The Salvation Army welcomes the recent announcement by the Home Affairs Committee to look into the way that prostitution is currently treated in legislation.

We are concerned, however, by the mention of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 within the terms of reference, and the misunderstandings that may be created as a result of linking Prostitution and Modern Slavery so closely.

Whilst similarities between the two may be drawn in the context of commercialised sexual activities, we would urge the Committee to exercise caution when identifying involvement in those activities by victims of sex trafficking, and those engaged through prostitution. It is important to distinguish that people trafficked for sexual exploitation are recognised in law as victims, that their involvement in exploitative sexual activities is involuntary, and will invariably reveal elements of coercion, control and deception in bringing about cooperation. By contrast, people entering prostitution may do so voluntarily, and for differing reasons. We see such clarity as vital so as not to obscure the specific support needs of each, or confuse messages in awareness-raising.

As the current holders of the government’s Adult Victims of Modern Slavery Care and Coordination Services contract, The Salvation Army has supported close to 3000 victims of modern slavery between June 2011 and June 2015. Over the course of four years we have seen an increase in demand for our services year on year, with sexual exploitation and labour exploitation continuing to be the two most common forms of modern slavery (43% and 36% in Year 4).

Our specialist support programme offers protection, care and confidential support services to victims of modern slavery. These services are delivered by twelve partner organisations and include:

- Initial and detailed needs-based assistance
- Secure accommodation
- Emergency medical treatment
- Material assistance
- Subsistence assistance
- Complaints service
- Translation and interpretation services
- Information and signposting
- Advocacy for specialist services including counselling
- Assistance at appropriate stages of criminal proceedings against offenders
- Access to education for dependent school-age minors

At the same time, The Salvation Army acknowledges that for the majority of adults and children caught up in prostitution, their ‘choice’ is often due to an overarching lack of choice with poverty, homelessness, family breakdown, debt and addictions as common underlying drivers: in effect, those working in prostitution are often subject to their own form of exploitation. We therefore offer our support to any measures resulting from the Inquiry that seek to address these issues, and which improve the support and assistance available to enable a safe exit from prostitution.

May I take this opportunity to wish you and the Committee every success for this important inquiry and I look forward to reading its findings in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Melvin Fincham
Lieut-Colonel
Secretary for Communications