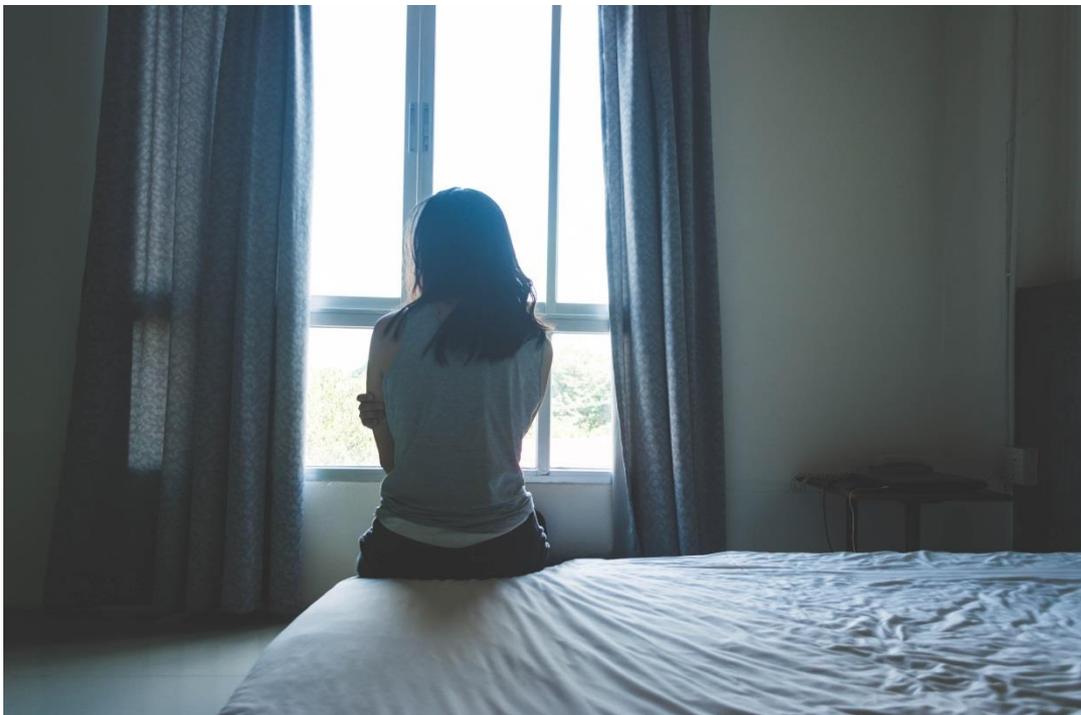




## **End modern slavery**

### **Resolution Shortlist Briefing Notes**



# End modern slavery

***There are tens of thousands of victims of modern slavery hiding in plain sight in the UK. Modern slavery has severe consequences for the health and mental wellbeing of survivors. The NFWI calls on Government to protect victims of modern slavery in the first instance and deliver longer term support to help them rebuild their lives. We call on our members to raise awareness of the prevalence of modern slavery throughout society and to campaign to defeat it.***

## Proposer's position

The proposer is concerned that modern slavery is a growing problem in the UK and worldwide. They hope to push government to increase support and protection for victims and increase awareness of the issue amongst WI members so that they can spot the signs and report concerns.

## The scale of the problem

Modern slavery is a complex crime that takes a number of different forms. It encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking. Traffickers and slave drivers coerce, deceive and force individuals against their will into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment. Victims may be sexually exploited, forced to work for little or no pay or forced to commit criminal activities against their will.

The true extent of modern slavery in the UK and globally is unknown, but the best estimates suggest that there are around 40 million victims worldwide. The UK government estimates that there are tens of thousands of people in slavery in the UK today. Modern slavery crimes are being committed across the UK and are taking place in many different sectors including factories, fields, brothels, nail bars and even within people's homes. There is no typical victim of slavery – victims can be men, women or children of all ages and nationalities. According to the Salvation Army, the number of UK victims who had been enslaved through labour exploitation rose by 63% between July 2018 to June 2019.

## The current situation in the UK

In 2015 the UK passed the Modern Slavery Act which made a number of changes to make prosecuting traffickers easier and increase sentences for these crimes. It also requires big UK businesses to publicly report on how they tackle slavery in their global supply chains, and established a UK Anti-Slavery Commissioner to oversee the UK's policies. However the Act has been criticised for focusing too heavily on policing and not providing protection for the victims.

According to Anti-Slavery International a number of key challenges remain. Firstly, police need more resources to carry out investigations. Furthermore, there are still cases where people are not believed, or those forced into crime are treated as criminals. Secondly, there are issues of identification. Moreover, there are issues recognising people from outside the European Union as victims of trafficking and so they may not get the protection they need. Thirdly, protection and support for victims is patchy. There is no system of long-term support for all victims and many have to move out of safe houses before they are recovered.

The former UK Anti-Slavery Commissioner Kevin Hyland has called for better support for victims and called for police forces to include modern slavery in their plans in order to improve conviction rates.

Protection of children is also of great concern. As part of the Modern Slavery Act, a requirement was introduced to establish Independent Child Trafficking Advocates (ICTAs) in England and Wales to represent child victims of modern slavery and ensure their best interests are taken into account for all decisions made about them. ICTAs have now been introduced in a third of local authorities, and the Government has committed to a full rollout of the service.



The charity Unseen operates a Modern Slavery helpline. Through the helpline over 15,000 potential victims of modern slavery have been identified to date. In 2018 Unseen launched an app (Unseen UK) which allows people to spot the signs of modern slavery and report concerns in confidence. A similar app focusing on car washes had previously been launched by the Church of England (the Safe Car Wash App).

The Government currently provides short term support for victims, usually for up to 45 days, or the time it takes the authorities to decide whether someone qualifies as a victim of slavery. After that the support ends. Most victims have to move out of a safe house without any further support as they attempt to rebuild their lives away from slavery. While dealing with their recent trauma they struggle to make ends meet, some risk becoming homeless, and many become targets for traffickers again. The authorities often see victims of slavery through the context of their immigration status and treat them as immigration offenders rather than victims of a serious crime. If victims do not have a guarantee of sustained support they are unlikely to feel safe and secure enough to give evidence to police investigations into their captors.

### **How could the WI work on this issue if it was passed?**

A full campaign would be developed by the NFWI if the resolution is passed, taking into account developments since then. To help inform your discussions, here are some ways the WI could consider working on this issue.

**At local and regional levels**, members could raise awareness of the prevalence of modern slavery throughout society and promote the helpline and apps that currently exist. They could work with charities working to raise awareness of the issue and support victims at a local level.

**Nationally**, the NFWI could work with other organisations to call for better support for victims of modern slavery from government and policing.

## Arguments for the resolution

- This is a growing problem both in the UK and internationally. The WI could help build awareness and action on an issue that is increasingly worsening and is not widely understood.
- This issue could positively complement the NFWI's work on violence against women and trafficking, and uphold the WI's reputation in pioneering action on important issues that may be hidden from public view.

## Arguments against the resolution

- This is a complex issue and several organisations are already campaigning for improved victim support, therefore is there more that the WI can add?
- A Private Member's Bill was reintroduced into the House of Lords in January 2020 which includes provisions to improve support for victims of modern slavery.

### Further information

**Unseen:** [www.unseenuk.org](http://www.unseenuk.org)

**Anti-Slavery International:** [www.anti-slavery.org](http://www.anti-slavery.org)

**Freedom United:** [www.freedomunited.org](http://www.freedomunited.org)

### Video content

This video from the Home Office includes information on Modern Slavery in the UK:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jv1H\\_fAoOG4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jv1H_fAoOG4)

## Public Affairs Department Contacts

If you have any questions about the resolutions or the resolutions process then please get in touch with the NFWI Public Affairs department.

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