



Human Trafficking

General Election 2017 Policy Paper

Background

Human trafficking, a form of modern day slavery, is one of the worst affronts to human dignity. Such is the scale of the problem that there are thought to be **more people in modern day slavery in the world today** than the sum of all those held in slavery over the 400 years of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. There are an estimated 45.8 million people in modern day slavery in the world.ⁱ Trafficking happens in all parts of the world, both across international borders and within countries.



In the UK 3,805 people were identified as possibly being victims of trafficking and modern day slavery in 2016, but it is widely recognised that the victims who are identified are just the tip of the iceberg.ⁱⁱ The Home Office has estimated that there are 10,000 – 13,000 victims of modern day slavery in the UK in a given year.ⁱⁱⁱ About a quarter of the people trafficked in the UK are children.^{iv}

People are trafficked into prostitution, agricultural and building labour, manufacturing, domestic servitude, forced begging, benefit fraud, petty criminality, and organ removal. Trafficking for sexual exploitation is the most common worldwide – 54% of all victims identified globally^v and 69% of all trafficking victims in the EU.^{vi}

Many people who end up being trafficked are looking for legitimate work. Traffickers prey on this desire and often deceive people with the promise of a good job. Victims often discover the truth too late when they are forced into prostitution or harsh working conditions. Too often victims are prosecuted for offences they are forced to commit by their traffickers, such as cannabis cultivation, while the people who brought them here and exploited them are never caught.

People are trafficked to the UK from all over the world, but British people are also trafficked and exploited within our own country. In particular children can be targeted for sexual exploitation and vulnerable men, often those who are homeless are also being trafficked within the UK for exploitative labour.

Commercial sexual exploitation is a key factor in human trafficking, but also present other challenges. We have produced a separate briefing that explores these issues in more detail which can be accessed [here](#).

Human Trafficking in the 2010-2015 Parliament



Since 2010 there has been steady increase in activity in Parliament aimed at addressing human trafficking.

The first significant step was in 2011 when the Government reversed its initial decision and chose to opt-in to the EU Anti-Trafficking Directive. To implement the Directive, the Government made some changes to the existing offence of human trafficking in 2012 allowing prosecution of British

citizens who commit trafficking offences abroad; and introduced the Trafficking People for Exploitation Regulations 2013 which give victims of trafficking access to special protection when giving evidence in court and set out how a victim should be treated by police during investigations.

Following pressure from the House of Lords, the Government has commissioned trials of Child Trafficking Advocates to provide specialist support and assistance for child victims of trafficking.

The most significant development during the 2010-2015 Parliament was the passing of the Government's Modern Slavery Act. Originally the draft focussed on issues to do with prosecuting traffickers such as consolidating the existing offences and extending the maximum prison sentence. However, as the legislation passed through Parliament many provisions were added to offer better protection for victims. These include a defence to prevent victims being jailed for crimes they are forced to commit by their traffickers, measures to make Child Trafficking Advocates with legal powers available to children across England and Wales and a clause which makes it possible for a future Government to put victim care on a legal basis through regulations if it wishes. The Act also created the role of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to lead efforts to improve law enforcement and identification and support of victims.

During the passage of the Modern Slavery Act the current legal framework for addressing demand for paid sex was also strongly criticised. The Policing and Crime Act 2009 makes it an offence to purchase sexual services from someone subjected to force but it has proved very difficult to use in practice. Amendments were moved to replace the current law with a new simpler offence of purchasing sex in any circumstances. However, none of these amendments was pressed to a vote. As a result, the Act does not engage directly with one of the principal drivers for trafficking in the UK.^{vii}

Human Trafficking in the 2015-2017 Parliament

Since the last election the Government has been working to implement the Modern Slavery Act. The Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner has made quick progress in raising levels of training and knowledge in police forces and key public services. He has also made significant recommendations for improvements in the care and support provided to victims.



Disappointingly following the initial trials for Independent Child Trafficking Advocates there has been substantial delay in rolling out the scheme across the country. In June 2016 under pressure from MPs the Government announced that it was committed to bringing that section of the Modern Slavery Act into force and a national roll out, but that this would come after further testing the scheme in three “early adopter” sites: Hampshire, Greater Manchester and Wales. Those projects began in January 2017 and are expected to run until October 2018.

The Government has also trialled a new process for the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) which is the gateway through which adult victims can receive help and support and determines if a person will be formally identified as a victim. The trial finished in March 2017 with the evaluation report due this summer.

MPs on the Work and Pensions Select Committee conducted an inquiry in 2016-17 into the support available for victims after they leave the initial 45 day reflection and recovery period at the end of the NRM process. Published just as Parliament dissolved, the report calls for victims to be provided with guarantee right to stay in the UK with access to benefits and other services for 12 months to set them on a path to recovery and rehabilitation.

Human Trafficking in the coming Parliament – pressures for change

Continued attention needs to be paid to implementing the Modern Slavery Act to ensure that there is an increase in successful prosecutions of traffickers and that victims are provided with the necessary protection and assistance in accordance with international law.



In particular the Government should:

- Ensure that Child Trafficking Advocates provided for through the Modern Slavery Act are delivered without delay and made available across all parts of England and Wales for all children who are potential victims and that the role will meet international best practice
- Use the power in the Modern Slavery Act to establish support services for victims through regulations
- Ensure that victims are provided with support and assistance beyond the current 45 day reflection and recovery period and that victims do not become homeless and destitute on leaving a safe house
- Review the laws on prostitution, particularly the operation of Section 14 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009 their impact on demand and reducing trafficking for sexual exploitation

What if you live in Scotland or Northern Ireland?

In the main, measures to tackle human trafficking are devolved to Scotland and Northern Ireland. People living in Scotland and Northern Ireland will primarily want to seek to shape trafficking policy through engaging with devolved government where they live.^{viii} However, crucially, at



present MPs from all parts of the UK play a role at Westminster in developing legislation on this matter whether for the whole UK or just for England and Wales. People living in Scotland and Northern Ireland should consequently use the opportunity presented by this election to press their MPs to vote for the best possible anti-trafficking legislation in Westminster not least because, given the borderless nature of trafficking, this will inevitably have an impact across the whole UK.

Key questions for candidates

1. Are you aware of trafficking and modern day slavery taking place within this constituency and what do you propose to address it and to support victims?
2. Will you promote further legislation to guarantee the reflection and recovery period of support for trafficking victims and to assist them in long term rehabilitation afterwards?
3. Will you work to ensure that a swift roll out of independent child trafficking advocates schemes across the whole country as soon as possible? Will you also ensure that the advocates will have all the necessary legal powers and responsibilities in accordance with international guidelines?
4. Will you work for a review of the laws on prostitution and its impact on trafficking for sexual exploitation and help to change attitudes towards demand for paid sex that fuels this form of human trafficking?



-
- i Global Slavery Index 2016, Walk Free Foundation
 - ii National Crime Agency National Referral Mechanism Statistics End of Year Summary 2016
 - iii Home Office Modern Slavery Strategy November 2014. Modern day slavery statistics cover both victims of trafficking and forced labour.
 - iv National Crime Agency Op.Cit.
 - v UN Office on Drugs and Crime Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2016
 - vi European Union Statistical Working Paper Trafficking in Human Beings Eurostat 2014
 - vii There is more detail about this in our [Commercial Sexual Exploitation briefing available here](#)
 - viii The Northern Ireland Assembly has passed the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) (Northern Ireland) Act 2015 which contains more extensive victim support measures than the Modern Slavery Bill and also addresses demand by making it a criminal offence to purchase sexual services in all contexts. The Scottish Parliament has passed the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015 and which also contains measures to ensure support for victims.