

Government recommits support to victims on Anti-Slavery Day

The Home Secretary has pledged to consign modern slavery to the history books as the government marks Anti-Slavery Day by urging the public to play their part in stamping out this barbaric practice.

Today, (Friday 18 October) a series of events will take place aimed at raising public awareness of how to spot the signs of modern slavery and highlighting what the government is doing to tackle this crime.

The International Slavery Museum in Liverpool will feature an interactive nail bar – a business which is often linked to modern slavery – as well as talks from law enforcement to inform the public about slavery in the UK.

The event comes as the Home Office published the [2019 Annual Modern Slavery report](#), which shows that there were more than 1,400 active investigations into modern slavery cases in the year to July 2019 – a rise of more than 64% on the previous year.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

The shadow of modern slavery can fall across any aspect of our lives – the clothes we wear, the food we eat, and the services we pay for. This is an outrage I refuse to ignore.

That's why the government is determined to end this vile crime and protect its victims. I'll not stop until slavery is truly consigned to the history books.

This is the ninth year Anti-Slavery Day has been marked in the UK. The aim is to raise awareness of the need to eradicate all forms of slavery, human trafficking and exploitation.

In addition to the event at the International Slavery Museum, Border Force will be raising awareness of modern slavery at railway stations, ports and airports throughout the UK and educating people on what they can do if they suspect someone is being exploited.

Minister for Safeguarding and Vulnerability Victoria Atkins said:

However much we may think of slavery as a historic crime, the truth is people are being trafficked, abused and exploited in the 21st century.

Raising awareness of modern slavery is crucial in the fight against this crime, which is why Anti-Slavery Day and events like this one

in Liverpool are so important.

The Cabinet Office has also today launched a campaign in London to help frontline professionals spot the signs of modern slavery and take action. The “Hidden in Plain Sight” campaign will ask workers in healthcare, job centres and banks to “take a second look” at the people they interact with for the tell-tale signs of exploitation.

These include:

- being forced to pay wages into someone else’s account
- not being in possession of their own documents
- being accompanied by someone who appears controlling or unwilling to leave them alone

The government also today announced the appointment of Jennifer Townson as the first Migration and Modern Slavery Envoy. In this new role, Ms Townson will be an advocate for tackling modern slavery globally, helping the UK to co-ordinate its efforts with other nations.

Establishing the role was one of the recommendations following the Independent Review of the Modern Slavery Act. Ms Townson has a range of expertise in the area.

Foreign and Commonwealth Minister of State for Human Rights Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

I welcome the appointment of Jennifer as the first Migration and Modern Slavery Envoy. The UK is at the forefront of the fight against modern slavery, and this appointment gives us a focal point for our international effort.

Jennifer will be a strong voice for the UK in bilateral and multilateral discussions on these issues.

The government’s 2019 Annual Report shows significant progress in tackling this crime with almost 7,000 potential victims referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in 2018, a 36% increase on the previous year. There has also been an uplift in operational activity to tackle modern slavery, with more than 1,400 active law enforcement investigations, compared with 850 in July 2018.

The report also outlines the progress made in improving the support received by victims of modern slavery through NRM reform, including the launch of the Home Office Single Competent Authority, a new single, expert unit to make all decisions on whether someone is a victim of modern slavery; and continuing the rollout of Independent Child Trafficking Guardians across England and Wales.

The Home Office has also committed to strengthen the effectiveness of the

transparency in supply chains provisions. This included consulting on potential changes to the legislation such as extending transparency reporting to the public sector and announcing plans to create a free government-run central reporting service for business' modern slavery statements.