



THE SCALE OF THE ISSUE

Women make up about **QUARTER (26%) 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 UK.

Research suggests that around **30%** of trafficking survivors have experienced one or more pregnancies during exploitation.

The Hestia researchers observed that some children of modern slavery victims were forced into **premature responsibility** or became hypervigilant 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 too. If they cried, the child would cry, 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.” Another said: “All four children were born during her exploitation and were brought up while she was enslaved in domestic servitude. She is so upset because she does not know how to help them. She can see the impact it has had on them, but feels ill-equipped to help them, and can’t see how. She is too gentle with them and will not enforce boundaries or discipline because they have been through so much and she doesn’t want to be harsh and strict.”

Several children were being tested or supported for **developmental delay**, particularly speech delays. 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.



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. Most services and support is currently focused on the needs of the adult survivor: the health and social support needs of dependents and families are under-reported. It is assumed that the adult survivor can provide suitable support needs for their dependent but sadly this isn’t always the case. It is a very long road to recover from an experience of exploitation and often the trauma is passed down to the next generation.

To help fill the knowledge gap, a number of organisations and individuals have commissioned research. London-based charity Hestia’s report ‘**Forgotten Children**’ outlines the deep and lasting impact on the lives of these children.



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

Holly Jones, a PhD research fellow at the University of Nottingham's Rights Lab, is also looking at the experiences, needs and support provision for dependents. She explains: "the impact of modern slavery extends beyond the individual victim. There is a knock-on impact and intergenerational trauma that the whole family faces. In the UK today, there is an invisible population of children that are not being catered for and there is a lack of understanding about the uniqueness of their needs."

Holly's research echoes many of the findings in the Hestia report. As well as developmental delays, behavioural challenges, a prevalence of ADHD and autism, hypervigilance and premature responsibility, Holly also observed the impact of family's living situations. She explains: "We all want to give our children a sense of safety, particularly after experiencing trauma, but the lack of a safe space, and the insecurity of not knowing if you're staying in particular accommodation or moving on, creates huge anxiety. There is no consistent, safe space.

"Parents speak of being overprotective of their children because of how unsafe they feel the world is and as a result, they struggle to allow their children to play outside with friends or socialise with others. Instead, they often use screen time as a way to distract children. For parents, being on their screens themselves was a big part in their own rehabilitation, providing a break and time to think but they felt this resulted in their children being online too much and worried about the consequences. Parents are trying to juggle so much on their own."



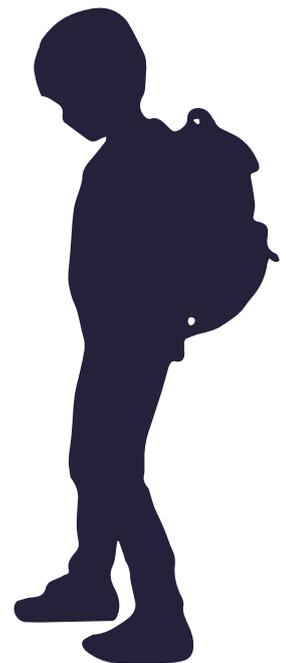
WATCH THE FILM

Learn more about intergenerational trauma by watching this short film with PhD research fellow, Holly Jones.



<https://youtu.be/ewChjJSubg>

1. What struck you as you watched the film?
2. What do you understand by the phrase 'intergenerational trauma'?
3. How do you think churches can respond to this gap in support provision?
4. What can your church offer in terms of community and stable relationships?





READ LUKE 18 V9-14

Learning the humility that equips us for witness and service

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 answer to life's challenges but fail to understand the complexity of individual circumstances. For example, people may share strong opinions on social media but fail to show compassion and understanding regarding the brutality of modern slavery, and the damage it does to children and families.

There is a temptation to judge one another, particularly parents, rather than viewing everyone with kindness and empathy, recognising that many of us have histories in a broken world that has abused and failed us. With survivors of trafficking, we have all played a part in their trauma – whether through apathy, indifference or ignorance.

Jesus contrasts the self-righteous prayer of the Pharisee with the approach of the tax collector. Our response needs to be modelled on the latter, who was humble and aware of his own weakness and culpability. He knew that his work and witness always fell short, and that he needed continuing guidance and grace to better fulfil his calling. This is our starting point when we approach God in prayer and petition.

- When are you tempted to be proud or self-righteous or feel good about yourself because of your good works, beliefs or backgrounds?
- 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?
- How can you improve your awareness and actions to support children being exploited in modern slavery?



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 captive free, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.





A STORY OF HOPE – HOLLY JONES

Holly Jones is currently a PhD researcher at the Rights Lab in Nottingham. Prior to entering academia, she worked for Causeway, a Sheffield-based charity, as the South Yorkshire Services Manager. Causeway exists to support, empower and create change for survivors of modern slavery. It has a government contract to support adult survivors of modern slavery and runs family safe houses for survivors who are referred with children, or who are pregnant.

During Holly’s time working at Causeway, she worked with hundreds of families and became increasingly aware of how the parents felt there was a lack of resources, support, and funding for their dependent children.

She explains: “Over time, I recognised the massive gap in support provision for children. Children would come into Causeway, and I could see they had unique needs due to the intergenerational trauma they were experiencing, and these needs were not being addressed. My time at Causeway compelled me to spend the last four years researching what support is available and exploring what best practice would be.

“As a new mum myself, I know that motherhood is hard enough on its own, let alone with the kind of trauma that you face because of modern slavery.”

Holly has big hopes for how her research could drive a change in the provision of support services for dependent children. She wants to start a national conversation and help people see how children of modern slavery survivors are victims themselves. She hopes her research will lead to more funding and resources for this hidden population.

Recently Holly has been involved in drafting the new **Slavery and Trafficking Survivor Care Standards**. The updated edition has an appendix on how to support dependent children of modern slavery survivors and the base level of care that children should receive.

Holly comments: “I was so pleased to contribute to the Care Standards section on dependents. It is a good start for people in the sector – support providers, charities, healthcare providers, the police, criminal justice professionals, legal advisers, and local authority – to encourage them to recognise there are children within these services that need more help.”



CAUSEWAY

Causeway is a Sheffield-based charity which exists to support, empower and create change for survivors of modern slavery. It has been supporting thousands of individuals to make progress and thrive for more than 15 years and currently works with more than 2,000 service users each year. It has a Government contract to support adult survivors of modern slavery but also runs family safe houses for survivors who are referred with children, or who are pregnant.

One small but significant way in which Causeway helps modern slavery families as they rebuild their lives is by providing material items when survivors first arrive at their safe houses or later when they move to live independently in the community. Often survivors and their children arrive at safe houses with literally just the clothes on their backs.

This year alone, Causeway has given 7,181 items, including duvet covers, crockery, cutlery, toys and clothing, to modern slavery families.

It also provides a service where the parent and the child can go on the website and pick something that they want for free. It gives survivors autonomy and agency – being able to decide what they want for themselves. This service wouldn't be possible without the generous donations of individuals and businesses, both locally and nationally.



www.wearecauseway.org.uk

CAUSEWAY



ACTION – LOVING FAMILIES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

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

- Do you have access to a community space that could be used to create this safe space to connect and play?
- What family support groups exist in your area? Are they looking for volunteers who have time to go along and befriend families? Are they in need of donations, such as toys or cake, or behind the scenes support? How could you get involved?

- Find out about local modern slavery organisations that are already working in your area alongside victims of modern slavery. Are they looking for volunteers to befriend individuals or offer transportation or access to a church hall or safe place to meet with clients?
- Could you organise a donation drive for a local modern slavery charity like Causeway and collect material items that could help a family as they rebuild their lives?

