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16 July 2019

Dear ,

I am writing to you in my position as the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

On 5th July 2019 eight offenders from two criminal gangs were convicted of slavery, trafficking and money laundering offences after the UK's largest-ever modern slavery network was exposed. 'Operation Fort' uncovered vulnerable victims who had been trafficked from Poland with the promise of well-paid jobs. Ninety-two potential victims of modern slavery were identified, although police believe that up to 400 victims in total were exploited by the gang.

When victims arrived in the UK, they were forced to live in squalor and work long days in farms and factories. These included rubbish recycling, parcel sorting, vegetable harvesting, constructing fence panelling and construction work. The victims received up to £20 a week whilst their perpetrators made more than £2m between 2012 and 2017. The poverty to which some of the victims was subjected led to them relying on food banks and soup kitchens to survive.

The senior police investigator, Detective Chief Inspector Dale describes the exploitation;

"What they did was abhorrent: they subjected victims to a demi-life of misery and poverty. They forced them into work and, if they objected, they were beaten or threatened with violence and told family members back home would be attacked."

Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 states that commercial organisations with a turnover of £36 million or above must produce a modern slavery statement setting out the steps the organisation has taken during the financial year to ensure that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in any of its supply chains, and in any part of its own business.

Some of the victims in this case were working at[]. I understand that [] supplies such products to your company. I would like to be reassured that in the light of this case you are reviewing the action your organisation takes to ensure that suppliers are not using slave labour.

This case illustrates the enormous harm that victims of exploitation suffer. Your business has a role to play in identifying and preventing exploitation.

I look forward to your response.

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

