



KALAYAAN

justice for migrant domestic workers

Press Release

17th December 2015

Independent reviewer calls for an urgent end to the tied visa system for migrant domestic workers

Kalayaan is delighted that James Ewins' independent review of the Overseas Domestic Worker ¹visa, released today **calls for an end to the current system which ties workers to their employers.**

The review finds that **'the existence of a tie to a specific employer and the absence of a universal right to change employer and apply for extensions of the visa are incompatible with the reasonable protection of overseas domestic workers while in the UK.'**

This right to change employers is a fundamental protection and the recommendations are an important first step in the protection of migrant domestic workers in the UK. Kalayaan is pleased that the review recommends that the permission to change employer also apply to those migrant domestic workers whose employers are diplomats and that all overseas domestic workers who are to work in diplomatic households are to be employed by the mission rather than individual diplomats.

The review also calls for **mandatory group information** meetings for all overseas domestic workers who remain in the UK for more than 42 days. Kalayaan welcomes any increase in opportunities for migrant domestic workers to receive information about their rights. We believe that if these meetings are delivered appropriately, in an environment where workers feel safe and genuinely able to disclose abuse, and are given meaningful options, such as changing employer, they can be an important tool in preventing and ending abuse.

Migrant domestic workers who accompany an employer to the UK for employment in their private household have since April 2012 been tied by the immigration rules to their employer. Since this time they have entered the UK on a visa which is valid for a maximum of 6 months and which cannot be extended beyond this time.

The Independent review of the ODW visa was commissioned following commitments made within the Modern Slavery Act. The Government has stated it is their intention to implement the review's recommendations.² As such changes can be made within the immigration rules we hope we will soon be seeing a significant improvement in the situation of migrant domestic workers in the UK who have entered on the ODW visa.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-domestic-workers-visa-independent-review> (accessed 17.12. 15)

² 'We have asked for this review to take place and we look forward to the recommendations. I cannot commit a future Government, but the intention is that whoever is in government—I very much hope it will be the Conservatives—will implement the review's recommendations'. Karen Bradley MP 17 March 2015 Modern Slavery Bill Debate <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm150317/debtext/150317-0001.htm#1503175000002> Column 650 (accessed 15 December 2015)

For further information please contact Kate Roberts, Head of Policy, Kalayaan kate@kalayaan.org.uk or 020 7243 2942