

Although justice has been devolved the N Ireland arrangements for identifying victims sit within the UK framework.

The [National Crime Agency](http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/crime-threats/human-trafficking/types-of-human-trafficking) (<http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/crime-threats/human-trafficking/types-of-human-trafficking>) lists the following forms of human trafficking: sexual exploitation of men women and children; forced labour; domestic servitude; organ harvesting; and child exploitation (including forced begging).

Victims of modern slavery are identified through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and 3,805 potential victims were referred to the NRM in 2016, 1,278 of whom were minors. The most common form of exploitation was labour exploitation. Potential victims were from 108 different countries.

The [Modern Slavery Act 2015](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/historic-law-to-end-modern-slavery-passed) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/historic-law-to-end-modern-slavery-passed>) consolidated existing legislation, increased maximum sentences, enhanced the support and protection of victims, and encouraged businesses to ensure that their supply chains were free of slavery.

UK National Trafficking Referral Mechanism (NRM)

The UK ratified the UN Convention Against Human Trafficking in 2008 and this included signing up to a new national referral mechanism, a process to help frontline staff identify victims of trafficking and offer them support. The UK National Referral Mechanism (NRM) was introduced in 2009.

In order to be recognised as a victim of trafficking and slavery via the NRM people are referred to the UK Human Trafficking Centre who should decide within 5 days that there are 'reasonable grounds' for assuming that they are victims. They are then given 45 days for reflection and recovery when they can decide what they want to do and whether they feel that they can co-operate with the police or not. They are helped with accommodation. If they are given a positive decision they are allowed to stay in the country for at least a year, have access to benefits and are allowed to work. They may get an extension especially if a criminal investigation is taking a long time. Some people want to go home and can be helped to do so. If they get a negative decision the Home Office may help them to go home if they have no other right to stay. Some people may also apply for asylum in the UK because of fear of persecution if they return home.

The Home Office, local authorities, the health trusts and the PSNI can refer potential victims in N Ireland.

The situation in Northern Ireland

Some trafficked people may have been smuggled in, but many will have entered the country legally, either from Europe where they do not need visas to work here or from outside Europe, with visas as skilled migrants e.g. in the fishing industry. They will probably have come here on the promise of a good job through a person or agency in their own country who arranged their transport and to whom they then owe a lot of money. On arrival the promised job will not exist. They will be controlled through threats and violence and told that the authorities may deport them if they complain.

During the NRM recognition process Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid support female victims of sexual exploitation and domestic servitude; Migrant Help UK support the other adults; and Social Services care for children and young people.

The Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 aimed to improve the capacity to tackle human trafficking, slavery or forced labour. For a summary of the 2015 Act's legal changes see the [NI Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery Strategy 2016/17](#) page 8–9 (<http://www.octf.gov.uk/OCTF/media/OCTF/documents/publications/Human%20Trafficking/Final-NI-Human-Trafficking-and-Modern-Slavery-Strategy-2016-17.pdf?ext=.pdf>). There are new offences, increased sentences, power to confiscate assets, a new statutory defence for people who are compelled to commit other offences. The most controversial element of the legislation is the criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services.

In 2016 NI first responders referred 33 people to the NRM (<http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/publications/national-referral-mechanism-statistics/2016-nrm-statistics/788-national-referral-mechanism-statistics-end-of-year-summary-2016>). They were from 16 countries: Romania, China, Lithuania, Albania Iran, Bulgaria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Taiwan, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The potential victims included 27 adults and 6 minors; 17 females and 16 males.

The type of exploitation was not specified for most of the minor potential victims. For the adults the reasons listed were as follows: 3, domestic servitude; 13, labour exploitation; 10, sexual exploitation; and one unknown.

The areas of gross exploitation in N Ireland include

- Agricultural work
- Sexual exploitation is also significant, especially as victims can be moved easily across the border or the Irish Sea.
- Food processing – read how [Romanian workers were exploited](#) in the Lurgan/ Portadown area (<http://www.gla.gov.uk/whats-new/press-release-archive/071016-trafficking-trio-sentenced-in-northern-ireland/>)
- Sea fishing
- Shellfish picking