



## Press release

17 September 2025

### Modern slavery in hospitality sector exposed in new report

Almost 550 people are thought to have been victims of modern slavery in the UK's hospitality sector over the past 18 months, according to new research from the anti-slavery charity Unseen.

The report, *Service not servitude: modern slavery in the hospitality sector*, reveals that between January 2024 and June 2025, the UK Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline indicated 485 potential victims in food and drink venues and 85 in holiday accommodation.

Survivors were often burdened with debts averaging £18,000 from illegal visa fees. The most common methods of control included financial coercion, tied accommodation and emotional abuse.

Unseen says the findings point to a growing problem linked to skilled worker visas. Reports of potential victims in the hospitality sector on these visas rose by 7,400% between 2023 and 2024 (from one to 75\*).

Indian nationals made up the largest group of those affected, representing 40% of potential victims where nationality was known. Bangladeshi and Chinese nationals followed. Most victims were Asian men in their 20s.

Justine Carter, Deputy CEO at Unseen, said the sector is showing "the same characteristics" of exploitation first seen in the UK care sector in 2022.

She said: "There is a large disparity between what is promised to workers and the reality once they arrive in the UK. Many are charged illegal fees, forced into substandard housing, and threatened with deportation if they speak up."

Carter warned the situation could worsen, with job cuts and financial pressures in hospitality increasing the risk of exploitation.

"To cut costs, some organisations may resort to exploiting migrant workers," she added. "These are egregious crimes we can't allow in a modern UK society."

Alongside slavery cases, the Helpline recorded a sharp rise in labour abuse in hospitality, with potential victims increasing by 60% between 2023 and 2024. The main issues were underpayment of wages, excessive hours, and workplace harassment.

Anyone seeking advice can call the Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline on 08000 121 700.

\*Based on disclosed information. The true figure of potential victims on skilled worker visas in hospitality is likely to be higher.



## **Notes to editors**

For media enquiries, please contact [media@unseenuk.org](mailto:media@unseenuk.org) or call 07951 678152.

An embargoed copy of the report is available upon request.

A [webinar](#) to launch the report will take place from 1pm to 2pm on Wednesday 17 September. Journalists are welcome to attend.

## **Request interview with modern slavery leading expert**

To request an interview with a modern slavery expert from Unseen, please contact the media team using the details above.

## **About the UK Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline**

- The Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline, run by Unseen, operates 365 days a year, is staffed by specialists, is free to use, and can take calls in more than 250 languages.
- Since its launch in October 2016 and the end of 2024, the Helpline has indicated more than 41,000 potential victims of modern slavery across 15,000 cases.
- Anonymised aggregate data from the Helpline is used to inform academic research, policing and government strategies, and help Unseen's Business Portal members identify trends in their sector.
- The Helpline is confidential and independently funded, relying on grants from trusts, businesses, fellow charities and other organisations, and donations from the public. It receives no government funding.