

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking and ensuring they receive the appropriate protection and support.

The NRM is also the mechanism through which the UKHTC collects data about victims. This information contributes to building a clearer picture about the scope of human trafficking in the UK. The data is [published in full](#) on this website.

The NRM was introduced in 2009 to meet the UK's obligations under the Council of European Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. At the core of every country's NRM is the process of locating and identifying "potential victims of trafficking" (PVoTs).

How does the NRM process work?

First responders

To be referred to the NRM, potential victims of trafficking must first be referred to one of the UK's two competent authorities (CAs). This initial referral will generally be handled by an authorised agency such as a police force, the UK Border Agency, social services or certain NGOs. The referring authority is known as the 'first responder'.

First responder agencies include:

- SOCA / UKHTC
- Local Authorities
- UK Border Agency
- POPPY Project
- TARA Project (Scotland)

- Migrant Helpline
- Kalayaan
- Medaille Trust
- Salvation Army
- Gangmasters Licensing Authority
- UK police forces
- Crown Prosecution Service
- Local Authority Children's Services

The first responder will complete a referral form to pass the case to the CA. Referral to a CA is voluntary and can happen only if the potential victim gives their permission by signing the referral form.

Download an [adult referral form](#) .

Download a [child referral form](#) .

All completed NRM forms are sent to the UKHTC in the first instance. The UKHTC will then determine which CA will deal with the case and will forward the papers if needed.

Completed forms should be sent to the UKHTC Competent Authority via e-mail at ukhtc@soca.x.gsi.gov.uk or by fax to 0870 496 5534.

Competent Authorities

In the UK the two CAs are:

- The UKHTC, which deals with referrals from the police, local authorities, and NGOs.
- The UK Border Agency, which deals with referrals identified as part of the immigration

process, for example where trafficking may be an issue as part of an asylum claim.

Once a referral has been made, trained experts in the CA will assess the case and make a decision on whether an individual is a victim of trafficking. There are several steps in this process:

Stage One – “Reasonable Grounds”

The NRM team has a target date of 5 working days from receipt of referral in which to decide whether there are reasonable grounds to believe the individual is a potential victim of human trafficking. This may involve seeking additional information from the first responder or from specialist NGOs or social services. The threshold at the Reasonable Grounds stage for the case manager is “From the information available so far I believe but cannot prove” that the individual is a potential victim of trafficking.

If the decision is affirmative then the potential victim will be

- allocated a place within Ministry of Justice safe house accommodation, if required
- granted a recovery and reflection period of 45 days. This allows the victim to begin to recover from their ordeal and to reflect on what they want to do next, for example, co-operate with police enquiries, return home etc.

The referred person and the first responder are both notified of the decision by letter.

Stage Two – Conclusive Decision

During the 45 day recovery and reflection period the CA gathers further information relating to

the referral from the first responder and other agencies.

This additional information is used to make a conclusive decision on whether the referred person is a victim of human trafficking. The CA's target for a conclusive decision is within the 45 recovery and reflection period.

The case manager's threshold for a Conclusive Decision is that on the balance of probability "it is more likely than not" that the individual is a victim of human trafficking.

The first responder and the potential victim will both be notified of the decision. If the referred person is conclusively identified as a victim of trafficking, what happens next will depend on their wishes.

What happens next?

Co-operating with police enquiries

The victim may be granted discretionary leave to remain in the UK for one year to allow them to co-operate fully in any police investigation and subsequent prosecution. The period of discretionary leave can be extended if required.

Other Circumstances

If a victim of trafficking is not involved in the criminal justice process, UKBA may consider a grant of discretionary leave to remain in the UK, dependent on the victim's personal circumstances.

Returning home

If they are from outside the European Economic Area, the victim can receive help and financial assistance to return home through the UK Border Agency Assisted Voluntary Return of Irregular Migrants (AVRIM) process. If they are an EEA national, UKHTC will put them in touch with their embassy and any relevant NGOs who may be able to help.

What if the referred person is not found to be a victim ?

If at any stage the referred person is confirmed not to be a victim of trafficking then dependent on the circumstances they may be referred to the appropriate law enforcement agency – the relevant police force or the UK Border Agency.

If it is decided by the UKBA that the person was not trafficked, and there are no other circumstances that would give them a right to live in the UK, they will be offered support to voluntarily return to their country of origin. The person can also be offered support to return to

their country if they have been trafficked and do not wish to stay in the UK.