



THE SCALE OF THE ISSUE



Women make up about

A THIRD OF ALL VICTIMS

of modern slavery in the UK and their exploitation can often result in pregnancy



According to the crisis charity, Hestia, there are at least

5000 children of modern slavery victims in the UK¹

DIG DEEPER

Very little is known about the children of modern slavery victims and the intergenerational impact of the trauma they and their mothers have been through. To help fill the knowledge gap, London-based charity Hestia commissioned research into the needs and experiences of mothers who are survivors of modern slavery and the potential impact of their trafficking experiences on their children. The report 'Forgotten Children' outlines the deep and lasting impact on the lives of these children.

The Hestia researchers observed that some children of modern slavery victims were forced into premature responsibility or became hyper-vigilant to their mother's needs as a reaction to the challenging circumstances they were living in. Several women told researchers that if they got sad their children would sense it and get upset. If they cried the child would cry too, or if they were experiencing low mood the child would try to protect them by bringing a book or some other comforter.

Low self-esteem was common, often affecting both mother and child. For example, the daughter of one survivor was no longer speaking at school following a period where her mother experienced low self-esteem.

Many of the women faced difficulties in setting boundaries and managing the behaviour of their

children, especially as they got older. A member of the Hestia Modern Slavery Response Team explains: "The children push at the boundaries, but the mothers feel guilty if they say no."

Several children were being investigated or supported for developmental delay, particularly speech delay. Other health needs of children included autism, eating difficulties and low self-esteem.

Older children had either been direct victims of violence and abuse by the traffickers or witnessed their mothers being hurt.

**WHAT IS IT LIKE BEING THE PARENT OF A MODERN SLAVERY VICTIM?**

The trauma of modern slavery not only impacts the children of victims, it also has a devastating impact on the parents of victims. Listen to Becky Lewis, the Strategic Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager at Bristol City Council explain the stigma and isolation faced by many parents of children who are exploited.



Scan me or go to The Clewer Initiative's YouTube channel and search for Becky Lewis' clips



¹ Hestia, Underground Lives: Forgotten Children: The Intergenerational Impact of Modern Slavery, 2021



REFLECTION

Read Luke 18 v9-14

The Pharisee thought he was an upright citizen, deeply religious and well equipped with rules and values to deal with the complexities of human living. In our world today, there are many people who claim to know the answers to life's challenges, including the brutality of modern slavery, and the damage it does to children and families. Jesus contrasts the self-righteous prayer of the Pharisee with the tax collector. Our response needs to be modelled on the tax collector who was humble and aware of his own weakness and culpability. This is our starting point when we approach God in prayer and petition.

- When are you tempted to be proud or self-righteous or to feel good about yourself because of your good works?
- Reflect upon the danger of self-righteousness and how it can infiltrate our hearts and even our acts of kindness and mercy
- How can our interactions with other people be characterised by humility?
- What might such humility and solidarity look like in your church, or in the work of organisations like The Clewer Initiative?



PRAYER

Holy God, help us to recognise the pain of all who feel inadequate and excluded, especially in the face of possible exploitation and abuse. May we own our own failings and shortcomings and our tendency to put ourselves first. We ask for your guidance and blessing through Him who sets all captives free, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.





A STORY OF HOPE - VIKI'S STORY

A story of hope - Viki's story

"I have two children – a son aged five and a daughter aged three. I love them both so much, they give me a different life and I am very happy. My son was born after I had escaped slavery and even though I had health issues during the pregnancy, things went well at first. But then we had to move cities and I didn't have anyone around me, not many friends and no family. I was isolated.

"When you feel so alone it's so hard to cope. I was very concerned about my son and the delays in his speech, so I went to the GP and asked the Health Visitor for help, but they just told me not to worry. But I said, 'look my son was talking and now he has stopped – something is wrong'. But they didn't see the gap between his age and his development.

"It was very difficult when they gave him the diagnosis of Autism because I was not aware of it and didn't know what it meant or how to help him. I didn't know what to do next – he was being sent home from school all the time and I didn't know how to help him at home.



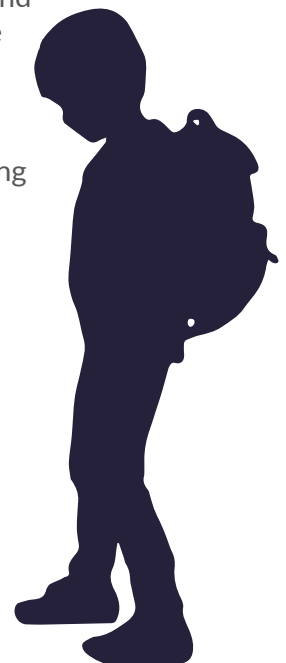
"My Hestia case worker chased up speech and language therapy and found funding for me to see a psychologist over Zoom. The therapist was able to show me what I was doing well and what I had to change. She showed me how playing together could help change his behaviour.

"Now I'm more confident with him – she's taught me how to deal with his behaviour and how to make my life more normal. It's a long way to get there because he is very delayed and needs lots of support, but it's helping me. My son has special needs but he is a lovely boy. He is amazing and I am so proud of him."



SPOTLIGHT ON HESTIA WWW.HESTIA.ORG

Hestia provides services for victims of modern slavery and their children across London and Kent, each year supporting more than 2,200 adult victims and 1,200 dependent children. Hestia's Modern Slavery Response Team (MSRT) provides support to victims referred into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the national framework that ensures victims of modern slavery and trafficking are identified and receive appropriate early support. Hestia supports victims in safe houses in London and Kent, and through a pan-London outreach service working in every London borough.





ACTION 2 – LOVING FAMILIES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

What have you learnt through this session and from the experience of Hestia about the needs of families affected by modern slavery?

Becky Lewis, the Strategic Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Service Manager at Bristol City Council outlines some of the ways that churches and communities can support vulnerable families and create a culture where exploitation does not thrive.

Take some time to watch each short clip and reflect on what might be possible in your context.



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- ▶ Be the eyes and ears of your community
- ▶ Community mentoring
- ▶ Creating a culture that does not allow exploitation to happen

Churches and faith groups can play a key role in providing safe spaces for parents and children of modern slavery victims to process their trauma and receive solace, support and companionship.

- *Do you have access to a community space that could be offered to parents or children of modern slavery victims?*
- *Could you find out about local organisations that are already working alongside victims of modern slavery and get involved befriending individuals?*

