



Home Office

Victoria Atkins MP  
Minister for Safeguarding

2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF  
[www.gov.uk/home-office](http://www.gov.uk/home-office)

Ms Rita Gava  
Director, Kalayaan  
St. Francis Centre  
13 Hippodrome Place  
London  
W11 4SF

HOCS Reference: MIN/0006513/20

10 September 2020

Dear Ms Gava,

Thank you for your letters of 16 April and 1 June on behalf of your clients at Kalayaan about the steps the Government is taking to protect migrant domestic workers at risk during the Covid-19 pandemic. I am responding as the Minister for Safeguarding. I am very sorry for the delay in responding to you.

I understand your concerns about the burden on local authorities and the threshold to qualify for support but where an individual has had their employment terminated or they are fleeing an abusive employer, local authorities may still be able to help.

We are ensuring local authorities are supported, with £4.3 billion of funding to help councils manage the impacts of Covid-19 to respond to the spending pressures they are facing, including £3.7 billion which is not ringfenced. Funding provided to local authorities under the Covid-19 emergency response will be paid through a grant, recognising that local authorities are best placed to decide how this funding is spent.

Right across the immigration system, this government has introduced measures to help those who have been impacted by global travel and health restrictions put in place to stop the spread of the pandemic. This has included providing over 40,000 visa extensions for those whose visas had expired between 24 January 2020 and 31 July 2020.

As global travel restrictions have started to lift, it is right this concession has been brought to a close. A month grace period until 31 August was given for people to make the necessary arrangements to return home. Those with reasonable grounds who have not been able to return home should contact the CIT helpline.

We have also extended the relaxation of the rules on switching visas in-country, enabling those who wish to stay in the UK to submit an application for a new visa from within the UK. Individuals can find details of how to apply for a long-term visa or apply to the Coronavirus Immigration Team for a visa extension here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents>.

If an individual is a victim of modern slavery, they should contact The Modern Slavery Helpline on 08000 121 700 or the Salvation Army Helpline on 0300 303 8151.

The safety and security of those we support through the modern slavery Victim Care Contract remains a top priority for this Government. We are working closely with The Salvation Army, the primary contractor, to ensure that victims are receiving the support they need and will continue to review policy and processes to maintain the service provided during these uncertain times.

We have provided £1.73 million of funding for modern slavery services, as part of the £750 million package announced by the Chancellor for charities during Covid-19. Given the importance of ensuring this funding reaches victims quickly and provides the services necessary to respond to the pandemic, it will support the organisations who directly work with victims in the Victim Care Contract, who have been identified through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). The funding will be used to enable organisations to adapt how they provide support and respond directly to the challenges posed by Covid-19. This includes ensuring the right accommodation is available, that victims can receive their financial assistance safely, that support services and therapies can be accessed remotely, and the provision of data packages, telephone and computer hardware and software.

The Government does not agree that offering all victims of modern slavery three years leave to remain would be the right approach. We are committed to supporting victims of modern slavery and recognise that granting leave to remain is necessary and appropriate in some cases, but immigration decisions for victims of modern slavery are made on a case-by-case basis. Not every victim of modern slavery will have exceptional circumstances to justify allowing them to stay in the UK and not every victim will want to stay in the UK. There are a range of immigration options which victims can pursue depending on the specific circumstances of their case. It is a priority for us to support victims to begin to rebuild their lives, including where the right option is to return home.

You dispute the measures put in place will support this cohort but many of the wide-ranging Covid-19 measures are not considered public funds and therefore are available to migrants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF).

Asylum seekers who would otherwise be unable to support themselves are provided with accommodation and financial assistance to meet their essential living needs. Any asylum seeker or failed asylum seeker who requires assistance can contact Migrant Help and make an application for support from the Home Office by emailing: [ASCORespondence@migranthehelpuk.org](mailto:ASCORespondence@migranthehelpuk.org) or by telephone on: 0808 8010 503.

The practical result was that those who would ordinarily leave Home Office accommodation because they had received an outcome for their asylum decision were allowed to remain in their accommodation in line with lockdown restrictions.

The Home Office has been working closely with Public Health Officials, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Local Authorities and stakeholders to plan for an appropriate resumption of terminations in line with relaxation of wider public health restrictions. We are working closely with Local Authorities, sharing data and enabling local planning as cessations for granted cases commenced on 11 August 2020 in England. Cessations for negative cases remains under review. We continue to work closely with the Devolved Authorities as we plan for cessations in the devolved nations.

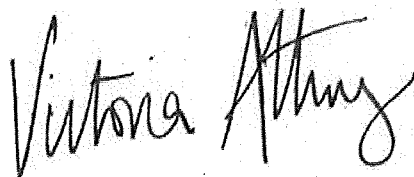
We recognise that there will always be some specific cohorts unable to access mainstream support which is why we have also allocated £750 million funding for charities who are providing vital support to vulnerable people at this difficult time.

We have published advice and information for migrants living here, including those who are subject to NRPF, on the support available. This can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-get-support-if-youre-a-migrant-living-in-the-uk>[dence@migranhelpuk.org](mailto:dence@migranhelpuk.org).

We will keep the situation under review and consider further measures if needed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Victoria Atkins". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'V'.

**Victoria Atkins MP**

