency NRM Panel that has been established for the purpose. The Home Office will therefore direct NRM's they receive regarding Warwickshire children to this panel.

Will NRM's for all children be referred?

All Warwickshire children who are more than 100 days away from their 18th birthday will be referred to the local NRM Panel to ensure decisions are complete before they become an adult. Children who are within 100 days of their 18th birthday will continue to have decisions made by the Home Office SCA.

What is the Warwickshire NRM Panel?

The NRM Panel is a monthly, multi-agency panel made up of managers from several key agencies including Warwickshire County Council Children Social Care, Youth Justice and Education Services, Warwickshire Police, Health, and the Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship (ICTG) Service

The aim of the panel is to ensure there is consistent multi-agency decision-making and robust planning in respect of children who may be subjected to Modern Slavery.

What does the Panel do?

The Panel will assess the circumstances of the child referred and make 2 key decisions in accordance with the Modern Slavery Statutory Guidance.

Stage 1 – The Reasonable Grounds decision:

A positive 'Reasonable Grounds' decision will be made if the Panel deem that there is 'reasonable grounds to believe that the child is a victim of Human Trafficking, Slavery, Servitude and Forced or Compulsory Labour' based on objective factors.

Stage 2 – Conclusive Grounds Decision

The Panel will make a Conclusive Grounds decision if it is decided 'on the balance of probabilities', there is sufficient information to decide that the individual is a victim of modern slavery. This means that on the evidence available, it is 'more likely than not' that modern slavery has occurred. A Conclusive Grounds decision provides official recognition (based on the civil burden of proof), that a child is/was a victim of modern slavery at that 'moment of time'.

The Panel may make both a Reasonable Grounds and Conclusive Grounds decision at the same meeting if sufficient information is available to reach both thresholds. If there is not and further information is needed, the NRM Coordinator will be tasked to gather what is required and bring back to the next panel meeting for the second decision to be made.

Decisions should be complete within 90 days, however in Warwickshire we expect that both decisions will be made in a maximum of 60 days from the NRM being submitted.

All SCA cases will be referred to the police (in the area where the crime has been committed) following receipt of the referral and a crime will be recorded and investigated. Decisions made by the Warwickshire NRM Panel will be subject of Quality Assurance checks by the SCA before notification to First Responders.

What should I include in the NRM referral?

An NRM referral is the starting point of an investigation of a serious criminal offence by the Police and has significant consequences for the potential victim in terms of protection and support (and potential further stay in the UK if they are subject to immigration control)

Time and care should be taken when completing it and you should speak to your manager regarding the circumstances. A crib sheet is being developed to help guide first responders consider the circumstances and to support making a quality referral.

Further support can be accessed by contacting the NRM Coordinator via email at **NRM@warwickshire.gov.uk** who will provide guidance about NRM and assist the process of making a referral. The NRM Coordinator will also support you in whether a referral needs to be made to the Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship Service (ICTG) offered through Barnardo's.

The ICTG service offers advice, guidance, and support for children (aged under 18) who have been exploited through trafficking and Modern Slavery, and for professionals working with them.

What does the outcome of the NRM mean for a child?

A positive NRM decision is the gateway for the victim to access:

- Services and support they need to start recovery
- Legal aid in immigration (non-asylum) claims
- Support, financial subsistence, and accommodation
- Counselling and interpreting

Limited protection from removal from the UK (the decision raises a barrier to removal). Often for children this support has been initiated via Children's Services, but an NRM referral will assure consistent intrinsic link of NRM to local safeguarding intervention.

Where can I access further information?

Professionals are encouraged to understand and recognise the signs of modern slavery, including exploitation and trafficking, and know how and where to refer concerns.

Guidance can be found via the exploitation and trafficking **procedure** and training is accessible via the Warwickshire Learning Hub.

General information about the NRM pilot can be found on the Home Office website through the link **here**. For more information about the Warwickshire Pilot, contact: Nigel Jones, WCC **nigelajones@warwickshire.gov.uk**



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