

2 February 2022

Rachel Maclean MP
Minister for Safeguarding

Tom Pursglove MP
Minister for Justice and Tackling Illegal Migration

2 Marsham Street London
SW1P 4DF

By email: PS.RachelMaclean@homeoffice.gov.uk; PS.TomPursglove@homeoffice.gov.uk

Dear Ministers,

Vietnamese nationals arriving by small boats

I write further to our previous email exchange on Vietnamese nationals arriving by small boats. Whilst I am assured that the number of Vietnamese nationals arriving by small boats has declined, we still need to take action. In my letter of 19 October 2021, one of the three recommendations I made was to ensure there is culturally sensitive support for victims. I am pleased that cultural competence training to support Vietnamese migrants has been delivered to The Salvation Army first responders.

I recently met with the organisation that delivered this training, Pacific Links, an international NGO working throughout Vietnam and in destination countries to prevent trafficking and help trafficking survivors build new lives. I would recommend that the Home Office also considers this training for relevant staff from the Borders and Enforcement directorates. It would be particularly beneficial for Border Force Safeguarding and Modern Slavery (SAMS) Officers and those in Immigration Enforcement who may interact with Vietnamese nationals during the course of their duties.

I also understand from officials that they are in the process of arranging a workshop with The Salvation Army to identify gaps in the process and improve communication between Immigration Enforcement and the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC). I am glad that discussions have begun, however, it is important that this work is progressed in a timely manner.

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.

Yours sincerely,



Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner



Dame Sara Thornton DBE QPM
Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner
5th Floor, Globe House
89 Eccleston Square
London
SW1V 1PN

DECS Reference: MIN/0245103/22

10 March 2022

Dear Dame Sara,

Thank you for your letters of 2 February (to myself and the Minister for Justice and Tackling Illegal Migration) regarding Vietnamese nationals arriving to the UK by small boats, and 9 February on work preparation and employability skills for victims of modern slavery.

As ever, I am grateful that we have been able to have an ongoing constructive dialogue on these very important issues, which affect the lives of modern slavery victims.

Vietnamese nationals arriving to the UK by small boats

In your letter of 2 February you recommended that the recent successful Vietnamese cultural sensitivity training, delivered by Pacific Links to The Salvation Army, our prime delivery partner of the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC), be extended to relevant Border Force and Immigration Enforcement staff. Details of the Pacific Links training have been passed on to the relevant officials who will consider if it is necessary to complement the existing comprehensive training Border Force and Immigration Enforcement colleagues undergo on these issues.

I want to assure you that we remain committed to ensuring that training for all staff involved with the identification and support of victims of Modern Slavery is high quality and victim focused.

Staff from the Borders and Enforcement directives play a key role in identifying and safeguarding vulnerable victims and helping to bring perpetrators of human trafficking to justice. For these reasons, Border Force staff receive specialist, victim-focused training which focuses on protecting vulnerable individuals and includes cultural competencies from a variety of nationalities. Safeguarding and Modern Slavery (SAMS) Officers are also provided with additional training covering identification of, and how to assist, vulnerable individuals, including potential victims of modern slavery and human trafficking. All Border Force SAMS training is regularly reviewed, and during the course of the pandemic over 30 webinars were held for SAMS officers to ensure training and knowledge remained current; these sessions were recorded as an additional resource for staff to refer to.

As you mention in your letter, the Home Office is currently arranging a workshop with The Salvation Army in improving communication between Immigration Enforcement and the MSVCC for those leaving detention. We remain committed to arranging this at the soonest possible opportunity.

Work preparation and employability skills for victims of modern slavery

As you know, the Government recognises the importance of modern slavery victims having the opportunity to access work, training, and educational opportunities to assist their recovery. We will consider how we can further access to training and employment through the MSVCC, and I welcome the recent engagement between the Home Office, yourself, and wider stakeholders on this important issue.

MSVCC support workers help victims, as part of their recovery journey, to access services of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), which are geared towards helping them to access employment (where they have the right to work), vocational training or educational opportunities. In those areas where it is known that victims are being supported, each Jobcentre Plus district has an identified lead officer on modern slavery issues. That lead officer should work closely with MSVCC support providers to establish effective working relationships, particularly for the purposes of accessing DWP benefits and services. Additionally, DWP Work Coaches, who are themselves trained to tailor support based on individual conversations and to be sensitive to the unique challenges faced by modern slavery victims, will provide important support to help a victim access employment where possible.

I recognise the importance of ongoing work to improve support to modern slavery victims in this area and, over the coming months, officials will explore with other government departments how we can build on existing efforts and support structures; to strengthen and coordinate access to work support and education opportunities for victims.

I am keen to continue actively engaging with the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner's office on these important issues.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rachel Maclean', with a small flourish at the end.

Rachel Maclean MP