

Research finds links between homelessness and modern slavery

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A leading homelessness charity, [The Passage](#), has found that rough sleepers on the streets of the UK are at risk of becoming victims of modern slavery.

The [Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner](#) has previously identified that slave masters prey on vulnerable homeless people but noted a significant lack of evidence. He therefore commissioned the Passage to investigate this issue. [Their report](#) was launched on the 26 January.

'Understanding and Responding to Modern Slavery within the Homelessness Sector' highlights how those who are homeless are very vulnerable to rogue employers offering work and accommodation, only to be left exploited in appalling conditions. In addition the report found that victims of modern slavery, a crime effecting an estimated 10-13,000 people in the UK alone [\[1\]](#), could be at risk of destitution and homelessness.

*"We must do more to safeguard our country's most vulnerable people", says the UK's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, **Kevin Hyland** OBE. "This report aims to increase our understanding of modern slavery within the homelessness sector, thus improve our response – both of which are vital if we hope to shelter and shield those in need."*

The UK's anti-slavery sector has been aware of the prevalence of homelessness among victims for some time, and the homelessness sector has been aware of slavery among clients, but there has been little coordination between both sectors until now. Yet the report found that 64% of homelessness organisations had indeed come across potential cases of modern slavery.

The UK's Prime Minister, **Theresa May**, has publicly described modern slavery as *"the greatest human rights issue of our time"*. Speaking on the Passage report, the Prime Minister states, *"The UK is leading the world with our efforts to stamp out modern slavery. Just over a year since the Modern Slavery Act came into force, convictions are up, more victims are getting support and there are more police investigations into this abhorrent crime. But there is still much more to do"*.

"Protecting victims is at the heart of the Government's approach to tackling modern slavery. We welcome this report which highlights the need for the Government, local authorities and law enforcement to work together to stamp out this barbaric crime."

The report makes 12 recommendations. These include closer working between local authorities and police to raise awareness of modern slavery; appropriate data collection to increase understanding of the links between homelessness and modern slavery; awareness raising among the homeless so that they can understand the risks of exploitation; long-term support provision for victims of modern slavery;

and establishment of partnerships across homelessness charities, anti-slavery organisations, police, local authorities and other relevant actors in order to address gaps in support.

Mick Clarke, CEO of The Passage, says, *“It is our hope that this report acts as a catalyst to bring about the systemic change required to address this crime.”*

In the UK potential victims of modern slavery are entitled to accommodation and other essential support services for at least 45 days under the government funded National Referral Mechanism (NRM) – a system specifically designed to identify and assist victims. However there is no long-term support available after this time. Many victims therefore find themselves destitute, homeless or worse, back in conditions of slavery.

“This report highlights the work that so urgently needs to take place” the Commissioner explains. “It is crucial that frontline organisations protect the homeless, before they fall victim to modern slavery, and support the enslaved, before they become rough sleepers on our streets. The time to act is now.”