
BASNET Lived Experience Series

THE SAFE HOUSE IS NOT SAFE

Survivors of Modern Slavery & Human
Trafficking and their Experiences of Racism
and Intersectional Discrimination in Some UK
Government Funded Safe Houses

18th March 2024



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“

The problem is we do not
complain because we do
not have anyone to
complain to – LEE11

”

Disclaimer

DISCLAIMER

The views presented in this report are solely those of the survivors and people with lived experience of modern slavery and human trafficking who participated in the two consultative meetings held in July 2022 and September 2023, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of AFRUCA, BASNET, or any affiliated organisations. The purpose of this report is to document the views and perspectives of participants and should not be construed as a representation of the broader views of other survivors within safe houses across England and Wales.

To protect the confidentiality and privacy of the participants, their names and identities have been anonymised. The sensitive nature of the project required utmost care, and the assurance of confidentiality was provided to instil trust and protect the well-being of the participants. Details of the facilities mentioned or referred to by participants during the meetings have not been recorded or mentioned in the report for the safety of participants. However, we strongly recommend that the Salvation Army, who are the government's National Referral Mechanism (NRM) accommodation contract holder, conduct their own investigation to address the issues raised.

Glossary

AFRUCA

AFRUCA Safeguarding Children

ARC Card

Application Registration Card

BASNET

The UK BME Anti-Slavery Network

BME

Black and Minority Ethnic

CQC

Care Quality Commission

EDI

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

HO

Home Office

MSHT

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

MSVCC

Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract

LEE

Lived Experience Expert

LGBTQI

Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex

NRM

National Referral Mechanism

SO

Superior Officer

SW

Support Worker

About

The UK BME Anti-Slavery Network (BASNET) is a part of AFRUCA Safeguarding Children (AFRUCA). BASNET promotes race equality, diversity and inclusion in the UK modern slavery and human trafficking sector. We are a collective of over 50 BME led charities and community based organisations working to address modern slavery and human trafficking. We also have a lived experience panel that informs the work of BASNET.

Since its inception in November 2019, BASNET has made significant progress and notable achievements including:

- Building an active network of over 50 BME led organisations engaged in modern slavery advocacy and service delivery in their communities
- Production of a sector-wide race Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan in July 2021 with a progress report in production.
- A capacity building residential programme for BASNET members in November 2022 and another planned for May 2024.
- An upcoming residential programme to build members capacity to undertake research in their communities.
- A successful partnership with academic institutions on two major modern slavery research projects.

A key part of BASNET's work is ensuring that survivor voices are at the heart of what we do. This is achieved through our Lived Experience Panel, bringing together individuals with lived experience of modern slavery, exploitation and human trafficking. In doing so, BASNET seeks their expert input to inform our activities to address race equality, diversity and inclusion in the UK modern slavery space whilst also offering culturally appropriate support to meet their needs.

To find out more about BASNET, you can access our website at www.bmeantislavery.org.

Introduction

As part of our anti-slavery work in various communities, direct cases known to us and our members, and verbal, unsubstantiated stories of the ill-treatment of survivors in government funded safe houses have been a cause of concern for us at BASNET.

BASNET conducted two consultations with thirteen lived experience experts to follow up on these concerns. These consultative meetings were held with individuals with lived experiences of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking residing in safe houses provided by National Referral Mechanism (NRM) sub-contractors across England.

The initial consultation took place in July 2022, involving eight survivors of Modern Slavery residing in safe houses in England. Participants shared their experiences of inadequate service provisions, and intersectional discrimination including racism, misogynoir, homophobia, and transphobia within their respective accommodations. Participants claimed these experiences have left them quite vulnerable, exacerbating their experiences of slavery and hindering their recovery process.

A subsequent follow-up meeting in September 2023 involved five survivors who echoed similar concerns regarding poor services, racism, and discrimination encountered in their safe houses. In total, 13 survivors (5 males and 8 females) of modern slavery and human trafficking, who resided in 13 different safe houses, participated in both sessions. This report documents the discussions held during these consultations.

INTRODUCTION

The key emerging issues expressed by the participants echoed the concerns highlighted in BASNET's Action Plan: "[Promoting Racial Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An Action Plan for the UK Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Sector](#)" published in July 2021. Whilst acknowledging the commendable work of numerous service providers in the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking sector who support individuals with lived experiences, we also highlighted the need for improvements in identifying and providing appropriate services based on ethnicity, sex, race, and sexuality. Our Action Plan also highlighted a range of robust recommendations and progress indicators for charities, the NRM contractor and subcontractors and other relevant stakeholders to take on board.

In addition, general awareness is very limited in relation to situations in government-funded safe houses within the National Referral Mechanism for victims of modern slavery and human trafficking. While the media extensively reports on the experiences of "illegal immigrants", the day to day experiences of very vulnerable victims and survivors of modern slavery go virtually reported. This report therefore aims to shed a light on these issues, through the lived experiences of participants at the consultative meetings.

In conducting both sessions with participants, a trauma informed approach was implemented. Participants were offered access to counselling after the meetings, particularly those who may have been triggered by the discussions. We ensured participants' cultural needs were met through the provision of culturally appropriate food and drinks, while also providing a private prayer room for participants who required this.

This consultative exercise marks the first in BASNET's Lived Experience Series, focusing on the experiences of survivors of modern slavery, exploitation, and human trafficking in the UK.

INTRODUCTION

We extend our sincere appreciation to the 13 participants for their bravery, openness, and courage in sharing their experiences with us, despite the potential risks of re-traumatisation. Rather than interpret this report negatively, we hope those in positions of responsibility perceive it as a clarion call to enhance service provision for vulnerable people who have gone through the terrible ordeal of modern slavery and human trafficking. Additionally, we aspire to encourage a repositioning of the National Referral Mechanism as a kind and empathetic government support programme and to actively contribute to fostering race equality, diversity, and inclusion within government-funded safe houses across England and Wales.

Report Summary

This report is a culmination of two consultative meetings with 13 survivors of modern slavery accommodated in various safe houses across England. It emphasises the need for improvement by highlighting the concerns expressed by the survivors regarding inadequate service provisions and the exacerbation of their vulnerabilities during the recovery process due to intersectional discrimination of racism linked with misogynoir, transphobia and homophobia.

The key emerging issues outlined in the report based on the experiences of the 13 survivors, include:

- **Discrimination by Staff:** Participants experienced discriminatory treatments based on their race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation.
- **Sexual Exploitation and Harassment:** Instances of sexual exploitation and harassment were reported, raising concerns about residents' safety.
- **Poor State of Safe Houses:** Participants reported structural defects, rat infestations and absence of safety protocols.
- **Poor Complaint Handling Procedure:** Complaints were not consistently followed up, and participants reported feeling victimised when raising concerns.

During the consultative meetings, participants shared their recommendation on improvements that can be made in the operation of government-funded safe houses and the services provided to survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking. The recommendations included:

- **Cultural Inclusivity:** Participants emphasised the need for a more culturally sensitive and victim centred approach in the operation of safe houses.
- **Complaints and Feedback Mechanism:** A robust mechanism for survivors to lodge complaints and provide feedback to ensure accountability and continuous improvement in service delivery.
- **Survivors' Entitlements:** Clear communication of residents' rights and entitlements under the National Referral Mechanism.
- **Training for Workers:** Recommendation that workers and managers in safe houses are adequately trained to understand the nuances of modern slavery and the experiences of victims, in addition to training for both staff and residents on cultural sensitivity, so the right support can be provided for all survivors.
- **Trauma Informed Care and Support:** Participants stressed the importance of prioritising the mental health of survivors through the provision of more empathetic services and kind-hearted support that meet their individual needs and address the unique challenges faced by each survivors.

Expectations: What Should Happen Next?

Based on the issues raised and recommendations provided by survivors during both meetings, we anticipate that this will prompt a comprehensive review of service delivery and policy protocols by key stakeholders. This includes the Home Office, the Care Quality Commission, the Salvation Army and its various sub-contractors.

We are aware that the Home Office is currently reviewing the Modern Slavery Victim Care Contract (MSVCC) and has commissioned the Human Trafficking Foundation to consult with survivors who have lived experience of modern slavery to inform the design of the new MSVCC 2025. We would ask that the views expressed by participants in this report be considered as part of the overall review.

Furthermore, we anticipate that these key stakeholders will conduct a thorough review of their commitment to achieving race equality, diversity, and inclusion in their service provisions. This review is essential to achieve better outcomes for all those in their care and accommodation, irrespective of their race, nationality, religion, ethnicity, ethnic origin, gender, and sexual orientation.

Recognising the gravity of the issues, we also expect that a more rigorous, academic, and scientific investigation is conducted to thoroughly examine the experiences of individuals with lived experiences of human trafficking and modern slavery who are in the care of government-funded safe houses.

Emerging Issues

01 | Safe houses are not meeting the expectations of BME residents

At both consultative meetings, participants expressed their dissatisfaction over unmet expectations in their safe houses. For many, their initial hope was that their safe house would provide a safety net and comfort that would support their recovery process following the traumatic experiences of modern slavery they had encountered. They reported this was not the case for them:

“
When they first told me I would be taken to a shelter, I was expecting it to be a nice and safe accommodation.-LEE1
”

“
When I arrived at the shelter, I was expecting to be comfortable in the accommodation.-LEE7
”

“
When I went to the shelter, I was hoping to get some rest from the trauma I had experienced.-LEE6
”

“
I never wanted preferential treatment, only to be treated equally and to feel safe.-LEE7
”

02 | Poor state of the safe houses

Participants shared their experiences about the poor hygiene and the poor conditions of their own safe houses. They reported about accommodation that had structural defects, rat infestations, absence of health, safety and safeguarding protocols, and dirty linens and beddings, limited cooking and eating utensils.

“
When I got to the accommodation, I was disappointed. The house was a shared accommodation of 5 men and 2 women. The house I was brought to was dilapidated, the beddings were very dirty and had changed colour and everything was in bad shape. I did not unpack my things for 3 months as I was uncertain of the place. - LEE2

“
The seven of us were told to use the same utensils and when we asked for more the staff said they had no money for that.- LEE6

“
I got to my room and saw the beddings were extremely dirty, it had been soiled on and the room was so small and hot.- LEE10

“
When I came to the safe house it was full of rats etc. lots of rubbish everywhere, no health and safety, no safeguarding principles and no fire protocols...Last summer was so hot and there were no fans, I had to buy it myself on the little money that I got. - LEE10

03 | Limited information and orientation about the safe house and the services provided were shared with incoming residents.

Participants shared how they neither received information prior to arriving at their safe houses nor were provided with an orientation regarding the services that they should expect whilst residing in the safe houses. Some participants mentioned no one informed them of their entitlements as someone accommodated under the NRM. They reported this contributed to their unmet expectations and anxiety.

“
They only told me about my room, that I would be sharing with other males. I had to ask them what I should do in an emergency and they said I can call 111 or 911 if I like but they could not do. - LEE2

“
When they left me there I was told a support worker would be coming every week to check on me as I was still healing from my injuries but I was just abandoned, not even given directions to the nearest shop or GP. Then I had to find my own way. - LEE7

I was taken from the hospital to the safe house and being new to this country I didn't even know what a safe house was and no one explained to me what was going to happen to me. I spent the entire trip assuming they were deporting me so I sat in fear. - LEE7

I had to take myself to all my meetings. They only showed me the corner shop and nowhere else. Going to the hospital I had to go myself with not enough to no money. Things were worse during the Covid. I was completely alone. - LEE6

04 | Limited consideration is given to diversity and social inclusion in the treatment of residents of safe houses.

The dissatisfaction echoed by participants was linked to their treatment as people from Black and ethnic groups, especially African and Asian heritage, with some also identifying as LGBTQI.

When I was rescued, I was taken to a hostel. I did tell them beforehand that I am a gay man and cannot risk sharing a room with men as I have been exploited before and people from my country tend to be homophobic. Knowing full well that people from my country can attack or abuse me for being gay they proceeded to put me in a shared room with 3 other men from my country. - LEE5

I was taken to a hostel and given a room on the male section as I am a transgender female. It was very disheartening to be placed there with the same ethnic group that despised me in my country. - LEE4

The Support Workers do not necessarily take into consideration your religion. Their behaviour causes enmity and jealousy between us because we (blacks) are not treated well. The Asian Support Workers appear to favour the Asians and white people, they ignore the black residents. This is why for example my witness statement was not submitted on time. I have [a health condition] and did not get the help I needed from the Support Worker. - LEE10

05 | Safety and Security, a growing concern among safe house residents

Participants expressed real concern for their safety and security in their safe houses. This was attributed to the different backgrounds of individuals who are housed in these shelters. The most worrisome was their report that residents who were previously convicted of different criminal offences including human trafficking were being housed in their “safe houses”.

“*Sometimes, it is better to be in the perpetrator's house! My safe house was also used to house people who have been released from prison for trafficking, drugs etc... We are in danger in the safe house as they mix everybody together. They use and deal in drugs when they come out, and prostitution was also rampant.* - LEE12

“*There was one boy who just came out of prison after two years and was put in our house. He was so violent and would always go out at night. I reported to the staff that he is always going out at night and leaving the doors ajar but they said it was not possible until I made sure to record him and then they believed.* - LEE11

Participants reported some individuals in their safe houses were prone to engaging in anti-social behaviour such as drug usage, prostitution, and violence. Consequently, participants reported they witnessed serious safeguarding incidents which included physical violence between residents. According to participants, these incidents were sometimes not investigated if you do not provide evidence to back up your allegations.

“*In my previous safe house, there was a stabbing [incident perpetrated] by someone who had just come from jail and had a lot of mental problems. I have heard similar stories from other places.* - LEE6

“*There was a man who would walk around with a knife all around the house but when we complained the staff wouldn't do anything even though they had CCTV in the house.* - LEE2

One night I got up to use the toilet and one of the men followed with a knife and told me he would attack me and even hang me. When I reported the incident, they asked for evidence as if it was possible to get evidence in such a situation. They called the manager who was British to come and I was happy as I thought she would surely help me but her resolution was to call my attacker and me together to apologize and make up even though he had threatened to take my life. He continued to carry a knife and would intimidate me and I contacted different organisations to help move me but in two years no one did anything. - LEE2

Participants also said that they experienced theft as some of their personal belongings, including groceries and kitchen utensils, often go missing in their safe house. While there are CCTVs in safe houses, participants stated that staff often don't look into their concerns.

When I first moved there, I cooked in the communal kitchen, I went to my room and came back to find my pot in the bin. I complained but nothing was done. - LEE1

One of the previous residents who left the house took my pots. - LEE3

When that happened to me, we had CCTV in the kitchen. I told the staff my things were stolen from my locker but they said the CCTV wasn't working. On another occasion an Asian survivor received a considerable number of food vouchers and they went missing from her locker, when she reported it to the Asian staff in less than an hour a house meeting was called and the CCTV was shown and the culprit was found. - LEE13

Due to the criminal background of some of the individuals who are housed in their safe houses, participants expressed fear over the possibility that their traffickers may end up in the same safe house as them in future when they get released from prison.

If my perpetrators come out of prison, I am scared they will end up in my safe house as well. - LEE12

06 | Residents experienced high levels of discrimination among staff

11 out of the 13 participants had experienced at least one form of discrimination on the basis of their nationality, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. Many of the participants reported they strongly believed that their negative experiences and their treatment in safe houses were directly or indirectly linked to their race, nationality, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation.

“

Religion always plays a part. When I first arrived in my shelter, I was treated fairly alright. Only when they got to know my sexuality as a gay man, they started to treat me differently and exclude from activities or going to the shop. When I got my room, it was very small and I noticed a big vacant room which I asked staff if I could move to it. They said no as it was for a disabled person but when the guy came the only difference between me and him was that he was Muslim. - LEE4

”

“

I noticed the partial treatment from the start and decided to keep silent and watch. I observed the environment. When you are shouting, they say that we are aggressive. Nigerians tend to shout when they are stressed, while the white people will break down and cry. We were told to keep our emotions in. When I noticed all this, I started to use their rules in my favour to get what I wanted. This is how I coped. The support workers are mainly Asian and white. - LEE8

”

“

I was unwell and needed to go to the hospital. Normally our support workers should go with us or arrange to be there. However, I was told that I should call a cab but I am sure that other people from other countries were not asked to do that. I had to ask people to help me. I found that if your support worker is Asian they do not tell us (Black residents) things. - LEE7

”

“

They do not help you to open bank accounts if you are not from the EU.... I later found out that the head manager of the safe house had been applying for bank accounts for residents but only those from the EU and he would refuse to do it for residents from the commonwealth countries. - LEE1

”

“

The Asian shelters treat the Muslims better than everyone else. - LEE3

”

07 | Staff are not sensitive to the needs of residents who identify as LGBTQI

Another area of concern for participants was the homophobic or transphobic behaviour that was demonstrated by staff in their safe houses. They reported how these behaviours manifested in the ways residents who identified as LGBTQI were rarely listened to, especially concerning their needs. The LGBTQI participants complained staff often refused to accommodate their needs. The participants shared that they felt isolated and this was further compounded by ridicule and harassment they had to endure at the hands of both staff and other residents in the safe house.

The people who manage my shelter are Arabs and they don't listen to Pakistanis or gay people. They take care of their own people and then we come second or don't get any help at all. - LEE4

They did the same to me, tried to put me with 2 men when they could clearly see that I was a transgender womxn. I told them I cannot stay in that room because I am different from other men. I asked where I would hang my bra, how I would keep my things but they seemed not to care. After an hour and they saw that I was being serious they came and located me in my own room which was an option from the beginning. It was still in the men's section, just that I had my own room. - LEE4

I would get harassed from the gate by the person answering the intercom to let me in, all the way to my room. Since the staff had made it known that I was gay now all the other residents knew and would ridicule me for it. After 3 months of living there a guard was shocked to learn that I had lived there all that time and not once had he seen me. I told him I stay in my room a lot just to avoid more questions. I stay in my room because I'm scared of the employees and the other people there. - LEE5

08 | Concerns about allegations of gross misconduct including sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in safe houses

Participants shared experiences of behaviours they felt constituted sexual harassment and sexual exploitation of residents in their safe houses. These included allegations that women in the safe houses were being propositioned for sex by male residents.

I too had men in my house asking for sex. If I wake up happy and dress nice they will say am a prostitute and deserve what happened to me. - LEE3

The safehouse had 3 men and 2 women, the men would always ask us for sex. - LEE10

In my safe house we had a lady that came into the kitchen where we usually would gather and announced to everyone that she would like to have sex with one of the ladies or men as she had "feeling". I almost lost my cool but another survivor helped calm me down. I told the staff that this person can definitely rape someone as she had been in jail for a serious offence which she had divulged to me. They did not move her and so I asked to be moved as I did not feel safe at all. - LEE7

Aside from allegations of sexual harassment, another participant recounted experiencing verbal abuse at the hands of a safe house Manager.

In my safe house it was managed by a Romanian couple and the lady would always call me and the other residents a certain word in her language when we tried to speak to her for the duration of my time there. Now I know it meant prostitute. - LEE1

09 | Unprofessional attitude by support workers and staff of safe houses

All participants at the two consultative meetings agreed that none of their initial expectations had been met in their respective safe houses. A deeper dive into factors contributing to the unmet expectations revealed this was mainly as a result of the conduct and attitudes of the professionals (that is staff or support workers) that they encountered in their safe houses.

Examples of such poor conduct as shared by participants included: support workers not having a good understanding of their background and profile as it appeared no effort had been made to read up on their cases ahead of engagement with the assigned resident.

The support workers are mainly Asian and white. My support worker was changed. It is terrible that my [new] support worker did not know my story and did not take the trouble to read my file properly. - LEE9

Some participants complained about support workers not having the skills and training to provide the needed support for people who had gone through extensive traumatic experiences as victims and survivors of modern slavery.

The support workers are not trained on the job ... or there is a huge gap between the training and what they do. There are never any black support workers however the survivors are mostly black. - LEE1

The staff running the safe house did not know what the NRM was nor the procedure of applying for asylum when I got there. I had to ask an external support worker to help me as the staff did not know what to do as they had applied for an ARC card for me before applying for asylum. - LEE6

The support worker I was given was so young and unprofessional. I presumed she was [redacted] as when we were discussing what I had been through she appeared appalled by it. She looked at me like I was a prostitute and dirty.- LEE3

Some participants felt that they were not fully supported by their support worker, especially in meeting their personal, emotional, physical needs, and day-to-day needs ranging from helping to complete official forms and having regular one-to-one meetings with survivors, to attending medical or legal appointments with service users.

When I have to go for my appointments, they are supposed to come with me and pick me up but they don't. Because I live in a safe house, I cannot tell someone to call me so that people will not know where I live. I need help because of my health condition. - LEE7

Support Workers should be queried when things go wrong because they are responsible for the advice that they give and the information collated. - LEE9

Participants talked about their inability to get support when their support worker is on leave or absent from work. This is because no provision has been made for a cover or stop gap in the absence of their assigned support worker.

“ An African manager was the best and was removed. Every time that they have a good black worker they were removed with no explanation. They would not let us know why such good black workers were removed. - LEE13 ”

“ The workers go on holiday and we have to wait for them to come back because as clients we cannot go anywhere. It is frustrating as we count the days to the workers’ return. There is no contingency plan. You have to speak to an SO who is not so good and does not know your case. Waiting for your SW is difficult. Very painful and appalling when you are not taken seriously. - LEE9 ”

Participants shared that this lack of support or ineffective follow up of survivors by staff in their safe house could be detrimental to their health. One of the participants recounted an unfortunate incident in their safe house where it took over three days to detect the death of one of the residents.

“ A fellow victim recently died in her room and the staff only noticed after some days when an electrician came to do some work in her room. The staff reported to the police that she had died over the weekend but we all knew we had not seen her for about a week as the staff do not check on the victims especially if you are black. - LEE9 ”

10 | Poor complaint handling procedure

Participants were asked if they shared their concerns with the staff. To this, they responded that their complaints were not always followed up by staff. Others felt victimised when they reported a concern to staff, while some said they didn’t know who they could complain or escalate their concerns to.

“ All I did was complain but nothing was ever done for me. - LEE12 ”

The problem is we do not complain because we do not have anyone to complain to - LEE11

When you complain you are called a trouble-maker. - LEE9

The staff of the hostel told me I would be homeless as they will not accommodate my concerns and proceeded to ignore me. I asked them what if I get attacked or something happens, they told me they cannot do anything but I can call the police. They made sure not to talk in hushed tones and everyone at the shelter was made aware of my sexuality and concerns, they laughed at me with no concern. They were being very rude and dismissive. When the manager came, I thought she would be more understanding but she told me she understands my situation but there is no free room. I then called the previous hostel I had been moved from to allow me to come back but they asked to speak to the manager on my behalf. After their conversation they told me to come in and get settled as I had been standing on the gate with my belongings and they had told me they had no extra rooms. - LEE5

|| Lack of standardisation in service delivery

Participants insisted not all safe houses are bad and not all staff or support workers in safe houses were unprofessional. However, the lack of standardisation of services in the sector was seen as a major challenge to effective and survivor centred service delivery to users.

All the contracting agents work separately and... there is no standardisation. It's like a lottery. You are lucky if you get put in a nice safe house with nice people running it.- LEE11

An African manager was the best and was removed. Every time that they have a good black worker they were removed with no explanation.- LEE13

Services are from very good to very bad. It is a service lottery it all depends on how lucky you are. - LEE8

12 | Mental health of survivors

Another key area of concern for participants relates to the treatment of trauma and mental health issues and challenges experienced by safe house residents. According to participants, staff failed to take seriously their history of trauma and mental health needs as they tend to downplay their experiences of modern slavery and feelings of the service users.

In my shelter I wake up every day, put on fresh clothes and put on makeup. When I complain about my room, they say I do not look depressed and I am fine. Like they know how I am on the inside. - LEE5

I love my country but I was not accepted by my own people, then when I came here I was put in a shelter with the same people who do not accept my lifestyle who make me feel like killing myself because of who I am. I would much prefer to stay with people from other countries as they will not treat me like an outsider. - LEE4

The trauma will never go, even in your own house you'll hear the postman knocking and get scared thinking it is them. I am tired I have had enough. - LEE6

13 | Inspection of Safe Houses is not adequate (Care Quality Commission)

Participants expressed frustration over the fact that there is usually no privacy for residents to speak their minds during the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection visits. During such inspections, participants said that they would have preferred having such interviews outside the premises of the safe house to give them a sense of privacy and confidentiality.

The CQC never meet with Black residents and people who would complain. The workers always selected those who would speak to the CQC - LEE13

Resident should not be put under stress by being told to speak to the CQC in the house where they could be observed by CCTV. - LEE8

Recommendations

During the consultative meetings, participants were invited to share their perspectives on the improvements they would like to see in the operation of safe houses and the services provided to people with lived experiences of modern slavery and human trafficking residing in these safe houses. The following ideas were presented by the participants:

01 | Cultural Inclusivity

- *Everyone in the shelters (workers and residents) must undertake training in cultural awareness that covers different cultures, not just the cultures of the owners of the safe houses who are Asian or Eastern European.*
- *There should be a strong understanding of the different cultures of the survivors/residents in safe houses so that there is respect and healthy relationships. This is not just for those running the safe houses but also residents i.e. other survivors from different backgrounds.*
- *Providers/contractors and commissioners (HO) should all have strong race equality, diversity and inclusion policy and practices that should be implemented and monitored as part of the MSVCC framework.*
- *The CQC should change their inspection framework to explicitly include exploration of cultural sensitivity, culturally appropriate services and anti-discriminatory policy, practices and training for staff. The CQC should also ensure that there is privacy and confidentiality for survivors being interviewed as part of the inspection process.*

02 | Survivors Entitlements

- *A handbook or support material should be provided in hardcopy and digital copy on the range of goods and services that each survivor is entitled to. It should be produced as a welcome pack in different languages and given to each person so they know their rights and entitlements during their stay in a safe house.*
- *The handbook should include information about what happens following a positive or negative NRM decision. This should be provided by all sub-contractors and Salvation Army.*

03 | Mandatory Training

- *Support workers should undergo mandatory and standardised training to ensure they can effectively assist survivors and address their diverse needs. This training should encompass comprehensive needs and risk assessment strategies, with a specific focus on factors related to race, gender, sexual orientation, and trauma informed care.*

04 | Trauma Informed Care & Support

- *Safe Houses should have a trauma informed approach to supporting survivors of modern slavery in their care.*

05 | Regular Audit and Assessment

- *Random, unannounced visits to safehouses by CQC and Salvation Army should be made so they can see the true state of things in the safe houses run by sub-contractors.*

- *There needs to be an independent body to assess safe houses and how they provide services to survivors from different countries/backgrounds to ensure the services are survivor-centred and fit for purpose.*

06 | Enhanced Safety and Confidentiality

There should be a safe place for survivors of trafficking to engage with the CQC and other inspections in a way that protects their privacy and confidentiality.

07 | Establishment of Complaints and Feedback Mechanism

- *There should be an independent body to deal with complaints about racism, homophobia, discrimination and other issues in safe houses.*

- *Many participants have had their cases undermined by their support workers. When this happens, survivors should feel confident and empowered to report so that the situation can be salvaged or rectified as soon as possible.*



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