



City of Westminster



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA



Safeguarding Adults
Executive Board

Domestic Servitude 7 Minute Briefing

1

What is modern slavery?

Modern slavery is an umbrella term covering human trafficking, slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Modern slavery occurs when someone is forced or coerced to do something, and another person gains from this. The most common ways people are exploited are through forced labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and criminal exploitation.

2

What is domestic servitude?

Domestic servitude is a type of modern slavery that is difficult to spot, as it's often very hidden. It usually occurs in private households, where people are forced to provide cooking, cleaning, childcare and/or other domestic duties. Domestic servitude can happen to domestic workers, or in other circumstances like familial or romantic relationships.

3

What are the signs of domestic servitude?

- Not having access to their passport or documents
- Working excessive hours, no days off, no contract or workers' rights violations
- Not having basic needs met like access to medical care, private space, or adequate food and rest
- Verbal or physical abuse from an employer
- Inability to come and go freely from their workplace, with movements controlled or monitored

4

What is the Overseas Domestic Worker Visa?

Domestic workers may be brought to the UK by their employer on an Overseas Domestic Worker (ODW) visa. The ODW visa lasts six months.

Anyone on the ODW visa is legally entitled to minimum wage and workers' rights protection.

7

Specialist Organisations

Kalayaan provides legal advice to domestic workers, specialising in the ODW. Contact them via their [website](#) or call 020 7243 2942. The Voice of Domestic Workers offers education and support. Contact them through info@thevoiceofdomesticworkers.com. The Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline can be reached on 08000 121 700.

6

How should I respond?

Signpost and link the victim to specialist organisations (step 7)*. Reassurance should be given about workers' rights protections and access to help.

Many domestic workers worry they will be in trouble with police or immigration, remain mindful of this. In an emergency call 999. Domestic servitude is modern slavery, which is a crime.

5

What should I consider if I identify a victim of domestic servitude?

Victims can be scared to leave exploitation. Many in domestic servitude are the breadwinners for their families and leaving their job may be difficult. It is important not to increase the risk of harm by bringing concerns to the attention of abusive employers. Information given to victims must be provided discreetly.

*A victim of modern slavery may require a referral to the [National Referral Mechanism](#)