

29 August 2025

Referrals with regard to Human Trafficking

I am writing to request the following under FOI:

1. **Number of referrals made by health professionals within your Trust to relevant agencies (e.g., PSNI, social services) regarding individuals suspected of being victims of human trafficking in each of the last 10 years. Please specify the criteria used for making such referrals (while respecting patient confidentiality).**

Adults

Adult Safeguarding make returns to SPPG on a monthly basis. The only question that we are asked is 'of the number of referrals reported to SPPG how many are considered as human trafficking'. We only hold the numbers centrally but not the other details requested below.

Please note the SPPG did not introduce the requirement to report the number of human trafficking referrals to adult safeguarding until September 2018; therefore this data below only captures this from this date.

The below table outlines the number of human trafficking referrals to adult safeguarding services per financial year.

| | |
|---|----|
| Number of human trafficking referrals to adult safeguarding services / financial year | |
| 2018/19 (September 18 to March 19) | 1 |
| 2019/20 | 6 |
| 2020/21 | 2 |
| 2021/22 | 16 |
| 2022/23 | 5 |
| 2023/24 | 9 |
| 2024/25 | 22 |

Human trafficking is included in the Adult Safeguarding policies and procedures as an associated type of abuse. It is defined in 2.2 of the Regional operational procedures as:

Human Trafficking/Modern Slavery

Human trafficking/modern slavery involves the acquisition and movement of people by improper means, such as force, threat or deception, for the purposes of exploiting them. It can take many forms, such as domestic servitude, forced criminality, forced labour, sexual exploitation and organ harvesting. Victims of human trafficking/

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*modern slavery can come from all walks of life; they can be male or female, children or adults, and they may come from migrant or indigenous communities.
The response to adults at risk experiencing human trafficking/modern slavery will always be to report the incident to the Police Service.*

Human trafficking referrals are processed like other adult safeguarding cases and screened in accordance to the criteria outlined in the: Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and protection in partnership 2015; Regional Adult Safeguarding Operational Procedures (2016) and; in the Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership; Protocol for Joint Investigation of Adult Safeguarding Cases (2016).

As such it is included in the mandatory adult safeguarding training, with staff being advised to report this via the regionally agreed APP1 (Referral form).

Children's

Children's Community Services cannot specifically answer this question using existing coding. There is no stand-alone code in the service for Human Trafficking.

Any concerns received by the Directorate concerning Human Trafficking would be brought to at an initial risk strategy meeting held for a young person (under 18). If Human Trafficking is suspect as part of 'an assessment of need and risk' - the services would make a referral to the NRM in the UK Government Home Office who would then consider the application.

Additionally, for families potentially subject to Human Trafficking this concern primarily arises during the family's ongoing assessment and not necessarily at point of entry.