

Pledge to Prioritise Modern Slavery

Request to Mayoral candidates from over 50 organisations | 10th April 2024

We believe that metro Mayors play a vital role in tackling modern slavery, so we are inviting all candidates to show a commitment to preventing and addressing this crime by signing the pledge outlined below.

Modern slavery refers to various forms of exploitation and abuse of adults as well as children, including forced labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and criminal exploitation– all of which have been identified throughout the UK.

In 2023, 17,004 potential child and adult victims were referred by first responders (in many cases, the police) to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the Government's framework for identifying and supporting victims of modern slavery in the UK. This was the highest ever number of referrals but does not take into account the large cohort of adult victims who do not consent to enter the NRM, or the estimated thousands of people who are yet to be identified. Despite the significant increase in identification during the last years, in 2022, there were 10,454 offences of modern slavery and human trafficking recorded by the police in England and Wales; yet, of these, less than 1% of cases (95) are currently recorded as having resulted in a charge or summons. This exposes the complexity of cases and the challenge in bringing exploiters to justice.

Modern slavery requires a coordinated and collaborative response. There are pockets of good practice across the UK responding to modern slavery and it is vital that we continue to build on these going forward to provide better support for survivors and prevent this crime from happening.

This is especially relevant in light of the ever changing and challenging legislative landscape. Over the past two years, with the introduction of the Nationality and Borders Act and the Illegal Migration Act, support for survivors of modern slavery in the UK is diminishing. As outlined in the Home Affairs Committee's 2023 report on Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery, "the fight against human trafficking is, in practice, no longer a priority for the UK Government... this de-prioritisation of human trafficking in favour of attention on irregular migration fails to reflect UK nationals, particularly children, who are consistently one of the most common nationalities referred to the National Referral Mechanism." A key recommendation in this cross-party report was that **"all Police and Crime Commissioners should actively consider setting modern slavery and human trafficking as a priority in their police and crime plans."**

We believe everyone should have a right to a life free from abuse, control, fear and exploitation. Metro Mayors play a critical role in preventing and addressing this crime, so we urge you, as a candidate in the 2024 Mayoral Elections, to commit to the following pledge and prioritise tackling modern slavery.

If elected as Mayor, I pledge to:

1. Deliver a dedicated strategy to tackle modern slavery and exploitation, which covers prevention, identification and support, and examines access to justice for survivors. This should be produced in consultation with survivors and with experts from statutory and non-statutory organisations.
2. Promote and lead a survivor-first approach that ensures protection and safe reporting for victims and witnesses of crime.
3. Promote the need for well-trained first responders to ensure the correct implementation of the Modern Slavery Act 2015
4. Promote equality, diversity and inclusion in all policy work and practice in preventing and addressing modern slavery.
5. Improve the quality of modern slavery intelligence and investigations to increase the conviction rate of this crime.
6. Prioritise partnership working and consider funding your local anti-slavery partnership in order to prevent and address modern slavery.

We thank you for your support.

A21 UK
After Exploitation
AFRUCA Safeguarding Children
Anti-Slavery International
Anti Trafficking and Labour Exploitation
Unit (ATLEU)
Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group
Bakhita Centre for Research on
Slavery, Exploitation and Abuse, St
Mary's University
Black Country Women's Aid
Booth Centre
Caritas Bakhita House
Caritas Diocese of Salford
Causeway
Citizens Advice Southend
Croydon Community Against Trafficking
Ella's
Emerge Worldwide
ECPAT UK (Every Child Protected
Against Trafficking)
Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX)
HERA UK
Hestia
Hibiscus Initiatives
Hope at Home
Hope for Justice
Housing for Women
Human Trafficking Foundation
IITCSE
The JAM Network UK
Justice and Care

Kalayaan
Latin American Women's Rights Service
The Lived Experience Advisory Panel
Medaille Trust
Migrant Help
Modern Slavery & Human Rights Policy
and Evidence Centre
New Step for African Community
The Nelson Trust
Pan-African Workers' Association
Pan Lancashire Anti-Slavery
Partnership
Robin Brierley Consultancy
The Salvation Army
Shiva Foundation
The Snowdrop Project
Sophie Hayes Foundation
SOS Rape Crisis
South West Anti-Slavery Partnership
Southend Against Modern Slavery
(SAMS) Partnership
Southend Association of Voluntary
Services
Stop and Prevent Adolescent Criminal
Exploitation (SPACE)
Street Talk
Tamar
The UK BME Anti-Slavery Network
Unseen UK
The Voice of Domestic Workers
Wai Yin Society
West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network