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**Jess Phillips MP and
The Modern Slavery Unit**
Home Office

Thursday, 15 August 2024

Dear Ms Phillips and the MSU team,

Joint Statement: Non-Statutory First Responder Capacity and Resources

Over the last few years, various organisations in the modern slavery and trafficking sector have raised concerns about a lack of capacity and resources for non-statutory First Responders to the National Referral Mechanism ("NRM") to perform their role of referring potential survivors of trafficking and modern slavery for identification and support. This week, the Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group and Kalayaan have published an updated briefing of the current situation, which we enclose in this letter.

As non-statutory First Responders, we perform a vital role in the NRM framework. Our independence means that potential survivors who are afraid of the authorities can trust us to reassure them that the NRM will protect them and allow them to recover from their past exploitation. And, our expertise ensures that their experience is understood and given context during the referral process, thus ensuring more accurate and comprehensive referrals.

However, there are very few of us, our collective remit is narrow, and our resources are limited. We work hard to assess enquiries and to make as many referrals as we can. but the pressures we face increase year-on-year, causing a bottleneck for potential survivors to access identification and support. The current state of affairs needs to be more sustainable. There needs to be more non-statutory First Responders to increase capacity and broaden expertise and geographical remit. We need to be resourced to ensure that we can provide a trauma-led approach to our role, including ensuring in-person meetings and access to interpreters.

We therefore urge the Government to implement the following recommendations:

1. Provide funding for organisations to carry out their First Responder roles
2. Consider and decide on existing applications from specialist front-line organisations to become non-statutory First Responders
3. Establish a recruitment process without further delay for prospective organisations to apply
4. Develop and maintain a nationwide training programme with minimum standards for both statutory and non-statutory First Responders
5. Revise the digital NRM referral form in consultation with First Responders to enable a more efficient referral pathway.

Yours sincerely,

Kalayaan - BAWSO - Medaille Trust - Migrant Help - The Salvation Army - TARA - Unseen