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Victoria Atkins MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary for Safeguarding
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
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Dear Minister,

Access to work for victims of modern slavery

I look forward to meeting with you on 24 March and am writing to raise one specific issue I would like to discuss. You may recall that when we met in January, we discussed the asylum review and more specifically the review of asylum seeker right to work. I have since met with colleagues who work in this area and now understand that the review is not imminent. Furthermore, I have gained the impression that the focus is on improving the system to ensure faster decision making, rather than changing policy.

Whilst I understand that Chris Philp has overall responsibility for asylum, this issue links to concerns I have previously raised about the length of time potential victims of modern slavery are waiting for their conclusive grounds and subsequent asylum decisions. I am assured that, on average, asylum decisions are currently taking six months. My concern, therefore, is that if victims from outside the EEA are waiting two or three years for NRM decisions and then going through the asylum process, they may be disproportionately represented amongst those waiting extended periods for a decision. Officials have been very helpful and are trying to quantify the issue and review business processes around trafficking and asylum claims.

In light of this, I would like to discuss the possibility of running an initiative to permit victims of modern slavery to work whilst awaiting NRM and asylum decisions, something I first raised when I wrote in October 2019. One example of such a scheme is the Co-op and City Hearts Bright Futures project that offers work placements to victims and survivors of modern slavery. Results from last year's independent review of the scheme were promising¹.

I look forward to our meeting.

Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner

¹ University of Liverpool, 'Bright Future: An Independent Review' June 2019