

Modern Slavery Bill Report recommends Supply Chain Legislation and review of GLA powers

The Association of Labour Providers wholeheartedly welcomes the Government's plans to introduce a Modern Slavery Bill to protect the victims of modern slavery and establish the most effective regime in the world for the prosecution of slave masters and traffickers.

Today, Tuesday 8th April, the House of Lords and House of Commons Joint Committee on the Draft Modern Slavery Bill has issued its Report recommending the following key steps to improve the draft Bill:

- simplifying criminal offences so as to ensure more convictions;
- putting the principles of victim care and services on a statutory footing and making it easier for victims to claim compensation;
- recognising the special case of children by creating separate offences of exploiting and trafficking a child; making clear that children cannot consent to modern slavery;
- ensuring that victims are not prosecuted for crimes they were forced to commit while enslaved;
- strengthening the asset recovery regime to seize the illicit gains made from modern slavery;
- ensuring independence for the Anti-Slavery Commissioner in order to establish the post as a focal point for galvanising the fight against modern slavery;
- taking steps to make sure that goods and services produced elsewhere but sold in the UK are free from the taint of slavery.

Commenting on the Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA), the Joint Committee stated that the GLA "has been much praised as an internationally-respected model of good practice. The weight of evidence we received suggested that expanding the GLA's powers and industrial remit would yield positive results."

The Report recommends that the Government conducts a review of the GLA in time for any necessary amendments to the Gangmasters (Licensing) Act 2004 to be made before the Modern Slavery Bill receives Royal Assent including of its powers; industrial remit, which might include risk-based analysis of sectors; funding model and levels; sponsoring department; and collaboration with other agencies.

The Joint Committee also recognised the work of NGOs and was encouraged by voluntary initiatives such as Stronger Together but also recommended proportionate legislative action to ensure that firms can no longer turn a blind eye to exploitation occurring in their names. Specifically, the Report recommends the Companies Act 2006 be amended to require quoted companies to include in their strategic report, published online, explanations of how the company has, with respect to modern slavery:

- a) verified its supply chains to evaluate and address risks
- b) audited suppliers
- c) certified goods and services purchased from suppliers
- d) maintained internal accountability standards, and
- e) trained staff.

Stronger Together is a multi-stakeholder initiative to reduce human trafficking, forced labour and other third party worker exploitation. As part of Stronger Together, all employers and recruitment businesses can access a range of free resources from the website www.stronger2gether.org to help them deter, identify and tackle worker exploitation. In addition a series of open workshops are being held across the UK to further help industry understand their responsibilities and the best practice associated with tackling hidden labour exploitation in the workplace.

David Camp, Director of the Association of Labour Providers, said: "The Stronger Together tools and workshops support business in tackling this evil within our society. Although we've set up this initiative to target hidden labour exploitation in the food and agriculture supply chains, we look forward to sharing the good practice developed with other industry sectors facing similar issues."

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. The Association of Labour Providers (ALP) is the specialist trade association offering support to organisations that provide and use workers within the food, agricultural and other GLA regulated sectors. Its members also include industrial labour providers. Established in 2004, the ALP's goal is for the provision of temporary labour to the UK food and agricultural sectors to be recognised as a model of good practice.

2. The “Stronger Together” initiative is about equipping UK employers with the knowledge and resource to recognise the signs of exploitation and to tackle it in the food and agriculture industries. It has been developed by the Association of Labour Providers (ALP), the Gangmasters Licensing Authority (GLA) and Migrant Help with sponsorship by a number of UK retailers.

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