



The Lord Alton of Liverpool & co-signatories  
House of Lords  
London  
SW1A 0PW

DECS Reference: MIN/1278641/25

24 March 2025

Dear Lord Alton and co-signatories,

Thank you for your letter of 14 February to the Home Secretary on behalf of members of the House of Lords, requesting that we grant the right to work to all survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery in the National Referral Mechanism. I am replying as the Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls.

This Government recognises the need for immediate action to address the significant challenges in this space. We know that victims are waiting far too long for a decision. I witnessed firsthand how detrimental it is to their wellbeing and recovery, to have to wait for a conclusive grounds decision on their case for months, sometimes years. After being brutalised, dehumanised, and exploited, after finding the strength to come forward to authorities, these courageous people have been in limbo, unable to move on with their lives with any certainty or stability.

That is why I made clearing the decision backlog a priority. Our new staff started arriving in December and I gave them the task of eradicating the backlog by December 2026. In a few short months, we have hired just over 100 new staff and cut the backlog by almost 40% from last year. It is now half the size it was at its worst, in 2022.

Victims with a right to work in the UK are able to do so whilst they are receiving National Referral Mechanism (NRM) support. Where a victim is also seeking asylum, they are eligible to work in jobs on the shortage occupation list if their asylum application has been outstanding for over a year.

Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC) support workers actively work with victims as part of their recovery journey to help them access services of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), which support individuals into employment. The DWP supports individuals into employment through the Jobcentre employment offer which includes work experience opportunities, Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (training, work placement and a guaranteed job interview) and the Work and Health programme for those with additional complex, long term needs. Support also includes access to English learning classes, help with curriculum vitae writing and job interview tips.

In those areas where it is known that victims are being supported, each Jobcentre Plus district has an identified lead officer on modern slavery issues. That lead officer should work closely with MSVCC support providers to establish effective working relationships, particularly for the purposes of accessing DWP benefits and services. Additionally, DWP

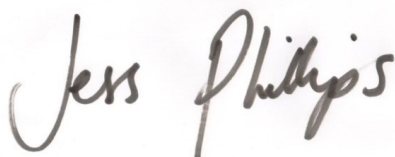
Work Coaches are trained to tailor employment and benefit support based on individual conversations and to be sensitive to the unique challenges faced by modern slavery victims.

Many victims who are in the NRM already have recourse to public funds. Many also already have the legal right to work owing to being British or due to having pre-existing leave to remain for another reason. Victims who have received a positive Conclusive Grounds decision may be considered for Temporary Permission to Stay providing they meet the eligibility criteria. A victim who has been granted a period of Temporary Permission to Stay will have recourse to public funds, no prohibition on work, and may also be able to enter higher education.

Where a victim is also seeking asylum, they may be eligible to work in jobs on the Immigration Salary List if their claim has been outstanding for 12 months or more, through no fault of their own.

Thank you again for taking the time to write to us and I would be grateful if you could share this response with your fellow co-signatories.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jess Phillips". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Jess Phillips MP**  
**Minister for Safeguarding and Violence Against Women and Girls**