



Dame Sara Thornton DBE QPM
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Dear Rebecca,

I am writing to you about my continuing concerns about the support to victims of modern slavery in these difficult times. It is already clear that all those who are vulnerable are finding it difficult to take the necessary measures to protect themselves and their families and this is particularly the case with modern slavery victims.

On 18 March I wrote to the Head of Modern Slavery and she reassured me that the Salvation Army was having regular conference calls with the sub-contractors. I know from the sector that this communication is appreciated. There are however several issues which require the urgent attention of your officials.

- In my previous email I raised the difficulty of cash payments at this time and urged for an alternative electronic payment to be introduced. I also raised this with the Minister last week and was assured that a solution was imminent. However I understand that this has still not been resolved. Given that those in outreach are no longer physically meeting their support workers, the failure to resolve this is leading to real hardship.
- As the emergency has continued there are increasing concerns from front line workers about lack of PPE. This particularly applies to those in safehouses who are providing vital support to victims who would otherwise be destitute.
- I am aware that several sub-contractors have launched fund raising appeals because of the significant financial challenges in the short and medium term. Others are looking at reducing their back office functions to prioritise the front line. The closure of many food banks has also meant that charities are having to find money for essentials such as nappies and formula milk. I assume that the Home Office will be prepared to cover at least some of these costs but I think that sub-contractors would appreciate early indication of this.

There are then two areas where I wanted to ensure that victims of modern slavery are being considered in parallel to other policy areas. I understand that there is a three month pause in exiting people from asylum seekers accommodation. Is there going to be the same arrangement for NRM accommodation? And second, I think that there is an agreement to increase universal credit and would want the same approach to be considered for NRM subsistence. There are concerns in the sector that victims will not be able to buy sufficient food and cleaning items to self-isolate for 14 days.

Lastly, you will be aware that Andrew Wallis the CEO of Unseen has recently written to the Minister about that dire financial situation of the help line. This is not the time to debate future provision but I understand that the grant which I believe was agreed by the Home Office last year has not been transferred to the help line. I know that they are getting desperate for that money. Given the

heightened vulnerability of victims at this time we need the help line which could quite literally be a lifeline for a victim.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "San Yuen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner

