

Summary of consultation responses and Department's response

Overview

On 6 July the Department of Justice launched a consultation on proposed amendments to section 12 and section 18 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015. The consultation closed on 1 September. For further information on the consultation visit the [consultation section](#) of the Department of Justice website.

Overview of Responses

15 individuals or organisations responded to the consultation on amendments to section 12 and section 18. All consultees were supportive of the amendment to section 12 to remove the requirement for an annual strategy, with the majority favouring a move to a three year strategy while underlining the need for the Strategy to be published and the continuing importance of producing annual progress reports.

All consultees were supportive of the amendment to section 18 to place on a statutory footing the administrative change made in 2016 to extend the provision of support beyond potential victims of human trafficking, to potential victims of slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour.

Some consultees also advocated for extending support for confirmed victims of trafficking or slavery once they leave the National Referral Mechanism Process. This is an issue that can be further examined in the context of developing a longer term Modern Slavery Strategy.

A list of the individuals and organisations that engaged in the consultation process is provided overleaf.

Next Steps

Given the support expressed by respondents to the proposals, the Department will prepare to progress the amendments, through the legislative process to:

- remove the requirement for an annual Modern Slavery Strategy, replacing this with the requirement to develop a strategy at least once every three years. The Department reaffirms its commitment to publish this Strategy, and to continue to publish an annual progress report.
- place on a statutory footing the provision of support to potential victims of slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour.

Both of these amendments are within scope of the Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

Summary of Views of Consultees:

CONSULTEE	Views on proposed amendments to S12	Views on proposed amendments to S18
Probation Board NI	Supportive, suggest three year period for Strategy	Supportive
Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority	Supportive	Supportive
Soroptomist International	Supportive, suggest three year period for Strategy	Supportive
PSNI	Supportive	Supportive
NIACRO	Supportive, suggest three year period for Strategy	Supportive
Barnardo's	Supportive, suggest three year period for Strategy	Supportive
Law Society NI	Supportive, suggest three year period for Strategy	Supportive
UUP	Supportive, suggest three year period for Strategy	Supportive
CARE NI	Supportive, suggest three year period for Strategy	Supportive
NISMP/NILGA	Supportive, suggest three year period for Strategy	Supportive
Councillor Frances Burton, Cllr for the Cloghervalley area with Mid Ulster Council	Supportive, suggest three year period for Strategy	Supportive
Children's Law Centre	Supportive, suggest three year period for Strategy, as well as annual action plan	Supportive

HSCNI	Supportive, suggest three year period for Strategy	Supportive
Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner	Supportive, suggest three year period for Strategy	Supportive
Southern Health & Social Care Trust , Older People Services	Supportive, suggest five year period for Strategy with review at mid-way point	Supportive

Other qualitative responses

We are grateful for the detailed comments that some respondents provided in relation to the content of the current Modern Slavery Strategy, the requirements for future strategies and on the process for developing future strategies. We welcome these views and suggestions, all of which will be taken into consideration as we take forward the development of a longer term strategy, in conjunction with our statutory and non-statutory partners.

The Department will work with key stakeholders to ensure that we reflect on the issues raised in relation to:

- Conviction and prosecution rates for human trafficking offences in Northern Ireland remaining low;
- Gaps in the published guidance relation to the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.
- The need for any future strategies to:
 - have a clear human rights and victim centred approach and one that focuses on reducing harm through improved victim identification and support;
 - be more specific in terms of the practical support arrangements that will be put in place to support both child and adult victims of trafficking including supports available to indigenous children who are victims or potential victims of trafficking;

- make clear the coordinated response needed in relation to all trafficking cases, but particularly where the victims are children and young people who are looked after by Health and Social Care Trusts;
- highlight the importance of the provision of legal advice to victims; and
- align with the budgetary cycle.
- Future strategies should be informed by:
 - Round table discussions with the various organisations involved in supporting victims, or potential victims of trafficking and slavery, through the referral and support mechanisms; and
 - Consultation with victims themselves.

In terms of monitoring the implementation of strategies, there should be a stakeholder engagement forum and a clear accountability mechanism capable of evidencing [including through improved data collection] that measures/actions outlined in previous strategies have been achieved.