



Law Centre NI
2nd Floor, Westgate House
2-4 Queen Street
Belfast
BT1 6ED

T (028) 9024 4401
E admin@lawcentreni.org
W www.lawcentreni.org
T @LawCentreNI

By Email: JusticeSexualOffencesandTraffickingVictimsBill@niassembly.gov.uk

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Dear Chair

For urgent clarification: post NRM support for victims with positive NRM outcome

I am writing following the Justice Committee session of 11 January 2021.

During Tuesday's session, the Committee explored our proposed recommendation about *post-NRM* support.

The Department confirmed that it currently exercises discretion to extend NRM support beyond the statutory 45 day period under s.18(9) of the Human Trafficking & Exploitation Act (NI) 2015. This is very welcome and indeed necessary given that the NRM decision-making process is rarely concluded within the 45 day period.

I am writing to clarify, however, that our proposal relates not to the *current* exercise of its discretion to extend support beyond the 45 day period, but rather relates to the post-NRM period. Specifically, our proposal is that the Department extends support to the *post-NRM period to all persons with a positive NRM outcome*. This support should be available for a 12 month period, although it could potentially end sooner if it is no longer required e.g. if the victim successfully obtains work or becomes entitled to social security. Post NRM support is urgently needed to address the current situation whereby victims of trafficking can find themselves homeless and destitute despite having a positive NRM outcome. EEA nationals who have Pre Settled Status are particularly likely to be in this category.

We wish to stress that victims of trafficking in this jurisdiction are at a significant disadvantage compared to victims identified in Great Britain; this is because in GB there is provision for post NRM support whereas in Northern Ireland there is not.¹

Accordingly, we would be grateful if the Committee would revisit this issue with the Department to secure agreement to develop provisions for post-NRM support in NI in consultation with stakeholders.

Ideally, post NRM support should be a standalone legislative entitlement for all victims who have a positive NRM outcome. Pragmatically, however, there is scope within the 2015 legislation to provide post NRM support using existing discretionary powers. The Department should provide a clear commitment to developing a package of post NRM support within a defined time period..

As we have previously shared with the Committee, the estimated cost of our proposal is modest (£0.35m per annum) and yet would significantly reduce the risk of further exploitation / re-trafficking.

I hope this is a helpful clarification in relation to our specific proposal. Colleagues and I sincerely thank the Committee for raising with Departmental officials the issues we highlighted to you in our written and oral evidence on the Justice (Sexual Offences & Trafficked Victims) Bill and for the careful consideration of these important matters.

Yours sincerely

Liz Griffith
Head of Policy & Research

¹ Provision for post NRM support is found in GB in the [Recovery Needs Assessment](#) process.