

HTMS Ambassador Programme

Labour Exploitation

Human trafficking & modern slavery (HTMS) is the exploitation of people through the use of threats, fraud, coercion or deception. Labour exploitation is a form of HTMS in which people are mistreated and denied their basic rights in the workplace, for the purpose of profit. It can happen in any industry and can affect people of all ages, genders and backgrounds, however, migrant workers are more often victims of forced labour.

Forms of Labour Exploitation

Workers may be exploited in a number of ways, below are some examples:

- being paid unfairly, having wages deducted or withheld at source
- forced to do unpaid work with no compensation
- denied access to benefits, such as sick leave and annual leave
- paperwork and/or wages being controlled by another person
- being forced to work long hours without breaks
- subjected to poor workplace health & safety, poor working conditions, and a lack of legally required personal protective equipment
- if accommodation is provided by the employer, it may be cramped and unsanitary, and the individual may be overcharged for it
- subjected to bullying or threats of physical violence
- the individual may be kept in isolation or have their movement restricted.[1]

In the UK, labour exploitation is most common in the following industries:

- agriculture
- food processing & packaging
- construction
- entertainment
- the service industry
- manufacturing (in sweatshops).[2]

Forced Labour

Forced labour is defined as 'all work or service which is extracted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily'.[3] Fraud, deception and coercion negate consent in these circumstances.

Victims of forced labour may also be victims of **debt-bondage**, whereby individuals are coerced or deceived into working for little or no money to repay a debt that can never be repaid. Victims are kept trapped in a cycle of exploitation via debt-bondage as the employer (or person controlling them) continues to add charges, incurring further debt.

REFERENCES:

[1] <https://endlabourexploitation.co.uk/about/>

[2] <https://www.gla.gov.uk/media/6095/spot-the-signs-glaa-18082020.pdf>

[3] <https://www.ilo.org/topics/forced-labour-modern-slavery-and-trafficking-persons/what-forced-labour>

Labour Migration

Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to forced labour and debt-bondage. Migrant workers may be offered a job abroad for which they have to borrow money from the employer or a third party for the travel and/or job finding fee. Upon arrival in the country of employment, they may discover that the job does not exist, or is not what was agreed upon.

Migrant workers are can be particularly vulnerable to forced labour and exploitation due to economic circumstances, immigration status and language skills. They may also have been trafficked to the UK for forced labour, with their pay going to the person controlling them. This is particularly an issue for **seasonal work in the agricultural sector** which has seen a rise in labour exploitation following labour shortages.[4]

Workers are recruited under the seasonal worker visa scheme, under which they are recruited temporarily for specific agricultural tasks, such as fruit-picking. Workers are housed in remote locations with inadequate facilities, and due to their unfamiliarity with basic UK employment rights, they do not know how to report the exploitative practices or seek help, and are often in fear of retaliation if they were to do so.

As with agriculture, there are noted to be exploitation risks in the food manufacturing[5] and food distribution sectors[6]. Whilst businesses are encouraged to ensure there is no slavery in their supply chains, it is important that we as consumers also question businesses and their practices, calling for fair labour practices, and use our purchasing power to hold them accountable.

If you are concerned about someone, seek help:

You are never wasting anyone's time if you raise concerns about possible harm.

If it is an emergency, call **999**

If you wish to report a crime anonymously, you may call **Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111**

The **Gangmasters & Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA)** investigate all aspects of labour exploitation. To make a report you can call them on **0800 432 0804**, or email them at **intelligence@glaa.gov.uk**.

You can also report any concerns to the **UK modern slavery and exploitation helpline**, a free 24-hour helpline where you will be able to discuss your concerns, receive advice and support.

You may call the helpline on: **08000 121 700** or you may visit the website and report your concerns online at **<https://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org/>**

REFERENCES:

[4] <https://www.unseenuk.org/the-price-we-dont-pay-modern-slavery-in-uk-agriculture/>

[5] <https://www.unseenuk.org/the-price-we-dont-pay-modern-slavery-in-food-manufacturing/>

[6] <https://www.unseenuk.org/the-price-we-dont-pay-modern-slavery-in-food-delivery/>