



Home Office

Baroness Williams of Trafford
Minister of State

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6.9.16

The Lord Alton of Liverpool
House of Lords
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Dear David,

Reference: PRIVATE MEMBER'S BILL ON TRANSPARENCY IN SUPPLY CHAINS – Friday 8 July 2016

I am writing to follow up the debate on Baroness Young's private members bill on Transparency in Supply Chains on 8 July, where my colleague Lord Keen was speaking for the government and with responsibility for the Home Office.

You asked about two matters, firstly unaccompanied children in Europe and how many of these have arrived in the UK, and secondly about what HMG is doing to ensure those perpetrating crimes against children are prosecuted.

On the first matter, under the Immigration Act 2016, we made a commitment to work with local authorities to transfer unaccompanied refugee children from Europe to the UK. Over 30 children who meet the criteria in the Act have been accepted for transfer since it received Royal Assent in May, the majority of whom have arrived in the UK.

We are in active discussions with the UNHCR, UNICEF, NGOs and the French, Italian, and Greek governments to strengthen and speed up mechanisms to identify, assess and transfer children in Europe who meet the criteria to the UK, where this is in their best interests. As is required by the Immigration Act, we are working closely with local authorities in the UK to establish their capacity to host more unaccompanied children. We must ensure we fulfil our obligations to children who are already in the UK, as well as ensuring we have the right support for those who may be brought to the UK from Europe.

We will transfer children who were already present in Europe before the EU-Turkey deal came into force on 20 March. It is important that we put the best interests of children first, and avoid any policy that places children at additional risk or

encourages them to place their lives in the hands of the people traffickers and criminal gangs. In any response, we need to be very careful not to inadvertently create a situation in which families see an advantage in sending children ahead, putting their lives at risk by attempting perilous sea crossings to Europe.

The Government is also taking wider action to support refugee children in Europe by providing substantial assistance to Member States who are facing particular pressures. The UK is the largest bilateral contributor to the humanitarian response to the crisis in Europe and the Balkans with a total contribution of £65 million. This includes nearly £46 million to provide life-saving aid to migrants and refugees including food, water, hygiene kits and infant packs, and protection for the most vulnerable, as well as support to organisations helping governments build their capacity to manage arrivals in Greece and the Balkans. The efforts of the partners we fund are targeted to reach the most vulnerable - including children.

It also includes the £10 million Refugee Children Fund created by the Department for International Development (DFID) to support the needs of vulnerable refugee and migrant children, specifically in Europe. The fund will support three specialist and mandated organisations – the UNHCR, Save the Children and the International Rescue Committee – to work with host authorities to care for and assist unaccompanied or separated children in Europe and the Balkans.

Furthermore, the UK through DFID has provided nearly £20 million in humanitarian support to Greece. Support to the UNHCR, the International Organisation for Migration, a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and in-kind assistance has provided life-saving aid to migrants and refugees to support reception, protection, accommodation, and meet basic needs.

Our action in Europe complements the very significant existing aid and assistance the UK has given in response to the Syrian conflict and migration crisis. Under our resettlement programmes, we have announced that up to 3,000 vulnerable children and family members will be resettled direct from the Middle East and North Africa. This adds to the resettlement of 20,000 people direct from Syrian refugee a community which has been under way since last year. Around of half those resettled are children.

On the second matter, it is important that all potential victims of modern slavery are referred to the national referral mechanism (NRM). This will help to ensure that victims are able to access appropriate support; that evidence about the crimes perpetrated against them are investigated and prosecuted and that HMG and its partners have a greater understanding about prevalence and types of modern slavery taking place in the UK.

To help facilitate this, we are currently piloting a new NRM model which aims to improve the identification of victims and the processing of their cases.

The Government has recently made amendments to its guidance on handling NRM referrals, setting out that all referrals must be passed to the police. In July 2016, we amended the counting rules for recorded crime to provide clarity that all referrals made by police into the NRM and all those that police receive from the NRM must be the subject of a recorded crime of modern slavery.

In November 2015, we placed a statutory duty on public bodies to notify the Home Office of every person they encounter whom they believe to be a victim of modern slavery. In addition the National Policing Lead for Modern Slavery is leading a programme to strengthen our operational capabilities, including law enforcement capabilities to detect, investigate and bring perpetrators to justice

A recent independent review of the Modern Slavery Act reported that the number of prosecutions and convictions for modern slavery offences is rising. However, we recognise the report's conclusion that there is more to do to improve the response to this appalling exploitation.

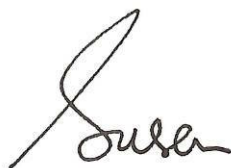
The Prime Minister has announced a dedicated government taskforce on modern slavery which will co-ordinate and drive further progress across all relevant government departments. Part of the taskforce's remit will be to improve training for those in the criminal justice agencies involved in investigating and prosecuting modern slavery offences.

Of particular note to the position of child victims of modern slavery and human trafficking, is the government's commitment to the full national roll out of Independent Child Trafficking Advocates (ICTAs) across England and Wales. ICTAs will support each child referred to them and provide them with independent advocacy support, guiding and advising them as needed through the complexities of the criminal justice as well as of local authority children's services and, the immigration system.

We recently announced (on 28 June) that we would commence section 48 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 to give effect to ICTAs. In advance of the parliamentary process that will be required to achieve national roll out, the Government also announced that it would undertake three additional measures that will support trafficked children in England and Wales. These measures consist of:

- Implementing ICTAs in three early-adopter sites - Greater Manchester, Wales and Hampshire. A process to identify a provider for this service was launched on 29 July and we expect the service to begin in the three areas later this year;
- To commission the development of a new training programme for existing Independent Advocates which will improve their awareness and understanding of the specific needs of trafficked children and how to support them.
- The creation of a Child Trafficking Protection Fund of up to £3million over the next three years, which will fund work at a local level, adding value to the existing provisions for child victims of trafficking. The fund will have two main aims: the first to reduce trafficked children from going missing, having contact with traffickers and finding them if they do go missing; and the second to provide better support for children from states that have consistently had high numbers of trafficked children. We expect to launch the fund and seek expressions of interest later this year.

I will arrange for a copy of this letter to be placed in the House Library.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julia', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Baroness Williams of Trafford