

9 February 2022

Rachel Maclean MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Safeguarding)
2 Marsham Street
London
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By email: PS.RachelMaclean@homeoffice.gov.uk

Dear Minister,

Work preparation and employability skills for survivors of modern slavery

In October 2021 I wrote to you to highlight the work undertaken by my office and the University of Nottingham's Rights Lab to understand the benefits and barriers to accessing employment for survivors of modern slavery.¹ It was helpful to discuss this work further with you when we met last month and I was encouraged to find that we were both in agreement that employability should be a part of the support that is available to survivors of modern slavery.

Since our meeting, I have chaired a roundtable which brought together a range of key stakeholders, including one of the Deputy Directors from the Home Office Modern Slavery Unit. The roundtable featured a series of presentations highlighting examples of existing good practice, including a health and well-being programme that is already being delivered by one of the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC) sub-contractors to help survivors build confidence and identify their strengths, as well as a Skills Academy platform that has been developed by the InterContinental Hotels Group.² We then discussed the four recommendations made by the report and shared ideas on practical ways forward.

The report's first recommendation referred to the UK government developing an evidence base to better understand the skills, qualifications, work interests, and work histories of survivors in the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). During the roundtable it was suggested that there may be opportunities within the MSVCC to capture additional information around survivors' skills, qualifications, and work interests through the journey planning process. This sounds like a sensible approach and I would support further exploration of this proposal. We also discussed the merits of a piece of research that could provide a snapshot of the skills, qualifications and work interests of those who are in the NRM to build the evidence base and better understand whether the current provisions made by the NRM are meeting the needs of survivors. I appreciate that the data embargo

¹Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and the University of Nottingham Rights Lab (2021) [The benefits and the barriers to accessing employment: Considerations for survivors of modern slavery](#)

² [InterContinental Hotels Group Skills Academy platform](#)

for research purposes remains unresolved, however once this is lifted, I would encourage you to consider any opportunities to take forward research in this area.

The report's third recommendation referred to the development of an overarching re-integration strategy for survivors of modern slavery. If we are to make an impact through our response to modern slavery, it is essential that tertiary prevention is part of our approach. Access to employment, education and skills training, and stable accommodation can all be vital components of longer-term recovery for survivors, helping to support sustainable independence and integration and in turn reducing the risks of re-trafficking. In November last year my office published a second report with the University of Nottingham's Rights Lab which focussed on re-trafficking. This highlighted that we do not have an agreed definition of re-trafficking and that there is also a lack of reliable data on the scale of this.³ The update to the UK's Modern Slavery Strategy provides a timely opportunity to think about some of these longer-term issues and ensure that the prevention of re-trafficking is a priority.

Finally, Schedule 2.1 of the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract makes various references to survivors receiving support that is tailored to their needs, aspirations, and goals to assist their recovery and to move towards independence.⁴ I would encourage you to consider where there may be opportunities within the contract for greater specificity regarding the provision of support for survivors that relates to work preparation and employability.

I look forward to receiving your response. In the interests of transparency, I request that you respond in a way that enables me to publish your letter on my website.

Yours sincerely,



Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner

³ Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and the University of Nottingham Rights Lab (2021) [Re-trafficking: The current state of play](#)

⁴ Home Office (2020) [Schedule 2.1 Services Description: Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract](#)