



Dame Sara Thornton DBE QPM  
Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner  
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3 March 2020

The Royal College of Psychiatrists  
21 Prescott Street  
London  
E1 8BB

Dear Professor Wendy Burn,

I am writing to you about the lack of adequate provision of training for doctors in the area of Modern Slavery Human Trafficking (MSHT).

MSHT is an egregious violation of men, women and children for the purposes of forced labour, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, domestic servitude, organ harvesting and forced criminal activities, including county lines.

There is no accurate way of estimating how many people are living and experiencing MSHT within the UK. However, the National Crime Agency suggest “tens of thousands”<sup>1</sup>, the Home Office estimated “10,000-13,000”<sup>2</sup> in 2012 and the Global Slavery Index estimate 136,000<sup>3</sup>. That would mean 2 per 1000 individuals.

There is an increasing amount of research which documents the severe impact of MSHT on the physical and mental health of victims and survivors, but we also know this is not limited to an individual. MSHT is a public health issue<sup>4</sup>, stemming from poverty and inequality, whilst self-perpetuating and contributing to detrimental social determinants of health. This country needs to address MSHT from a public health and healthcare perspective in order to tackle this crime in a person-centered, holistic and effective way.

Our health service needs an effective and coordinated response to MSHT. Some studies suggest as many as 68% of victims present to healthcare settings when they are experiencing exploitation, with

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<sup>1</sup> The Guardian, 2017 Tens of thousands of modern slavery victims in UK, NCA says.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/10/modern-slavery-uk-nca-human-trafficking-prostitution>

<sup>2</sup>HM Government. *Modern Slavery Strategy*. [online] London, 2014: Open Government Licence v3.0. Available at:[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/383764/Modern\\_Slavery\\_Strategy\\_FINAL\\_DEC2015.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/383764/Modern_Slavery_Strategy_FINAL_DEC2015.pdf) [Accessed 30 Jun. 2019]

<sup>3</sup> Global Slavery Index. *Country Data | Global Slavery Index*. [online] 2018. Available at:  
<https://www.globalslaveryindex.org/2018/data/country-data/united-kingdom/> [Accessed 23 Jan. 2019].

<sup>4</sup> Such E, Laurent C, Salway S. 2017. Modern Slavery and Public Health, Public Health England.  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-slavery-and-public-health/modern-slavery-and-public-health> (last accessed 1 February 2018).

just over half of those being seen by emergency/urgent care practitioners<sup>5</sup>.

Despite this, healthcare professionals don't feel they have the knowledge and confidence to know what to do when they encounter someone who may be trafficked. In 2015, a survey of 782 NHS healthcare professionals found that 95.3% percent were unaware of the scale or extent of MSHT in the UK. One in eight healthcare professionals said they know or strongly suspect they have come in to contact with a victim (one in five in maternity services), yet 78.3% reported that they had insufficient training to assist trafficked people. Importantly, 86.8% reported lacking knowledge of the questions to ask to identify potential victims<sup>6</sup>. This research highlights a serious knowledge and confidence gap amongst frontline clinicians, who may be the only individuals encountering trafficked victims at their most vulnerable. Crucial opportunities to intervene and offer safety and choice are being missed.

“Safeguarding Children and Young People: Roles and Competencies for Healthcare Staff”, an intercollegiate document, established that “forced marriage, modern slavery and grooming and exploitation”, “county lines” and “child trafficking (internal and external)” are considered core competencies for all levels of safeguarding, expected of all healthcare staff<sup>7</sup>.

Whilst it is positive to see a commitment to safeguarding vulnerable people within your curriculum, I understand that there is currently no specific reference to MSHT, thus there is no mandate for training bodies to train and equip their healthcare professionals to identify and safely respond to MSHT. As such, the responsibility rests solely on individual prioritisation within safeguarding teams, NHS Trusts and other healthcare organisations.

Under the terms of the Modern Slavery Act of 2015, I am charged with encouraging good practice in the prevention, detection, and investigation of slavery offences, and the identification of victims<sup>8</sup>. My first [strategic plan](#) was laid before Parliament in October 2019 and I have prioritised the care and support of victims. Herein lies a crucial opportunity to do so. It is a stated goal of NHS England to support staff in accessing training on how to identify and safeguard victims of MSHT<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, the duty to safeguard all adults and children is enshrined in the General Medical Council's statutory guidance, “Good Medical Practice”, upon which all medical education in the United Kingdom is based<sup>10</sup>.

Following consultation with NHS safeguarding leads and experts in the field, both clinical and within academia, this office has identified a key opportunity for the Royal Colleges to take the lead in the

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<sup>5</sup> [J Health Care Poor Underserved](#). 2016;27(3):1220-33. doi: 10.1353/hpu.2016.0131

<sup>6</sup> Oram S, Hemmings S, Abas M et al. Provider Responses Treatment and Care for Trafficked People. Department of Health, 2016. <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/ioppn/depts/hspr/research/CEPH/wmh/assets/PROTECTReport.pdf>. (last accessed 5 February 2018).

<sup>7</sup> The Royal College of Nursing. (2019). *Safeguarding Children and Young People: Roles and Competencies for Healthcare Staff | Royal College of Nursing*. [online] Available at: <https://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/publications/pub-007366> [Accessed 18 Oct. 2019].

<sup>8</sup> Legislation.gov.uk. (2019). Modern Slavery Act 2015. Charter 30, Part 4, Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. [online] Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/30/part/4/enacted> [Accessed 18 Oct. 2019]

<sup>9</sup> NHS England (2019). *NHS England » NHS England slavery and human trafficking statement*. [online] England.nhs.uk. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/safeguarding/slavery-human-trafficking-statement/> [Accessed 18 Oct. 2019]

<sup>10</sup> General Medical Council (2019). Good Medical Practice. *Domain 2: Safety and quality*. [online] Available at: <https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-guidance-for-doctors/good-medical-practice/domain-2----safety-and-quality#paragraph-24> [Accessed 18 Oct. 2019].

efforts to safeguard patients against MSHT with all its deleterious consequences. We propose that the inclusion of reference to MSHT within your curriculum would equip trainee doctors to safeguard this vulnerable patient population.

I am therefore writing to urge you in the strongest possible terms to include reference to Modern Slavery Human Trafficking (MSHT) and exploitation within your curriculum for trainee psychiatrists.

I look forward to receiving your response. In the interests of transparency, I request that you respond in a way that enables me to publish your letter on my website.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "San Yoon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner**

1 July 2020

Dame Sara Thornton DBE QPM  
Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner  
Sent via email: [shelley.perera@iasc.independent.gov.uk](mailto:shelley.perera@iasc.independent.gov.uk)

Dear Dame Thornton

Thank you for your letter of 3 March 2020 asking us to consider the addition of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT) into the core curriculum.

It was discussed at the Curricula Revision Working Group and Specialist Advisory Committee chairs meetings and it was agreed that safeguarding in itself is a broader issue for trainees to be aware of.

The new curriculum will have a High-Level Outcome specifically for safeguarding (HLO 7), with broad capabilities on safeguarding vulnerable people.

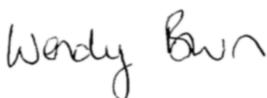
After discussion, the group felt that we would be unable to outline MSHT specifically in the main curriculum document without outlining all areas of safeguarding, and it would be difficult to mandate capabilities in this.

I was agreed that we could potentially link to relevant information on various safeguarding areas in the training guide, but again would need to ensure what we include is all encompassing.

Please let us know if you would like any further information.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely



Professor Wendy Burn  
President

Dr Adrian James  
President of The Royal College of Psychiatrists  
The Royal College of Psychiatrists  
21 Prescott Street  
London  
E1 8BB

18 September 2020

Dear Dr James,

Earlier this year I wrote to your predecessor, Professor Wendy Burn, regarding the inclusion of modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT) within the core curriculum. I appreciate the response that was received on 1 July 2020, especially given the significant demand on the health sector over the past few months.

I understand that the new curriculum will have a High-Level Outcome specifically for safeguarding (HLO 7) with broad capabilities on safeguarding vulnerable people. However, I was disappointed to read the response from Professor Burn stating that the Royal College of Psychiatrists would be unable to make specific reference to MSHT within the curriculum.

Having reviewed your curriculum<sup>1</sup> online, I note that Intended Learning Outcome 1 (detailed on page 28) provides a list of patients who have encountered different forms of trauma including those who have experienced sexual abuse, domestic violence and immigration detention. I welcome the emphasis on taking a trauma informed approach within your curriculum and it seems that this could be an appropriate place to mention MSHT or more broadly, exploitation. MSHT is a major public health issue with significant mental health precursory vulnerabilities, therefore I would encourage you to give further consideration to including this reference.

Finally, I am delighted to confirm that the new national training standards for MSHT training published by Skills for Care which I referred to in my previous correspondence will be launched on 22 September 2020. The standards outline the recommended levels of training and expertise appropriate for the identification, care and support of victims and survivors of MSHT and are relevant to a wide range of practitioners and organisations. Further details on the launch event, including how to register your attendance are available [here](#).

Sincerely,



**Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner**

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<sup>1</sup> Royal College of Psychiatrists (2019) [A Competency Based Curriculum for Specialist Core Training in Psychiatry](#)