

Anti-Slavery London Working Group
C/O Human Trafficking Foundation
Blackfriars Settlement
1 Rushworth Street
London, SE1 0RB
020 3773 2040

March 2021

Dear London Mayoral candidate,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Anti-Slavery London Working Group, a large pan-London forum of leading statutory and non-statutory organisations addressing modern slavery and exploitation in the capital. We believe the Mayor of London has a vital role in tackling modern slavery, so we are inviting all mayoral candidates to show a commitment to preventing and addressing this crime by signing the pledge outlined below.

Modern slavery refers to various forms of exploitation and abuse of adults as well as children, including forced labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, criminal exploitation and forced or sham marriage – all of which have been identified in London.

In 2019, 10,627 potential child and adult victims were referred by first responders (in many cases, the police) to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the Government's framework for identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery in the UK. This was a 52% increase from 2018 but does not take into account the large cohort of adult victims who do not consent to enter the NRM, or the estimated thousands of people who are yet to be identified. Despite the significant increase in identification during the last years, in 2019 there were only 72 convictions for modern slavery across the whole of the UK, exposing the complexity of cases and challenge in bringing exploiters to justice.

The Metropolitan Police accounted for almost 30% of all referrals made into the NRM in 2019, highlighting the scale of the issue in London. With its transport links and gravitational draw, London is the UK hot-spot for modern slavery. Particular trends include people who are homeless being repeatedly recruited for forced labour, and children criminally exploited for 'county lines' drug trafficking. Behind every one of these statistics is a person; therefore, preventing and addressing modern slavery must be a priority.

Recognised as the "greatest human rights issue of our time" by the former Prime Minister, modern slavery requires a coordinated and collaborative response. London has acknowledged this crime in the list of priorities in the Police & Crime Plan 2017-21 and developed positive initiatives, such as the MOPAC Rescue & Response service. It is vital that we continue to build on these going forward to provide better support for survivors and prevent this crime from happening.

This is especially relevant in light of Covid-19. The pandemic has exacerbated challenges with regards to identification and support. There are significant gaps in intelligence about victims who were being exploited by businesses that are currently closed; and with members of the

public and professionals going outside less often, and a falling away of education, support and care services, opportunities for identification decreased. Those trapped in exploitation are at greater risk of catching the virus and face barriers accessing healthcare and seeking support.

The longer-term impacts of the recession could be catastrophic for modern slavery. With a rise in unemployment, more Londoners are vulnerable to exploitation and being pressured to accept poor pay and working conditions to provide for themselves and their families. The reduced economy also drives the demand for cheap goods and services, increasing the risk of modern slavery and exploitation.

We believe everyone should have a right to a life free from abuse, control, fear and exploitation. The Mayor of London plays a critical role in preventing and addressing this crime, so we urge you, as a candidate in the 2021 London Mayoral Elections, to commit to the following pledge and prioritise tackling modern slavery in the capital.

If elected as Mayor of London, I pledge to:

1. Deliver a dedicated strategy to tackle modern slavery and exploitation in London, which covers prevention, identification and support, and examines access to justice for child and adult victims/survivors. This should be produced in consultation with survivors, those at risk of exploitation and with experts from statutory and non-statutory organisations
2. Promote and lead a survivor-first approach that ensures protection and safe reporting for victims and witnesses of crime
3. Prioritise partnership working in order to prevent and address modern slavery in the capital
4. Promote the need for well-trained first responders across London
5. Promote equality, diversity and inclusion in all policy work and practice in preventing and addressing modern slavery in London

We thank you for your support.

Yours,

Anti-Slavery London Working Group Members:

1. AFRUCA - Safeguarding Children
2. Anti-Slavery International
3. BME Anti-Slavery Network (BASNET)
4. Caritas Bakhita House (CBH)
5. Chair of the London Modern Slavery Leads Network
6. East European Resource Centre (EERC)
7. Every Child Protected Against Trafficking UK (ECPAT UK)
8. Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX)
9. Her Equality Rights and Autonomy (HERA)
10. Hestia
11. Hibiscus Initiatives
12. Hope For Justice (HFJ)

13. Housing for Women
14. Human Trafficking Foundation (HTF)
15. Justice and Care
16. Kalayaan
17. Latin American Women's Rights Service
18. Love146
19. Medaille Trust
20. Shiva Foundation
21. SHPRESA Programme
22. SPACE
23. St Giles Trust
24. STOP THE TRAFFIK
25. The AIRE Centre
26. The Children's Society
27. The Passage
28. The Salvation Army
29. Unseen UK
30. Victim Support