



UK BME ANTI-SLAVERY NETWORK

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PRESS RELEASE

BLACK LIVES MATTER AND THE UK ANTI-TRAFFICKING SECTOR

1. The UK anti-trafficking and anti-slavery sector has been very silent about the global, topical issue of “Black Lives Matter”. However, this should not be the case. The sector requires a lot of introspection and reflection to address its lack of diversity, inclusion and equity that manifest in a number of ways.
2. Most anti-trafficking charities in the UK do not have staff members from Black and Ethnic Minority communities, yet majority of their users and beneficiaries are from BME communities or from overseas. Very few of them have BME staff in senior management or as Trustees. Even worse, fewer have any form of contact or relationship with the key communities affected by the issues they are addressing.
3. The anti-trafficking statutory sector itself is not immune from criticism. We are witnessing changes in government immigration and asylum policies that significantly affect victims of human trafficking – for example adverse changes to legal aid and the recent derisory increase in asylum financial support which does nothing to improve the living conditions of victims.
4. Government engagement with communities affected by human trafficking and modern slavery is at best tokenistic. There are no formal structures of engagement with these communities by any central government agency in the UK. Where prevention work in communities has taken place (for example in the Nigerian community), external consultants with no knowledge at all of the communities have been commissioned to conduct “community engagement”, with obvious little or no impact.
5. Black Lives Matter provides a veritable opportunity for us in the sector to correct the above and other anomalies, ensuring that we put in place changes so that we are more representative and inclusive in every way of the people we aim to serve.
6. BASNET envisages a clear-cut role for the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner in helping to address the marginalisation of affected communities in anti-trafficking and anti-slavery through her partnership work with charities and statutory agencies.
7. We call on different arms of the sector to utilise this important moment as a catalyst for change – just as we are witnessing in other areas of endeavours across the world.

Note

BASNET is the UK BME Anti-Slavery Network dedicated to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in the UK anti-slavery space. Secretariat AFRUCA – Safeguarding Children. Further information: Email: BASNET@afruca.org. website: www.afruca.org/BASNET