The Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne,  
House of Lords,  
London  
SW1A 0PW  

March 2010

Dear Emma,

In the recent debate on the Prime Minister's statement on child migration, I undertook to write to you setting out in greater detail what the Government is doing to combat child trafficking, particularly in relation to trafficking from and through central and eastern Europe.

We remain committed to ensuring the United Kingdom is a hostile environment for traffickers. To this end we introduced legislation to criminalise trafficking with the introduction of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and the Asylum and Immigration (Treatment of Claimants etc) Act 2004 under which we have secured 138 convictions to date. We have ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and have publicly set out the UK's victim centred strategy to combat human trafficking in the annually updated UK Action Plan. The update was last published on 19 October 2009 and sets out the 38 action points being taken forward as part of our work on prevention; investigation, enforcement and prosecution; support for adult victims of trafficking and child trafficking.

Within the European Union, a new 5-year justice and home affairs programme (the 'Stockholm Programme') was agreed by ministers in December 2009. This specifically includes reference to developing European-wide measures in child protection. These include: two draft directives to be issued in this month on 'Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography' and 'Human Trafficking'; tightening measures across Europe on the disqualification of individuals from working with children in conjunction with securing agreements to share criminal records between member states; and establishing compatible national schemes to create a child abduction alert network, which would extend the range of the NPIA Missing Children Bureau in the UK.

The UK has led a G8 initiative to establish the International Child Sexual Exploitation database at Interpol in Lyon. This will be supplemented with a new G8 Wanted Child Sex Offender Website to be launched at Interpol by a Home Office minister, Alan Campbell, on 22nd March.

House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW
Tel: 020 7219 3200 Fax: 020 7219 3051 Email: pslordsleader@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk
We have made considerable progress in raising awareness of child trafficking among practitioners and provided practical support to assist in identifying and safeguarding child victims of trafficking. The updated UK Action Plan on Tackling Human Trafficking contains 15 actions aimed at improving our ability to identify and protect child victims of trafficking.

In November 2007 we launched, with Comic Relief, the NSPCC Child Trafficking Advice and Information Line, which has been highly effective in guiding practitioners to take protective action where cases of children suspected as trafficked have been identified.

In December of that year, we published practitioner guidance (Working Together to Safeguard Children who may have been trafficked) which advises professionals how best to identify and protect child victims of trafficking.

The Government remains committed to improving practitioners’ responses to early identification and protection of potential child victims of trafficking. We are doing this by actively working with our stakeholders to improve the National Referral Mechanism process so that first responders work more effectively together in evidencing trafficked children and ensuring adequate arrangements for their safety.

We are also addressing concerns over children going missing from Local Authority care. A Missing Persons Taskforce was launched by the Prime Minister on 10 December and will shortly make recommendations as to how the multi-agency response to incidents of missing children can be improved. This, together with the impending move of responsibility for missing children to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre (CEOP), will further strengthen our response to this issue.

We aim to replicate the success of the multi-agency police led operations of Paladin and Newbridge in identifying and protecting unaccompanied children at ports. CEOP is developing a training project which it aims to deliver to police forces to better equip them in identifying and investigating cases of children suspected of being victims of trafficking.

We are also focusing our attention on "hidden children" to help us build our knowledge of those children trafficked for domestic servitude, benefit fraud and other forms of abuse that we know little about. CEOP will carry out a thematic study to scope the likely numbers of children identified as trafficked for such forms of exploitation.

An example of successful joint working with European partners has been Operation Golf – the first UK police joint investigation team with another EU Member State. It is a joint investigation with the Romanian National Police,
UK Human Trafficking Centre, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Serious and Organised Crime Agency, Europol and Eurojust under EU law. The investigation focuses on the trafficking of Romanian Roma children for forced criminal exploitation including volume crime, begging and pickpocketing on the streets of London and across the UK. Operation Golf has discovered that the trafficking of Roma children and families from Romania and other EU states is widespread. Operation Golf has achieved funding from the European Commission of over £1 million to date.

Of course, we also acknowledge that some children are trafficked for organised criminal activities, such as tending cannabis farms, and will continue to work with the police, CPS, CEOP and others to ensure that ACPO and CPS guidance is followed to guard against children being criminalised where indicators suggest they may be victims of trafficking.

Jan Royall