



To mark [Anti-Slavery Day](#) on 18 October 2016, Hilary Garratt our Director of Nursing and Deputy Chief Nursing Officer for England shares [in her blog](#) the work our organisation is doing to raise awareness of modern slavery, [asks us to watch a video](#) that'll help us understand and respond to modern slavery and to join the conversation on Twitter [@NHSEngland](#), [#EndSlavery2016](#).

Earlier this week, the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner published his [annual report for 2015-2016](#) showing progress that organisations are making to reduce modern slavery across the UK. In this blog, Hilary Garratt, Director of Nursing and Deputy Chief Nursing Officer for England talks about the ongoing work to help raise awareness of modern slavery and how to take action across the NHS.

Every day, NHS staff come into contact with people from across the globe. With more than one million people accessing NHS funded services every 36 hours, the 1.5million staff who work in our NHS, not just in hospitals, but in places where people live their lives, will come into contact with modern slaves.

When we hear the word slavery, we often think of something overseas. But here are the facts; we know that there are 13,000 modern slaves in the UK. They are often hidden in domestic service, in our high streets working in nail bars, food outlets car washes, factories, fields and our shorelines where the fishing industry is active.

Slavery is all around us, but we simply don't recognise the signs. It is in our hands, and yet we can be indecisive about whether or not to get involved. To change that, we do not face a problem of ignorance but of awareness.

It was during my time working in the Calais refugee jungle this year that I witnessed the reality of how our fellow humans, living through unimaginable trauma, are so easily exploited. I saw with my own eyes, young boys and girls being lured into the hands of criminals for want of a better life.

The sight of this happening so shamelessly in the jungle, a place that has no rules or protection, is something that will always remain with me. I recall myself and co-workers feeling powerless to act and for myself, the shame of knowing that some of these children and young adults will, like other slaves, end up in our country.

The UK has a reputation and rich history of having some of the strongest laws in the world to combat modern slavery. However, the law offers little protection unless people and organisations work together on a number of levels.

The NHS has a significant role to play in combatting modern slavery and supporting victims. But to do this we need to ensure that staff understand that modern slavery exists, and we need to ensure that staff are confident and able to both recognise the signs and symptoms of both victim and perpetrators and know what to do.

Today is Anti-Slavery awareness day and I am delighted to be able to share some of the fantastic work that [NHS England](#) is leading to raise awareness and take action on modern slavery across the NHS.

In the last 12 months we have worked closely with the government's Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner ensuring that the NHS England led Anti-Slavery programme aligns to the national priorities set by Commissioner.

As part of the NHS England programme, we have today published a [video](#) that will support staff to understand and respond to modern slavery. It portrays the signs that victims present with and the impact that each and every individual working in the NHS can have in keeping present and potential future victims of modern slavery safe.

We will ensure that all NHS staff have access to formal training on modern slavery which will provide the latest information and the skills to deal with it. We will work with NHS funded organisations to ensure modern slavery is taken seriously so it features prominently in safeguarding agendas.

From today, NHS England is also leading on a Twitter awareness raising campaign and in partnership with the Royal College of Nursing, participating in a kick start event that will explore with a range of professional how to drive awareness and skill development through the UK countries.

Please do stop and think for a moment on this important day and at the very least, find just 10 minutes to [watch the powerful video](#) and chat to a colleague about what you can do to support the thousands of modern slaves, our fellow human beings, who live in our communities, who use services we provide, commission and support. Let us know what you think and join us on Twitter [@NHSEngland](#), [#EndSlavery2016](#) where we will continue our conversation.