

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





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Dame Sara Thornton and Patricia Durr
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DECS Reference: MIN/0121592/20

16th October 2020

Dear Dame Sara Thornton and Patricia Durr

Thank you for your letter of 24 September 2020 regarding the proposed pilots to test a devolved model of National Referral Mechanism (NRM) decision making for children. Thank you too for acknowledging the importance of the work that the Modern Slavery Unit are doing to progress these pilots, recognising our efforts to engage early with a wide range of stakeholders. I read with interest your joint review into what works in multi-agency decision making and the implications for child victims of trafficking, which I know has informed our thinking.

We recognise that there is a strong case to be made that there may be benefits of NRM decisions for children being made by children's safeguarding partners at a local level. This is what we are keen to explore through the pilots. I value your support in bringing local authorities together over the summer to discuss this important project. My team have reported that the workshops were engaging and constructive and have allowed us to refine our thinking and shape the pilots.

I appreciate that you are keen to ensure there is a robust process to monitor and evaluate the pilots. We recognise the importance of this and will continue to work closely with our analysts and insight colleagues to develop the evaluation framework. As I think the Minister mentioned when you met, we are looking at options for appointing an independently chaired advisory group to oversee the evaluation drawing on our experience of evaluating Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs). This group will discuss the best approach to the evaluation including the approaches to assessing the impacts on children, as well as the practicalities of measuring longer term outcomes. My team will be in touch with further details as we set up this structure.

We are currently preparing for the commercial tender to go live very soon with a view to having the pilots in place by the end of this year. The pilot will run for 12 months across approximately 10-12 sites throughout the UK. We are also continuing to work with asylum colleagues to ensure that where there are pilots in areas of high unaccompanied

asylum-seeking children, support and resource from the Home Office is tailored as appropriate. I am keen to ensure that we continue to work collaboratively, and we are grateful for your continued support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca Kirby', with a small dot at the end.

Rebecca Kirby
Director of Tackling Slavery and Exploitation