

18 October 2021

Rachel Maclean MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Safeguarding)
2 Marsham Street,
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Minister,

Access to work for victims of modern slavery

I look forward to meeting with you on 27 October and write in advance to let you know that I would like to discuss access to work for victims of modern slavery. In October 2019 I wrote to the then Minister for Safeguarding, Victoria Atkins MP, about the timeliness of NRM decision making and the recovery of victims. I was concerned about the impact of not being able to work on victims, and suggested we explore an initiative permitting those awaiting NRM decisions to access paid work.¹ In April 2020 I was advised that the Home Office would await findings from the review of asylum seeker right to work before considering any specific initiatives for victims of modern slavery.² Eighteen months later, a conclusion to this review does not seem to be imminent.

Many survivors face unacceptable delays for decisions about their trafficking status. Those claiming asylum then face a further wait and for many, structured employment opportunities are dependent on immigration status. My office has partnered with the University of Nottingham's Rights Lab to understand the benefits and barriers to accessing employment for survivors of modern slavery.³ This research found that whilst employment is only a part of the equation in supporting survivors to successfully reintegrate into society and achieve sustainable independence, it is a vital part offering meaning and purpose, routine and stability, and enabling financial independence.

The report outlines four recommendations:

1. Through the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract, the UK government should develop an evidence base to better understand the skills, qualifications, work interests, and work histories of survivors in the National Referral Mechanism.
2. In collaboration with survivors and the wider UK anti-slavery sector, a standardised suite of modules should be developed to form an accredited work preparation curriculum.
3. In conjunction with survivors and the wider anti-slavery sector, the UK government should draft an overarching reintegration strategy for survivors of modern slavery. The strategy

¹ [iasc-letter-to-victoria-atkins-mp-october-2019.pdf \(antislaverycommissioner.co.uk\)](#)

² [iasc-letter-to-victoria-atkins-mp-march-2020.pdf \(antislaverycommissioner.co.uk\)](#); [letter-to-the-iasc-from-victoria-atkins-mp-april-2020.pdf \(antislaverycommissioner.co.uk\)](#)

³ [Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner - New research on benefits and barriers to work for survivors of slavery \(antislaverycommissioner.co.uk\)](#)

should provide reintegration pathways and durable solutions for survivors who remain in the UK as well as those who return to their home country.

4. The UK anti-slavery sector should undertake further research to address urgent data and evidence gaps related to the right to work.

I discussed the findings with Minister Atkins and she agreed that officials would consider how the recommendations align with the Victim Care Contract, but I understand that this has not yet progressed. In light of this, I would like to revisit the possibility of an initiative to permit victims of modern slavery to work whilst awaiting NRM and asylum decisions. My suggestion is that this should be attached to the Co-op and City Hearts Bright Futures project, an existing initiative offering work placements to victims and survivors of modern slavery. Results from an independent review of the scheme were promising.⁴

I look forward to our discussion.

Yours sincerely,



Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner

⁴ University of Liverpool, 'Bright Future: An Independent Review' June 2019