



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

HOCS Reference: MIN/0012342/20

11 September 2020

Dear Dame Sara,

Thank you for your letter of 31 July, where you raised concerns regarding the cessation of financial support payments for those in initial asylum accommodation. I am sorry for the delay in responding to your letter.

Potential and confirmed victims of modern slavery accommodated in initial accommodation previously fell outside of the service user types listed for Victim Care Contract (VCC) financial support. It was a clarification of rates in the contract in July that resulted in the cessation of payments for this cohort, and we worked at pace to ensure that the situation was resolved as quickly as possible.

On 27 August, we published updated statutory guidance setting out that this group would be entitled to £25.40 per week from the VCC, bringing this cohort in line with other potential or confirmed victims of modern slavery who are also receiving support from the Asylum Support system. The support provided by Asylum Support to those in initial accommodation whether through a cash payment, in-kind or a mixture of the two meets the essential living needs of this group and includes provision for food and toiletries. Travel to essential appointments is also arranged where appropriate. We will be ensuring any potential or confirmed victims of modern slavery supported through the VCC and accommodated in asylum initial accommodation whose payments under the VCC ceased in July 2020, receive a back payment to the date of cessation. Work is underway to make these payments.

Your letter makes reference to the review of the financial support rates for the VCC, this is part of a wider consideration of the current policy and movement towards a needs-based approach to financial support. As a first step, we have launched a call for evidence on recovery needs, and the kinds of services/support needed to meet those needs. This is being followed up with a series of workshops with charities and others to further develop our evidence base and inform policy changes. We will continue to provide updates on this work more widely through our newsletter and our engagement with the Modern Slavery Strategy and Implementation Group (MSSIG).

I want to take this opportunity to reiterate that providing support to potential and confirmed victims of modern slavery continues to be a key priority for Government, and as you are aware, work is underway through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) Transformation

Programme to ensure that the support we provide meets the needs of individuals to help them with their recovery from exploitation.

Finally, I recognise your concerns about the importance of communication on this complex issue, and I hope I have reassured you of our commitment to do so.

Thank you again for raising this important issue with me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Victoria Atkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'V' and a stylized 'A'.

Victoria Atkins MP