

Fact Sheet – Exploitation within the Care Sector

Whilst not specific to adults with care and support needs, there has also been recent recognition of the risks of exploitation within the care sector. It is recognised that the care sector is susceptible to worker exploitation and modern slavery due to the significant use of temporary labour and the conditions of employment.

“The issue with care workers experiencing exploitation is that very vulnerable people are being employed to care for very vulnerable people”

Justine Carter, Director, Unseen (2023)

Recognising the signs of modern slavery is crucial if the people experiencing exploitation are to be supported effectively.

In the context of the care sector, modern slavery may manifest in several forms, including but not limited to:

Forced Labour	Workers coerced or deceived into providing labour under exploitative conditions, such as long working hours, inadequate pay, and restricted freedom.
Debt Bondage	Workers trapped in a cycle of debt, often through fraudulent recruitment practice, where they are recruited to repay an inflated debt, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation.
Exploitative Recruitment	Unethical recruitment practices, including charging excessive fees, withholding passports or identification documents, and making false promises about working conditions or wages.
Physical and Psychological Abuse	Workers subjected to physical violence, verbal abuse, threats, or intimidations by employers, colleagues or external perpetrators.
Living Conditions	Care workers living in overcrowded, substandard, or unsuitable accommodation provided by the employer, leading to further exploitation and poor living conditions.

Restricted Movement	Workers have their freedom of movement limited or controlled, either through confiscation of passports or strict surveillance.
Withheld Wages	Employers withholding or significantly deducting wages, making it difficult for workers to escape their exploitative situation or meet basic needs.
Lack of Access to Services	Workers facing barrier in accessing essential services like healthcare, legal aid, or support networks, further isolating them and exacerbating their vulnerability.
Fear and Dependency	Workers exhibiting fearful or submissive behaviour, indicating that they are under the control of others and unable to assert their rights or seek help.

Replicated from: [Sandwell Anti-Slavery Partnership](#)

What to do:

Anyone who is worried that someone may be the victim of modern slavery can call the Police on 101 or through the Live Chat system on the Staffordshire Police website. In an emergency, always call 999.

Modern Slavery & Exploitation helpline – Tel: 0800 0121 700

Support available locally:

Staffordshire County Council's Care Market Development Team maintain a range of resources to support care services in Staffordshire, including an International Recruitment Workforce Support Pack.

[International Recruitment Support Information | Staffordshire County Council](#)

West Midlands Social Care International Recruitment Hub –

Provides information, advice and guidance tailored for care providers, local councils & international care workers

Additional resources:

The Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Unit (MSOICU), in partnership with the Clewer Initiative, have developed an awareness raising resource focussed on the Care Sector.

The resource is split into 2 parts:

- 1) A general overview of what modern slavery is and the different types of exploitation that can exist.
- 2) Specific scenarios within the care sector.

The resource documents are available to download on the MSOICU website [Here](#)

Other information

How is the care sector regulated:

Care Quality Commission (CQC) – The regulatory body for health and social care providers in England. CQC does not have authority investigate concerns relating to modern slavery and international recruitment practices directly, however they would expect providers to have safe and effective recruitment processes that prevent modern slavery.

Please refer to the link below for CQC's regulatory policy position on modern slavery and unethical international recruitment:

<https://www.cqc.org.uk/about-us/transparency/our-regulatory-policy-position-modern-slavery-and-unethical-international-recruitment>

Employment Agencies Standards (EAS) Inspectorate – the state regulator for all recruitment agencies in the United Kingdom, including in the care sector.

Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA) – The GLAA investigate all aspects of labour exploitation in England and Wales, but also work with partner agencies such as the Police, the National Crime Agency and other law enforcement agencies to target, dismantle and address serious and organised crime across the UK.

<https://www.gla.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-we-do>

The [Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Health and Social Care Personnel](#) sets out the principles and best practice benchmarks health and social care employers and recruitment agencies must follow to ensure effective, ethical international recruitment.