



Home Office

# **Understanding the NRM: A guide for Secondary School Aged Children**

January 2026



## Common terms you will see in this leaflet:

<b>Home Office</b>	This is the part of the government that ensures you have access to the right support and is involved in making your NRM decisions.
<b>National Referral Mechanism (NRM)</b>	The NRM is a way to identify potential victims of exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery, and make sure proper support is in place for you.
<b>First Responder</b>	This is a professional (such as a police officer, social worker or a charity worker), who is concerned that you have been taken advantage of and referred you into the NRM.
<b>Reasonable Grounds Decision</b>	This is a decision the Home Office makes on whether it is reasonable to think you may have been a victim of exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery.
<b>Conclusive Grounds Decision</b>	This is a decision the Home Office makes on whether it is more likely than not that you have been a victim of exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery.

**You may see content throughout this leaflet that makes you feel uncomfortable. It is okay to feel uncomfortable and support providers can offer more assistance at the end of the leaflet.**

**Throughout this pack, you may see the term ‘victim’ being used. When we say victim, we mean people who are victims of exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery.**

**Don’t worry if you don’t know what this means, this booklet will help explain what exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery is, and how we can help you.**

## What is exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery?

It can be complicated. Here are some questions to help.

1



Has anyone ever asked or pressured you to commit a crime, like theft?

2



Has anyone ever asked you to look after, carry, or sell things like drugs, stolen items, packages, or anything illegal for them?

3



Have you ever lived with someone, and were made to do their housework or look after their children? If yes, were you treated unfairly, or have exhausting working hours, or forced to live and work under bad conditions with little or no pay?

4



Has anyone ever pressured, tricked or forced you into doing something sexual, or has made you feel uncomfortable and as if you weren't in control? Has anyone ever pressured or made you do something sexual in exchange for something?

5



Have you ever worked for someone and were poorly paid or not paid at all?

6



Has anyone ever taken you to somewhere, like on a trip or to a new place, and then made you do things you did not want to do, or did not let you talk to the people you trust?

**If you answered yes to any of the above, or have had any other similar experiences where you felt pressured or forced to do something you didn't want to, you might be a victim of exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery.**

**There are people who care and want to help you. If you think you, or someone you know (child or adult), might be a victim of exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery, you should tell a trusted adult, such as a teacher, social worker, or the police, who can help you get the right support. If you or anyone you know is in immediate danger, please contact the police immediately by calling 999.**

You should share this information pack with a trusted adult, who can explain any parts that you would like more information on.

## What is the National Referral Mechanism



The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a system in the UK that helps children and adults who might be victims of exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery. It's there to make sure you're safe and supported.

## Why am I being referred to the National Referral Mechanism



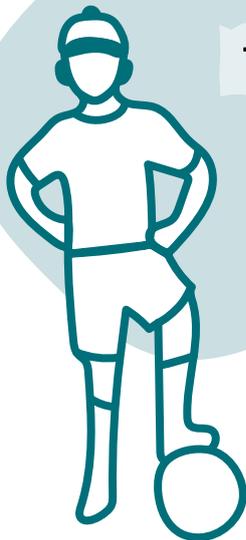
A trusted professional (such as your social worker, a police officer, or a charity worker) was concerned about you and was required to make an NRM referral. As you are under the age of 18, you did not have to agree to being referred into the NRM.

You were referred into the NRM to keep you safe, that does not mean you are in trouble. The NRM referral gets sent to the Home Office (part of the UK Government).

The police are also informed that you are a potential victim of a crime.

The job of the police is to keep everyone in the UK safe. They may look into what has happened to you, so that they can stop it from happening again and to make sure you and other young people are supported and kept safe from harm.

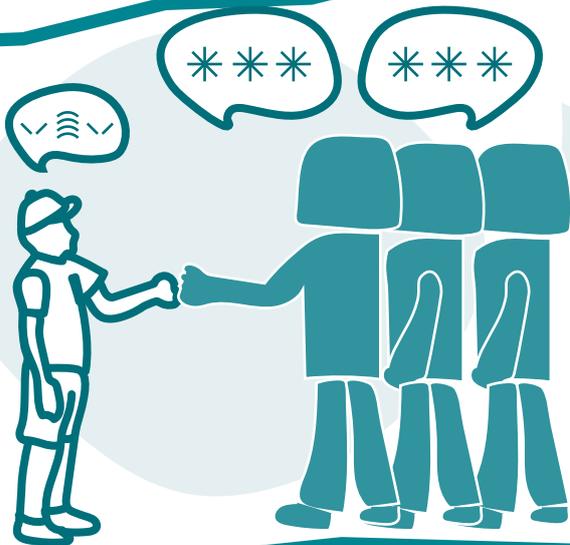
## Charlie's story



1 Charlie is 14. He likes playing football and seeing friends after school.

2

After school, older boys start talking to Charlie outside the shops and buy snacks for everyone.



3

Charlie starts speaking to the older boys more and thinks they are becoming friends.

4

One day, they ask Charlie to drop a bag off at a house on the way home. Charlie doesn't know what is inside but says yes to impress them.





5

The boys give Charlie an expensive coat, as a thank you for helping them.

6

One day they threaten Charlie and say Charlie owes them money. Charlie cannot afford to pay them, so Charlie is made to drop more packages off for them.



7

Charlie feels scared.

8

One day, the police stop Charlie carrying a package for the older boys, the police explain Charlie might be a victim of child criminal exploitation and make a referral to the National Referral Mechanism.





9

The police, social workers, and Independent Child Trafficking Guardian help support Charlie. They explain this is not Charlie's fault and want to keep Charlie safe.

10

After being referred into the National Referral Mechanism by the police, Charlie still worries, but the adults supporting him remind him he's not alone.



11

They help him understand his rights, make safe choices, and believe in himself again. With their help, Charlie starts to build a future where he feels safe, strong, and in control.



## How does the NRM Work?

- Once you've been referred to the NRM, the first step is making sure you're safe. Trusted professionals will talk to you about how you're feeling, listen to you and explain what's happening.
- Part of being in the NRM means the Home Office will look at whether you are a victim of exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery.
- Making this decision can take some time because it is complicated, and the Home Office need to be sure they are making the right decision. This process involves examining the evidence provided by trusted adults to decide if you are a victim of exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery.
- Whilst the Home Office are making these decisions, other professionals have the responsibility to ensure you have access to the right support, such as safe accommodation, education and legal support.
- The support you receive will be based on what you need, so it's important to talk to trusted professionals about how you're feeling.

### There are two parts to the NRM decision:

#### 1. You will get a 'reasonable grounds' decision first.

- ◆ This decision should be made within 5 days and will either be 'negative' or 'positive'.
- ◆ If the decision is positive, the Home Office think that you may be a victim of modern slavery. You will then progress to getting a conclusive grounds decision.
- ◆ If the decision is negative, you might be able to ask for this decision to be reconsidered. A trusted professional can help you, such as your social worker or the police, otherwise your case will be closed.

#### 2. A 'conclusive grounds' decision comes next (if you get a positive reasonable grounds).

- ◆ If the decision is positive, the Home Office think that you are more likely than not a victim of modern slavery. Later in this leaflet, you can see what this means for you.
- ◆ If the decision is negative, you might be able to ask for this decision to be reconsidered. A trusted professional can help you, such as your social worker or the police, otherwise your case will be closed.

You may also meet an adult called an **Independent Child Trafficking Guardian**. They're not part of the police or children's services. They are professionals who are there to support you. They'll help explain things, come to meetings with you, and make sure your voice is heard. The ICTG service have a helpful leaflet to explain the role of ICTG's, which we have shared with your trusted adult.

If you have received a positive decision and would like to be supported after you turn 18, please let the Home Office know by e-mailing [nrm@modernslavery.gov.uk](mailto:nrm@modernslavery.gov.uk) who can put you in touch with the appropriate support provider to consider what support may best help you.

### **What can I do if I receive a negative NRM Decision?**

A negative decision does not always mean that you are not a victim of exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery.

It may be that the Home Office did not have enough information to make this decision.

You might be able to ask the Home Office to reconsider the decision by emailing [nrm@modernslavery.gov.uk](mailto:nrm@modernslavery.gov.uk).

A trusted professional can help you with this, such as your social worker or the police, otherwise your case will be closed.

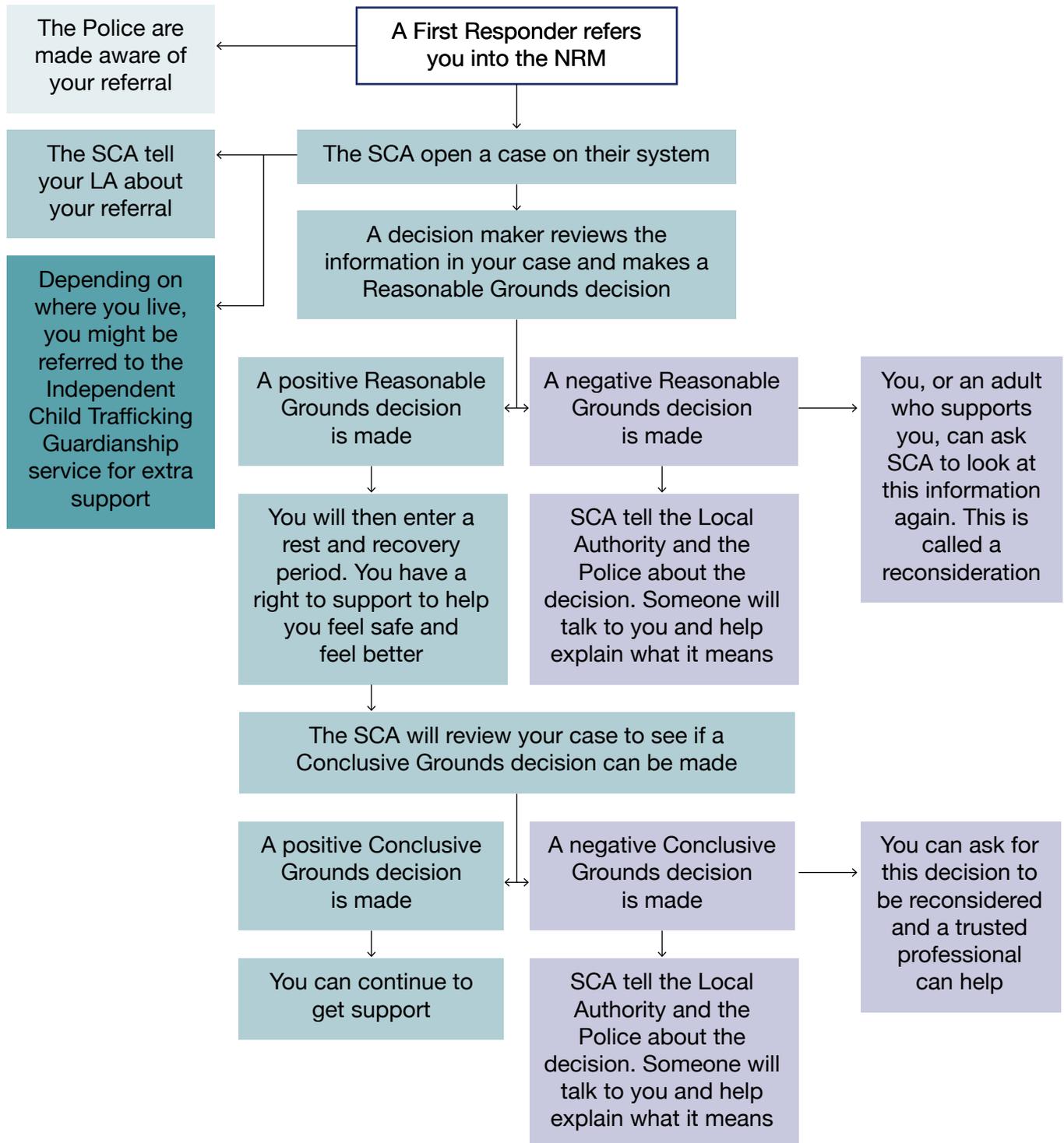
### **What are the benefits of the NRM:**

- The individual will receive a conclusive grounds decision from the Home Office, and if positive, will be recognised as a victim. This may help the individual in their own recovery journey and could help professionals supporting them to recognise their vulnerability and understand how best to support them.
- A positive NRM decision can help you access tailored support to help your recovery.
- If you receive a positive conclusive grounds decision, and do not currently have leave or a right to stay in the UK, you may be able to get temporary permission to stay in the UK (which means you can remain in the UK temporarily if you don't already have permanent status in the UK), as a confirmed victim of modern slavery.
- A positive NRM decision may help when the defense is being considered by the police and prosecution services. You may want to share this with your legal representative if you have been arrested or face prosecution for criminality linked to your exploitation.

## Common Myths:

<p><b>Asylum and the NRM are the same thing.</b></p>	<p>FALSE</p>	<p>Claiming asylum and being referred into the NRM are different processes, some people might be in both processes.</p> <p>Someone who claims asylum is not from the UK and has a fear of returning to their home country because of something serious and personal, like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your race</li> <li>• Your religion</li> <li>• Where you're from (nationality)</li> <li>• What you believe (political opinion)</li> <li>• Being part of a group that's treated unfairly</li> </ul> <p>If you're given asylum, you become a refugee. This means the UK agrees you need protection and can stay here safely. Details of how to claim asylum can be found here – <a href="#"><b>Information booklet for asylum applications - GOV.UK.</b></a></p> <p>The NRM identifies people who are a potential victim of exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery. You cannot apply for the NRM, a First Responder must refer you if they suspect you are a victim.</p>
<p><b>The NRM is not for me, because I am from the UK.</b></p>	<p>FALSE</p>	<p>Anyone can be a victim of exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery, so the NRM supports British children who are victims, as well as those not from Britain.</p>
<p><b>I wasn't trafficked because I didn't leave the UK.</b></p>	<p>FALSE</p>	<p>Trafficking does not mean you have to have travelled or been moved between countries. It can happen within one country, including within a local area, and it can happen online.</p>
<p><b>Remaining in the NRM will delay my asylum claim.</b></p>	<p>FALSE</p>	<p>Asylum decisions can go ahead if there's enough evidence because it is usually in your best interest to have an asylum decision made, even if an NRM decision has not been taken yet.</p> <p>However, in some cases, the asylum decision might wait for the NRM decision first. Where this does happen, the decision is made based on your individual circumstances, and the decision will be kept under review to ensure it is always in your best interest.</p>

**The below diagram illustrates the NRM process from the point of referral to the potential end outcome**



## Who Else Can Support Me?

If you would like to speak to anyone other than a trusted adult about anything you have read, the below organisations offer support to children who may have been treated unfairly.

### England and Wales Support Providers:

#### Barnardo's – National Counter Trafficking Centre

Barnardo's runs the Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship Service in England and Wales. They provide specialist support to child victims of exploitation, human trafficking and modern slavery, helping them understand their situation, access services, and advocate for their rights with social care, police, and immigration authorities.

Phone Number: 0800 043 4303

Email: [countertrafficking@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:countertrafficking@barnardos.org.uk)

Website: <https://nctc.org.uk>

#### Modern Slavery and Exploitation Helpline (Unseen)

Unseen run the UK Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline and work with individuals & potential victims to stamp out slavery for good.

Phone Number: 08000 121 700 (24/7 helpline that is free, confidential and available in over 200 languages)

Website: [modernslaveryhelpline.org](https://modernslaveryhelpline.org)

#### Childline

Childline provides free confidential support for children under the age of 19 to talk about any issues they may be going through. The Helpline is free and confidential and available 24/7.

Phone Number: 0800 1111

Website: [childline.org.uk](https://childline.org.uk)

#### NSPCC – Child Trafficking Advice Centre

The NSPCC provides advice and support for professionals and families concerned about child trafficking. Their Child Trafficking Advice Centre (CTAC) offers free guidance and training to help safeguard children at risk.

Phone Number: 0808 800 5000

Email: [ctac@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:ctac@nspcc.org.uk)

Website: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/ctac>

#### Northern Ireland support providers:

##### Barnardo's independent child trafficking guardian service

They provide specialist support to trafficked children, helping them understand their situation, access services, and advocate for their rights with social care, police, and immigration authorities.

Phone Number: 028 90658105

Email: [ReceptionNI@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:ReceptionNI@barnardos.org.uk)

## Scotland support providers:

### Guardianship Scotland

Statutory Independent Child Trafficking Guardian service. Only for unaccompanied and separated children.

Guardianship Scotland: While Guardianship Scotland is not a designated trafficking support provider, they continue to offer NRM support to unaccompanied young people who remain in the NRM after turning 18.

Phone Number: 0141 445 8659

E-mail: [guardianship@aberlour.org.uk](mailto:guardianship@aberlour.org.uk)

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