

News story: Government commissions independent review of the Modern Slavery Act 2015

It comes as new Home Office research published today reveals the devastating impact of modern slavery. The [economic and social costs of modern slavery report](#) estimates that it costs the UK up to £4.3 billion a year.

Each instance of the crime is estimated to cost around £330,000, including the cost of support, lost earnings and law enforcement but most significantly the physical and emotional harms suffered by individuals, who are often exploited over months and sometimes years. This places each modern slavery crime as second only to homicide in terms of harm to its victims and society.

Led by Frank Field MP, Baroness Butler-Sloss and Maria Miller MP, the independent review aims to strengthen the UK's ongoing response and accelerate progress from Government and businesses in eradicating modern slavery.

Victoria Atkins, Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, said:

The Prime Minister established this country as a world leader in this fight against modern slavery through our ground-breaking laws and law enforcement approach.

However, as this awful crime is evolving, it is our responsibility as citizens, businesses and governments to do all we can to stop exploitation. This independent review will help us identify what more we can do to tackle this terrible, global injustice by enhancing the Modern Slavery Act where necessary.

Chairing the Business Against Slavery Forum last week, it is clear some companies are leading the way but others are falling behind. I've asked for this review to look at if we should strengthen our legislation to ensure businesses are taking robust action to eradicate forced labour in their supply chains.

The Rt Hon Frank Field MP said:

The government is providing the inquiry, and all the groups that they will consult, with a major opportunity to build on the world leading anti-slavery Act so that greater justice is gained for the growing number of people enslaved in Britain and through the supply routes for businesses in this country.

The Rt Hon Maria Miller MP said:

The Modern Slavery Act means the UK leads the world in tackling this most heinous of crimes. I welcome the opportunity to be part of this independent review because it is imperative that the law is working well in practice and can evolve as perpetrators find new ways of exploiting and harming victims.

Baroness Butler-Sloss said:

The exploitation and enslaving of men, women and children across the world and within the UK is one of the most shocking crimes and one of the most profitable. The Modern Slavery Act is a splendid piece of legislation but it is very important to review how well it is being implemented and how it could be improved. I am delighted and proud to be asked to be part of a team to hold an independent review into the working of the act.

The Modern Slavery Act, which is the first of its kind in the world, has helped to transform the UK's response to modern slavery on a national and international scale by providing police and law enforcement agencies with the powers they need to bring perpetrators to justice and enhancing the protection given to victims. It has led to a significant uplift in law enforcement activity against the criminals behind this vile crime, with more than 600 live investigations currently taking place.

But the criminal networks that recruit and control victims are constantly adapting and finding new ways to exploit victims, and the commissioning of this independent review is an opportunity to enhance the UK's legislation to effectively tackle this issue. Key areas of focus for the review will be developing an understanding on the nature of modern slavery offences, the provisions around legal access and compensation to victims and improving the support given to child victims.

Legislation currently requires every business with an annual turnover of £36 million and over to publish a statement on its website outlining what it is doing to prevent and tackle modern slavery in its operations and supply chain. Another key focus of the review will be looking at what more can be done to strengthen this legislation and minimise the risk that the goods and services available in the UK are produced through forced labour and slavery.

The Home Office today has also confirmed a £2 million extension of the Independent Child Trafficking Advocates (ICTAs) scheme, which works with trafficked children to ensure their best interests are met in any decision making by the public authorities involved in their care.

There are currently three sites trialling the scheme in Greater Manchester, Hampshire and Wales – working in partnership with Barnardo's – with more to be added from autumn 2018, beginning with the West Midlands. This will mean

that one third of local authorities in England and Wales will have an ICTA service in place by April 2019, demonstrating the Government's commitment to rolling ICTAs out nationally. An interim report is also set to be published on the ICTA service, which has been running in early adopter sites since January 2017.

Barnardo's Chief Executive Javed Khan said:

We're pleased more children are set to benefit from Barnardo's Independent Child Trafficking Advocates Service and that the Home Office has recognised the different needs of children trafficked within the UK and from abroad.

We know first-hand how vital this work is to help children to recover from the exploitation and trauma they have experienced.

The extension and expansion of the ICTA service will enable us to support and protect more vulnerable children trafficked to the UK. It will also allow us to upskill professionals working with children living in the UK to understand vulnerabilities around trafficking and the risks to internally trafficked children.