

The National Referral Mechanism

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the framework for identifying victims of trafficking, slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour, ensuring they receive the right support.

THINK NRM, when responding to **any form** of exploitation.

If a child is being used for the benefit of others including to commit any crime, to work inappropriately, or take part in any sexual activity and they are being **moved or kept** anywhere for that purpose, they are being trafficked and an NRM **must** be completed.

Who should submit an NRM referral?

All **first responders** have a legal duty to refer anyone they think **may** potentially be a victim. They are not expected to be sure. This includes **all police and local authority staff**.

It is best practice to submit an NRM in partnership with other agencies as they may have valuable information to include. By ensuring all relevant information from every professional involved is included, you can help ensure that the referral is as accurate as possible and that the potential victim receives the right response.

If you are not a first responder, yet you suspect a child is a victim of trafficking, it is your role to **advocate** for a referral to be made by a first responder in the multi-agency network.

A referral to the NRM should be completed in **parallel** to ongoing safeguarding actions and criminal charging decisions where relevant. It should **not replace safeguarding processes**. Every child referred into the NRM should also be referred to the relevant local authority Children's Social Care team, who should then convene a child protection meeting to ensure the child is safe and receiving appropriate

Why use the NRM?

Identifying victims: The NRM is a valuable framework for identifying potential victims and advocating for appropriate interventions or support to prevent further exploitation and offending.

Builds the intelligence picture: It is the main data source in understanding the scale of modern slavery in the UK.

Disruption powers: The NRM facilitates the use of disruption powers under the Modern Slavery Act to help target the real criminals controlling children and protect further children from harm.

Initiates modern slavery investigations: Successful modern slavery charges act as a far stronger deterrent than drugs charges, including longer sentences.

Myth busting

<p>It doesn't matter what I write on the NRM as long as it's completed and submitted.</p>	<p>FALSE: It is vital to think about the language you include. A child who has been exploited is a victim. Words like 'prostitute', 'gang member' and 'streetwise', for example, suggest compliance rather than victimisation. Keep your submissions factual and focused on exploitation indicators only.</p>
<p>If a child appears to be acting in knowledge and 'consent' of their actions, an NRM can't be completed.</p>	<p>FALSE: Groomed and exploited children cannot consent to their own exploitation. It is our duty to look beyond the obvious and recognise what may really be going on.</p>
<p>NRMs can help the pursuit and conviction of Organised Crime Groups and exploiters.</p>	<p>TRUE: Police have a duty to raise a crime report and investigate for every NRM submission. Successful modern slavery charges act as a far stronger deterrent than drugs charges, including longer sentencing.</p>
<p>Young people are using the NRM to escape criminal convictions.</p>	<p>FALSE: The NRM is NOT a 'get out of jail free' card and there is no guarantee that a positive NRM decision will see a young person 'let off'. Every case must be treated individually and we cannot allow professional bias to risk failing to protect children.</p>
<p>Exploiters are abusing the system and telling young people to say they are a victim of trafficking to avoid criminal charges.</p>	<p>FALSE: A young person simply saying they are a victim doesn't mean they will be recognised as one by the NRM. However any young person under the influence of an exploiter is a victim and should be treated as such.</p>
<p>If a young person's solicitor uses a Section 45 Modern Slavery defence later in the process, then this must be a false defence and trafficking has not occurred.</p>	<p>FALSE: Young people who are being exploited will often give false accounts initially, due to fear and mistrust of professionals. Traffickers often coach young people to give false accounts and solicitors often advise them to plead guilty to get a shorter sentence. If there is a disclosure later in the process, or if professionals share information which identifies the young person is being exploited, then an NRM should be submitted.</p>
<p>Whenever a professional thinks a child is being exploited, they should consider a NRM referral.</p>	<p>TRUE: If you have any belief that a young person may have been exploited, you should ensure an NRM is submitted. We encourage all submissions to include multi-agency input.</p>
<p>The NRM does not do anything for a child.</p>	<p>FALSE: An NRM referral should always act as a trigger to instigate child protection responses, further support and other parallel safeguarding actions. The NRM plays a vital role in identifying a child's needs and the risks they are currently facing and should help prevent further exploitation.</p>
<p>Child sexual abuse victims don't need to be referred into the NRM.</p>	<p>FALSE: CSA victims can often be overlooked, any time a child is moved or held somewhere as part of their sexual abuse they should be referred into the NRM.</p>
<p>Police should make the referral as the NRM is a criminal justice process.</p>	<p>FALSE: It is vital that local authority social workers and all other first responders initiate a referral whenever they suspect a child has been held or moved for the purposed of exploitation. They should involve the police and all other relevant professionals in the referral before submitting it.</p>

Access the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre video on the NRM here:
[Via YouTube](#) [Via Police Knowledge Hub](#)