


# Human Trafficking

## The basics of what Nurses need to know

International Council of Nurses Supported by the HR Directorate  
HSE and the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery, RCSI IRELAND





The International Council of Nurses, a federation of over 130 national nursing associations, endorses the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and believes that all people should be treated humanely with respect and dignity. Nurses play a key role in detecting and protecting victims of human trafficking. This pamphlet aims to guide nurses in this role.

## 1. Types of Human Trafficking...

Human trafficking is underpinned by Power and Control

### **Sex trafficking**

Street/online exploitation/ prostitution, residential/ commercial front brothel, truck stops/rests, hotels/hospitality, major sporting event.

### **Labour trafficking**

Domestic workers, agriculture & farming, unskilled work, begging/ peddling, factories, construction, fisheries & maritime, food processing, hospitality sector, car washes, beauty industry & nail bars, restaurants.

### **Criminal Activity**

Cannabis cultivation, street crime, benefit fraud, street begging, forced marriages.

### **Organ harvesting and removal**

**Human trafficking is underpinned by Power and Control through the following practices:**

- Economic abuse
- Coercion and threats
- Intimidation
- Emotional abuse
- Isolation
- Denying, Blaming, Minimizing
- Sexual and physical abuse as a punishment
- Using privilege or social standing,
- Corruption.

## 2. How to recognise Human Trafficking...

There are some general signs to look out for such as the individual;

- Appears to have no legal or suspicious looking documentation in their possession.
- Has no registration with government services, GP, schools etc.
- May have travelled great distances internationally without an understanding of the processes involved in travelling.
- May struggle to communicate in the local or any language.
- May not be using their 'real name' or changes personal details.
- Have no or limited understanding of time or space.
- Claims to be 'just visiting' an area but is unable to offer times and dates of arrival and departure or addresses and phone numbers of other persons.
- Vague or no next of kin details.
- Appears to move location frequently.
- Has no control of his/her own money.
- Neglected appearance can be common due to loss of self-esteem and physical abuse.
- Maintains poor eye contact and closed body language.
- Appears to be withdrawn and submissive and afraid to speak to professional.
- When they do speak they display paranoia, fear, anxiety, depression, submission, tension and general nervousness.
- May have old and untreated injuries with poor history related to the injury.
- Is accompanied by a person who speaks on their behalf and controls the flow of information offered.
- Appearing vague about the address and community where they live.
- Has numerous inconsistencies in his/her story.

### 3. What to look out for...

#### General Health Indicators

- Malnourishment or generally poor health.
- Signs of physical abuse – in particular, unexplained injuries or signs of prolonged abuse:
  - Bruises
  - Black eyes
  - Burns
  - Cuts
  - Broken bones
  - Broken teeth, dental pain
- Multiple scars (including unusual injuries e.g. from lack of protective equipment to violence) evidence of a prolonged infection that is normally easily treated with a routine check up.
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STIs).
- Maternity - Late booking, signs of recent birth or post natal signs.

- Mental health concerns – self harming.
- Addiction to drugs and/or alcohol.
- Individual has no idea of his/her last medical check up.
- Lack of healthcare insurance or registration with the services – paying with cash.

#### Specific Sex Exploitation Indicators

- Underage sexual exploitation or prostitution of a person under 18 years of age (internationally defined as trafficking).
- Suspicion the the person is underage despite their claiming to be older.
- Physical evidence of sexual trauma.
- Evidence of untreated/treated STI's.

- Multiple/frequent pregnancies.
- Inappropriate interest in/or relationship with older men.
- A large amount of sexual partners not appropriate for age or circumstances.
- Inappropriate language used indicative of working in sexual exploitation of prostitution.
- Evidence of a controlling relationship from a partner or another person.
- Inappropriate attire for age or time of day.
- Unexplained tattoos on neck or lower back and other types of branding.
- Family dysfunction increasing risks.
- Individuals outlook on situation and health issues inappropriately downplayed.
- Lack of engagement with the services due to fear or negative outcomes after the interaction.

## 4. What do I do now?

### What to do if I think I have identified a person who has been trafficked:

- Be sensitive and understand the individual's experience.
- Do not place yourself or the individual in danger – notice who is around when you are talking to the individual.
- Notify the Police or relevant authorities if you suspect the individual is in danger.
- Try to record as many details and information without endangering yourself or the individual.
- In private away from others offer information of local agencies or support services that can help the individual either for immediate support or if declined on a future date when the person may

feel more prepared to seek assistance.

- Contact your safeguarding lead and follow local policy when identifying potential victim of human trafficking – if no policy exists consider developing one.

**a) "Trafficking in persons:"** shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose

of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not

involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;  
(d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

**"Trafficking breaks down into three elements:"**

1. The act (what is done) 'Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons';
2. The means (how it is done) 'Threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or

benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person';  
3. The purpose (why it is done) 'For the purpose of exploitation... Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs' (Note there is no

requirement for the purpose to have been achieved, so a person who is rescued before exploitation occurs is still a victim of trafficking).  
The Palermo Protocol establishes children as a special case for whom only two components required - means and exploitation - because a child can not give consent to being exploited, even if they are aware/agreeable.

