



Mike Martin MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

DECS Reference: MIN/1218902/24

18 November 2024

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter of 14 October to the Home Secretary about the safeguarding provisions for those coming to the UK as a domestic worker. I am replying as the Minister for Migration & Citizenship.

Everyone deserves to be treated fairly at work and rewarded for their contribution to the economy, both in terms of fair pay and fair working conditions. The Government has committed to creating a new body, the Fair Work Agency (FWA), to be a single enforcement body for employment rights. The FWA will bring together existing state enforcement functions, cover a broader range of employment rights and include new enforcement powers.

The Overseas Domestic Worker (ODW) route allows domestic workers to visit the UK with their employer for up to six months. This visa length aligns with that of their employer, who cannot intend to stay for longer than the six-month period and reflects the short-term nature of their time in the UK. Further information about the route can be found here: www.gov.uk/overseas-domestic-worker-visa.

There are a number of protections in place for ODWs designed to minimise the risk of exploitation. For example, ODWs are able to change their employer without notifying the Home Office, to ensure those who need to escape unsuitable conditions can do so quickly and without additional administration. Employers of ODWs must also agree the terms and conditions of the ODW's employment in writing as part of the visa application process, and they are expected to act in accordance with UK laws, including paying National Minimum Wage.

Where abuse does occur, we have effective support structures in place to identify and assist victims of abuse and exploitation. Workers who find themselves a victim of modern slavery are protected by the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and may be eligible to apply for permission to stay as a Domestic Worker who is a Victim of Modern Slavery, which allows them to remain in the UK with the ability to work as a domestic worker for up to two years.

After being referred into the NRM, potential victims of modern slavery are eligible to begin receiving specialist support provided under the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC); this includes safe and secure accommodation, if necessary, financial support and access to a dedicated support worker (who can provide assistance in accessing health care and legal support).

Regardless of eligibility to work in the UK, all potential and confirmed victims of modern slavery supported by the MSVCC are eligible to receive financial support to meet their essential living needs and assist with their social, psychological and physical recovery. Those who retain a right to work in the UK having been referred into the NRM can verify this through the Employer Checking Service.

In October, the Government pledged to eradicate the backlog of decisions on modern slavery cases within two years, giving thousands of women, men and children who may have suffered traumatic sexual, physical and economic abuse the clarity needed to assist with their recovery. Through hiring 200 additional Home Office staff to process cases, thousands of vulnerable people will receive faster decisions on their cases so that they can move forward with their lives, whilst making the process more efficient.

Regarding our future approach to safeguarding migrant domestic workers, the Government keeps all policies and immigration routes under review, and we are currently considering our position on this.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Seema Malhotra". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Seema Malhotra MP
Minister for Migration & Citizenship