

Secretary of State for the Home Department

Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP

House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA

19/05/2025

RE: Immigration White Paper

CC: Minister for Safeguarding, Jess Phillips MP

Dear Home Office Ministers,

We are writing as organisations across the Modern Slavery sector, to condemn the divisive and hostile rhetoric from the government and express our deep concern at the potentially misguided policy on immigration announced in the White Paper.

On Monday, when announcing the Immigration White Paper, the Prime Minister used language and rhetoric that should be beneath the Government, in portraying migrants as “strangers” who threaten British values and culture.

This comes in the context of the government moving forward with the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill which - alongside bringing in new powers – retains harmful provisions from the Illegal Migration Act 2023 and Nationality and Borders Act 2022 that the government when in opposition described as a “[traffickers Charter](#)” that aimed to “*just wish away*” human trafficking and slavery.

Everyone who makes the UK their home should be treated with dignity and respect. As organisations and survivor groups working to end trafficking and modern slavery and support survivors, we are all too aware of the damaging impact of hostile rhetoric.

Charities, communities and survivors have already experienced the real-world impact caused by divisive rhetoric. In the wake of far-right, racially-motivated riots last summer, those supporting survivors of modern slavery and people seeking asylum were [forced to close vital services](#). Survivors have reported feeling let down by having their experiences exploited by politicians. Meanwhile, survivor leaders, civil society, law firms and academics [warn that stereotypes harm communities and make it harder to identify victims](#) and perpetrators of exploitation.

Regressive law and policy drive exploitation and denies access to safety, rights, and justice when it takes place. [Research commissioned by the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner](#) has found that fear of immigration enforcement and deportation was the primary reason for choosing to stay with an exploiter rather than access support under the NRM.

We also reject the government's attempt to disguise a hostile immigration policy as a means of addressing labour exploitation. Measures included in the Immigration White Paper itself will fail to address the causes of exploitation, and instead will exacerbate unfairness in current immigration rules that have left migrants wanting to offer their skills to the UK vulnerable to modern slavery.

Workers' rights are fundamentally intertwined with migrant rights. We cannot lift up one group of working people at the expense of other workers, including migrant workers and those who seek sanctuary in the UK. The promise of a new deal for workers must include those seeking asylum who face restrictions on entering the job market. We cannot prioritise and uphold human rights only for specific cohorts: everyone deserves to lead a safe and dignified life.

We urge you to change course; to be guided by the expertise of people with lived experience of the UK's modern slavery, immigration and asylum systems. These are, as the lived experience experts in ATLEU's Changemakers describe, the "lived realities of people who want to contribute, who want to belong, and who are being held back by a system that sees them as numbers, not as humans."

Our ability, as a country, to end the scourge of extreme labour exploitation has reached an all-time low since before the passing of the Modern Slavery Act. This directly undermines the stated ambition of this government's Employment Rights Bill, which, without a change in approach, stands to fail in preventing abuse and exploitation before it has even begun. We urge the government to abandon rhetoric which stokes resentment against the migrant community and to focus on delivering an effective plan to prevent exploitation wherever it occurs.

We stand ready to work with you on this.

Signed on behalf of

Africa Advocacy Foundation

African Rainbow Family (ARF)

AFRIKINDNESS

AFRUCA Safeguarding Children

After Exploitation

Anti-Slavery International

Anti-Trafficking Monitoring Group (ATMG)

Anti Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit (ATLEU) and ATLEU's Changemakers

Asylum Aid

Bail for Immigration Detainees (BiD)

Detention Action

ECPAT UK (Every Child Protected Against Trafficking)

Ella's

Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX)

Flourish (NI)

Helen Bamber Foundation

Hibiscus

Hope at Home

House of Rainbow CIC (HOR)

Humanity Research Consultancy

Jericho

Jesuit Refugee Service UK

Kalayaan

Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS)

Manchester Migrant Solidarity (Manchester MiSol)

Medical Justice

Meshebah Community Interest Company

ReflecTeen

Survivor Alliance UK CIC

The Lived Experience Consultancy

The Snowdrop Project

UK BME Anti-Slavery Network (BASNET)

Worker Support Centre