

HUMAN TRAFFICKING & EXPLOITATION (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill 2013

Comments offered by Extern

Extern welcomes the fact that a more robust framework is envisaged to strengthen protection for people in a vulnerable position in Northern Ireland and criminalises the purchase of sex in Northern Ireland under Clause 6 of the Bill.

This Bill is notable in its determination to enable Northern Ireland to lead the way to challenge human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Whilst concern has been raised pertaining to Clause 3 and 4 around the issue of Judicial discretion, the clarity offered for instance around aggravating factors is commendable. The intent to ensure with regard to Clause 5, that “forced begging” is expressly stated in statute offers transparency and clarity.

Whilst the intent in Clause 6 is plausible it must be noted that Extern concurs with the focus to reduce the incidence of trafficking into the sex industry but would not want prostitution to be driven underground or there to be a negative impact upon reporting. It is however valid to take note of research in the Netherlands where a report for the Ministry of Justice concluded that where prostitution has been legalised there has been no significant improvement in the situation of persons in prostitution and apparently emotional well-being is low.

Extern concurs with Clause 9 and 10.

Extern welcomes Clause 11 – compensation for victims of Trafficking – that guidance has been issued, victims are to be given advice on securing compensation and Northern Ireland is taking account of the European directive.

Extern notes that the Department of Justice is minded to legislate in areas covering Clauses 10, 13 and 14. This is welcomed.

Extern feels Clause 15 is important in terms of Prevention and the publication of a Strategy about awareness and reducing trafficking and slavery offences is vital.

Extern recognises that Human Trafficking and the sexual exploitation of women are human rights issues. Support measures for women are necessary to ensure their safety, health and well-being and significantly to encourage them to seek help without fear of criminalisation, marginalisation or deportation.

Extern is a charity that works in Northern Ireland and across the Island of Ireland. It works with vulnerable Children and Families, Adults affected by the Criminal Justice System and Adults who are vulnerable, who have had traumatic experiences and those experiencing Homelessness and who may also be challenged with addiction, mental health or physical health difficulties. Extern provides a service to refugees and asylum seekers who have been granted "Leave To Remain".