

Rebecca Kirby
Director of the Tackling Slavery and Exploitation Directorate
Home Office
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

24 September 2020

Dear Rebecca,

We write to you regarding the pilot to test approaches to devolved National Referral Mechanism (NRM) decision making for children following the publication of our joint review 'A review of what works in multi-agency decision making and the implications for child victims of trafficking'.¹ We hope that you found this review useful and the support from your team at our virtual launch event was appreciated.

Firstly, we would like to thank the Modern Slavery Unit (MSU) for progressing work to pilot devolved NRM decision making for children. Along with many others in the sector, we firmly believe that it is in a child's best interests for NRM decisions to be made by children's safeguarding partners at a local level with intrinsic links to child centred local safeguarding structures. We have been pleased to see the efforts of the MSU to engage with stakeholders at an early stage on various aspects of the pilot proposals including colleagues from civil society, as well as local authorities and other statutory local safeguarding partners.

The commitment to pilot devolved decision making for children is a pivotal moment in shaping the future of the NRM. We therefore strongly encourage you to utilise the pilots to test a variety of child centred models and ensure that the process to monitor and evaluate the pilots is robust. To draw evidence-based conclusions from the pilots, the aims and objectives must be clearly defined from the outset. Whilst we recognise that the pilots will initially run for 12 months, it is essential that the evaluation measures the impact of devolved NRM decision making on outcomes for children. Quantitative data and qualitative feedback from practitioners are undoubtedly important, but consideration of the impact on outcomes for children in the short to medium term must be a fundamental component of the evaluation if it is to be effective in informing policy and practice. We recommend looking to the five outcomes for children (being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being) as detailed within Every Child Matters² and given legal force by the Children Act (2004).

As work to implement the pilots progresses towards commercial tender, we would also welcome the opportunity to continue this positive engagement with your team. In our view, an Advisory Group for the pilots would add significant value by enabling an ongoing dialogue and an opportunity for feedback throughout the duration of the pilots. Both ECPAT UK and the Independent Anti-Slavery

¹ Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and ECPAT UK (2020) ['A review of what works in multi-agency decision making and the implications for child victims of trafficking'](#)

² HM Government (2003) [Every Child Matters](#)

Commissioner's Office would be very willing to participate in any such group that is established moving forward.

We look forward to receiving your response. In the interests of transparency, we request that you respond in a way that enables us to publish your letter on our websites.

Yours sincerely,



Dame Sara Thornton DBE QPM
UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner



Patricia Durr
CEO ECPAT UK

