



UK BME ANTI-SLAVERY NETWORK

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PRESS RELEASE

BASNET Releases Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan For The UK Modern Slavery Sector; Urges Collaboration To Make Sector More Inclusive.

The UK BME Anti-Slavery Network (BASNET) today releases its Action Plan on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and calls on key players in the UK modern slavery sector to adopt the Plan as an indication of their commitment towards racial justice and equity. The Plan will be launched on 15 July 2021 and is now available for download at www.bmeantislavery.org.

The BASNET Race Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan is the culmination of a year-long effort, developed as a result of the joint conference held with the Human Trafficking Foundation in July 2020. It is aimed at tackling racial discrimination in the sector, including in the identification and provision of services for survivors of modern slavery many of whom are either from a foreign country or from a UK Black and Minority Ethnic community.

The Race EDI Action Plan is divided into nine key themes exploring key racial inequality problems in the UK modern slavery sector with recommendations and indicators to measure progress. It identifies that modern slavery research is insufficiently informed by affected people, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Other poignant issues raised include the proliferation of county lines child trafficking in Black communities and the criminalisation of victims from ethnic minority backgrounds. The lack of racial diversity in some anti-trafficking charities was identified as a problem alongside the government's "Hostile Environment" policy which discriminates and impacts negatively on victims and survivors of modern slavery from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Key recommendations in the Race Action Plan include:

- Government should adopt a 'Victim/Survivor First' Policy in relation to modern slavery and human trafficking irrespective of race, ethnicity, country of origin of victims.
- Government should use ethnicity data to ensure equitable treatment and decision-making for all victims/survivors at all stages of the National Referral Mechanism process.

- Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking charities and organisations should commit to increase overall representation and diversity of Board and Senior Management by up to 25% (1 in 4) and actively seek to encourage leadership among ethnic minority groups.
- Government should establish a National Working Group of academics, survivors, affected communities, faith and statutory experts to develop a National Action Plan to Tackle County Lines Trafficking as part of UK Modern Slavery strategy
- The Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre and other parties should explicitly address issues of how structural racism is manifest in the way research has been historically funded.
- The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) Victim Care Contractor should develop and implement a robust and comprehensive Action Plan on addressing race Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in service provision. This should include the recruitment of a specialist Focal Point on EDI and Survivor Engagement.
- Government and service providers should improve provision of free, specialist, culturally appropriate, trauma informed services for all survivors of modern slavery
- As part of central and regional governments' modern slavery strategies, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) working groups should be established as platforms for dialogue and contribution to the modern slavery and human trafficking policy making process.

A range of sector stakeholders were consulted in the production of the Action Plan including survivors of modern slavery, community based organisations, statutory agencies and charities.

Dame Sara Thornton DBE QPM, UK Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, said:

"I am delighted by the collaboration across the sector in developing this action plan. I am committed to playing my part, and will therefore continue to advocate for this important issue and promote good practice."

Baroness Lola Young of Hornsey OBE, Co-Chair of All Party Parliamentary Group on Sports, Modern Slavery and Human Rights said:

'Making progress in eliminating modern slavery and trafficking, means being inclusive, and tackling discrimination in the sector. This report will contribute to achieving those aims.'

Tamara Barnett, Director of Operations, Human Trafficking Foundation said:

'We hope this plan leads to real change in our sector – challenging entrenched attitudes as much as representation and ensuring there is no hierarchy of victims'.

Debbie Ariyo OBE, Founder and Chair of BASNET said:

'At the core of this Action Plan is commitment to do better for victims and survivors, for children and adults and for affected communities through a racially inclusive approach. This Action Plan is to propel the needed changes within the UK Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking sector'.

Note To Editors

1. The UK BME Anti-Slavery Network (BASNET) established by the charity AFRUCA – Safeguarding Children in November 2019 is the first network in the UK and in Europe dedicated to promoting race equality, inclusion and diversity in the anti-trafficking and anti-slavery space. Our Network members are registered charities and community interest companies working in diaspora communities affected by modern slavery.
2. Visit BASNET website at www.bmeantislavery.org to download the Race Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for the UK Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Sector.
3. The Race EDI Action Plan will be launched on the 15th July 2021 from 1pm to 3.30pm at the 2nd EDI Online Conference in partnership with the Human Trafficking Foundation. Click [here](#) to register.
4. For further information and media enquiries, please contact Naeema Ahmed, Network Manager BASNET on email: naeema@afruca.org or telephone 0207 704 2261