

Forced Labour



What is forced labour?

Forced labour is the act of coercing or deceiving someone into working against their will. Victims of forced labour are often controlled by their 'employers' through threats of/ actual physical harm, confiscation of identity documents and by withholding their wages. Forced labour occurs throughout the country and is most common at the boundary of formal and informal work. It is within these low-skilled, low-wage jobs where labour standards and workers are, for the most part, unregulated, unlicensed and unenforced. Although forced labour **does** occur among vulnerable British workers, it is migrant populations who are particularly at risk.

Forced labour and supply chains.

Forced labour is relatively common within UK businesses. Although companies may not actively exploit workers, when their products/services require complex and multileveled supply chains, there is a strong likelihood that at one of those levels, forced labour will occur. Research conducted by Allain *et al.* demonstrates that the large number of subcontractors and intermediaries involved within construction and agriculture supply chains make these industries very susceptible to forced labour exploitation.

What can be done?

The JRF suggests that improving regulation and the enforcement of labour standards is crucial to eradicating forced labour in the UK. We do not currently have a unified labour inspection body; instead, a number of enforcement

agencies are responsible for monitoring forced labour in the country. To tackle forced labour in the UK we need unified regulation and enforcement of labour standards and crucially, improved protection and assistance for those who have been affected.

What are the signs?

- Excessive overtime
- Migrant workers who paid a fee and may be at risk of debt bondage
- Workers paid cash in hand, no clear record of hours worked or pay rate
- Lack of grievance mechanisms
- Absence of unions
- Workers dependent on employer or agent for basic living needs
- Workers living and working in poor conditions
- Prison labour used in the production of goods

Statistics

- **3,000 to 5,000 people are affected by forced labour in the UK (JRF)**
- **20.9 million affected globally (ILO)**
- **Accounts for \$150 billion in illegal profits in the private economy each year (ILO)**

Useful Resources

Joseph Rowntree Foundation reports-
Forced Labour in the United Kingdom
Forced Labour's Business Models and Supply Chains (2013)
International Labour Organisation - www.ilo.org

Who to Contact?

The Gangmasters Licensing Authority is the UK Government's agency that deals with Labour Exploitation. www.gla.gov.uk
Call **101** to contact your local police or 999 in an emergency

Call the Salvation Army's 24-hour confidential Referral Helpline on **0300 3038151**