

Frodsham Churches Together - Concerns we have on the bill for Modern Slavery

Executive summary

- Frodsham Churches and delegates feel that more could be done to strengthen victim support, including legal aid. This has a twofold benefit, one to ensure that the victim has full and fair support, secondly the crown has better evidence to convict the identified slave master of those trafficked if victims are in a fully supported environment. This includes being totally safe from their perpetrators.
- Victims should also have full access to appropriate healthcare. Assistance should also be given to restore the individual, thereby ensuring they can return to normal society. Restoring full nationality rights and domestic documentation. In the UK and Internationally we should be seen to be doing more to support the victim.
- Statutory clarity regarding non-prosecution of victims is required. Comparison can be made in English Law for instance regarding minors, as to contract law, undue influence and duress. Judgement is needed to ensure that victims are not victims twice over. How is the victim under the direct control of the slave master?
- Stronger measures to ensure better identification of victims in custody, that victims seeking help are not turned away from the statutory authorities including the Police and Social Services. That the statutory authorities fully understand what the National Referral Mechanism is and respond to it.
- The Government in its bill should set the framework of how it expects ethical business to behave. This would best be shown in how Government could encourage business to behave in a responsible way and to cleanse all their supply chains from actions of slavery.
- The bill also gives an opportunity for Government to re-examine current regulations around the advertising of sex services. To identify how changes in this area may disrupt the criminal activities relating to modern slavery. Increase the penalties to reduce the demand for these services. Ensure that those who use these services are aware that it is a criminal offence and that they are culpable to the serious crime if they fail to report their concern.
- We understand and welcome that Government are now placing in the bill its wish to appoint an Anti-Slavery Commissioner and create a statutory system of Guardianship for child victims. However we are concerned that the system should be under the control of Government and not privatised, given the complexities of these issues.
- We also agree with the provision in the bill to the detention or forfeiture of all property, where ever found, if it has been utilised in the pursuit of modern slavery. A more proactive approach is necessary to tackle the root causes of Human Trafficking. There needs to be a higher conviction rate for those masterminding the trafficking.

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