



# recruitment grapevine

**CHAMPAGNE**  
CANDIDATES,  
LEMONADE  
**BUDGET?**

RECRUITMENT  
LIFE IN  
**GERMANY**

RECRUITMENT  
LESSONS  
FROM  
**WWE**

THE BREXIT  
**CHALLENGE**

SHOULD  
RECRUITERS  
**CHARGE**  
CANDIDATES  
**WHO WASTE  
THEIR TIME?**

COULD  
BLOCKCHAIN  
**REVOLUTIONISE**  
THE INDUSTRY?

# INVISIBLE CHAINS

UNCOVERING MODERN SLAVERY WITHIN THE RECRUITMENT INDUSTRY





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UNCOVERING MODERN SLAVERY  
WITHIN THE RECRUITMENT INDUSTRY

Words by Emma Jackson | Design by Adam Pettigrew

At the start of 2004 Morecambe Bay, with its hostile landscape and lethal quicksand, was a relatively unknown region of the UK. But on the evening of February 5th that year, the world's press descended upon the area as a devastating case of modern slavery unfolded, in what tragically became known as the 'Morecambe Bay cockling disaster'.



**A**round 40 miles north of popular seaside resort Blackpool and just south of the scenic Lake District National Park, the large estuary can make for treacherous territory. On that fateful night, at least 21 Chinese illegal immigrant labourers were drowned by an incoming tide. A British father and son had unlawfully hired a group of Chinese workers to pick cockles off the Lancashire and Cumbrian coast. The workers had been illegally imported via containers into Liverpool and were hired out through local criminal agents of international Chinese Triads. The tragedy caused a national outrage, and at the time, many were aghast that such a heinous act could ever have happened in 21st Century England. And yet, 14 years on, modern slavery is no less prevalent. Whilst Prime Minister Theresa May has acknowledged that human trafficking is "the greatest human rights issue of our time," many believe the Modern Slavery Act doesn't do enough to support victims.

The charity Unseen, describes modern slavery as: "The illicit trade in human beings, turned into commodities to be bought, sold and exploited, with very little chance of prosecution for the perpetrators and horrendous human rights outcomes for the victims." Such crimes include holding a person in a position of slavery, involuntary servitude or compulsory labour; or facilitating their travel with the intention of exploiting them soon after. Although human trafficking often involves an international cross-border element, it is entirely possible to be a victim of modern slavery within your own country. Sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and organ harvesting are all variants of modern slavery not to mention a plethora of unthinkable child related crimes.

Globally, an estimated 40.3million people were victims of modern slavery in 2016, according to figures from the UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Walk Free Foundation. In the UK alone, there has been a 47% increase in victims since 2012. The numbers are stark, and the seriousness of the problem is sadly underestimated. Yet there is a growing movement that is working relentlessly to raise crucial awareness of this shameful pandemic. PMP Recruitment is one such organisation acting to identify and protect the vulnerable. The international staffing firm (part of the Cordant Group) are fast emerging as somewhat pioneers for establishing the responsibility of recognising and reporting suspected cases of modern slavery within the profession. PMP has been operating in high-volume recruitment for more than 20 years, employing today (at peak) up to 45,000 colleagues throughout Europe and Australia. With significant cleaning, caring, and security businesses comprising of the same demographics where modern slavery can and have been found to occur, they take the safety of their workers seriously.


Jamie Reynolds, Managing Director at PMP says the examples of modern-day slavery seen the most often involve 'gang-masters'. "Typically, it is individuals who are effectively taking pay from colleagues as a form of route to employment – almost like a 'finder's fee'," he says. "Or where multiple colleagues are being housed in one location. They may have come to the UK after being enticed into that situation and will often have had their passports taken from them. And then there are examples of brut threats." PMP do not have overseas help during peak times and are therefore not susceptible to the challenges that come with transporting workers in and out of other countries. >>



The company became a member of the UN Compact in 2006 and safeguarding colleagues in labour industries has been a staunch element of their offering for many years. Jamie says: "Recently, we have focused on giving colleagues the ability to raise concerns without fear of prejudice or repercussion. What has also become more prevalent, is our customers and the market place being more aware of their social responsibility to support allegations and investigations. Both sides of the spectrum are taking joint responsibility for action. And then, I also think that charities such as Unseen are becoming more mainstream and transparent to victims."

Together, alongside specialist organisations such as the GLAA (Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority) and Unseen, PMP ensure colleagues are well equipped to escalate any concerns they may have that modern slavery is taking place. Thanks to ongoing training in understanding and appreciating the problems there has been a marked increase in the number of concerns being raised. An independent hotline that allows them to escalate potential issues without fear, sees up to 50 anonymous calls a month being made. Jamie says: "There has been a definite upturn in complaints being lodged due to the awareness we are raising. People feel comfortable and know that they are going to be supported. We typically see that the people who raise the concerns are fearful of repercussions having been close enough to see the potential risks. We give them that support, guidance and reassurance that they can raise issues without fear."

Of course, these changes don't happen overnight, nor do they happen without any outlay. PMP understood that to advance in their helping of identifying and exposing cases of modern slavery, they would need specialist technology. As such, they have invested heavily in a national resourcing centre which processes all their registrations. Jamie explains: "We have developed industry leading technology in which the candidate self-registers, with several steps for them to go through. It incorporates training and information around modern-day slavery and raising awareness. Our system then allows us to verify applications through algorithms, addresses, postcodes and names to give us that independent view and insight."

PMP work tirelessly to eliminate modern slavery from within the confines of their organisation, and they understand the unique responsibilities that befall the recruitment industry. However, it will take the efforts of the entire profession to make a profound effect. Recruiters often have exclusive information about the candidates they place, and, if they know how to join the dots, can spot issues long before the authorities may be able to. Ongoing training at all levels, intelligent software and a safe environment for employees to report suspicions is vital. If being part of such a crucial initiative isn't already on your radar, you must ask yourself, why not? 

Listed below are some of the signs that might indicate trafficking. This is not an exhaustive list. If you have any concerns about an individual or a situation, please call the police.

(From unseenuk.org)

### Physical appearance

Show signs of physical or psychological abuse, look malnourished or unkempt, or appear withdrawn and neglected. They may have untreated injuries.

### Isolation

Rarely be allowed to travel on their own, seem under the control, influence of others, rarely interact or appear unfamiliar with their neighbourhood or where they work.

### Restricted freedom of movement

Have no identification documents, have few personal possessions and always wear the same clothes day in day out. What clothes they do wear may not be suitable for their work.

Have little opportunity to move freely and may have had their travel documents retained, e.g. passports.

### Reluctant to seek help

Avoid eye contact, appear frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers and fear law enforcers for many reasons, such as not knowing who to trust or where to get help, fear of deportation, fear of violence to them or their family.

### Poor living conditions

Be living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation, and / or living and working at the same address.

### Unusual travel times

Be dropped off / collected for work on a regular basis either very early or late at night.



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