



Dame Sara Thornton DBE QPM
Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner
5th Floor, Globe House
89 Eccleston Square
London
SW1V 1PN

28 August 2020

Dear Dame Sara,

Thank you for meeting with me on 24 March to discuss the Overseas Domestic Workers visa application process and information sessions.

During our meeting you raised a recommendation made by James Ewins QC in his independent review of the Overseas Domestic Workers (ODW) visa route: that an individual using the ODW route should have their rights clearly communicated to them. I agreed to outline the process for how rights are communicated to applicants to the ODW route at Visa Application Centres (VAC).

I am very sorry for the delay in responding. Since the meeting, I have asked officials to develop proposals to significantly reform the ODW visa route. This work was unfortunately delayed due to the pressures of responding to COVID-19, but it is now underway, and officials hope to be in a position to start engaging with you and other important stakeholders soon. In the meantime, I have set out below the current process for communicating rights to applicants to the ODW route, noting this may change as we develop our proposals to reform the route.

It has been long-standing operational process, supported by Home Office policy, that every ODW is provided with an information leaflet upon making their visa application. This leaflet provides the ODW with information relating to their employment rights whilst they are in the UK. The leaflet also signposts the ODW to first responders and other methods of help available to them should they require it whilst they are in the UK.

Every ODW must attend a VAC in person to complete their visa application and provide their biometrics. Biometrics are taken privately, with only a member of staff and the ODW in the booth. No other person is allowed into the biometric booth/suite. It is at this point, in private, where the information leaflet is given to the ODW. The leaflet is translated into the top 10 languages based on actual use of the route, and it is also in English.

In order to support Home Office guidance and policy, the distribution of these leaflets is now a contractual requirement on our commercial partners who operate the VACs. The distribution of leaflets can be monitored as part of the contractual measures we have, alongside our existing processes. As such, we have a higher degree of confidence that the information is being provided to all ODWs who make a visa application.

I hope the above is of interest and I look forward to working with you as we seek to reform the ODW migration route.

With my very best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Foster', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Kevin Foster MP
Minister for Future Borders and Immigration