

Dame Angela Eagle MP
Minister for Border
Security & Asylum
House of Commons
SW1A 0AA

RE: The impact of the work ban on labour exploitation

Dear Minister,

We are writing to you as organisations who specialise in labour exploitation and the asylum system, to highlight our serious concerns about the Government's current working restrictions on people seeking asylum and the forced labour and exploitation this leads to, ahead of your meeting with food delivery companies this week as reported in [BBC News](#).

Recent reporting by [The Sun](#) and other media outlets and the recent stunt by the Shadow Home Secretary have all put people seeking asylum in serious danger. By filming people without their permission and naming or making hotels easily identifiable, *The Sun* reporters and the Shadow Home Secretary have effectively adopted the tactics of far-right 'migrant-hunters' - whose site 'visits' and harassment of asylum seekers are at [an all-time high](#) according to Hope Not Hate.

We would urge your Government in the strongest possible terms to not legitimise these irresponsible stunts, which put people in these hotels in direct and immediate danger of far-right attacks - less than a year on from racist riots on UK streets which included attempts to burn down specific hotels with people seeking asylum trapped inside. We fear the response from Downing Street thus far only serves to validate actions which put people seeking refuge in real danger, and we are considering formal complaints procedures against the Shadow Home Secretary and some media outlets for their conduct in recent days.

We feel strongly that it is the policies of successive Governments, trapping people seeking asylum in poverty, limbo and isolation that drives people into irregular work, the shadow economy and risk of exploitation.

There is a wealth of evidence¹ to suggest that the UK's prohibitive twelve-month work ban for people in the asylum system - making our country an international outlier - drives people into forced labour, modern slavery and exploitation.

1

<https://labourexploitation.org/publications/i-kept-waiting-and-waiting-the-realities-of-asylum-seekers-restricted-right-to-work-in-the-uk/>
<https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/we-speak-up-for-change/at-risk-exploitation-and-the-uk-asylum-system>
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/social-policy-and-society/article/asylum-seekers-and-the-labour-market-spaces-of-discomfort-and-hostility/8D8144E54E6675BDB6000D68256AFEBD>
<https://labourexploitation.org/publications/rights-and-risks-migrant-labour-exploitation-in-london/>
<https://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com/view/journals/jpsj/30/2/article-p120.xml>
<https://www.atleu.org.uk/cases-news/2022/10/18/2022-10-17-it-has-destroyed-me-new-report>
<https://asylummatters.org/app/uploads/2025/05/FINAL-Time-to-Lift-The-Ban-Report-12pp-A4-V3-DIGITAL-ACCESSIBLE.pdf>

The Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX) report [*“I kept waiting and waiting”: the realities of asylum seekers’ restricted right to work in the UK*](#) found that the work ban combined with the restrictive Immigration Salary List for those granted permission to work after twelve-months keeps people in a state of limbo and poverty, and ‘may force them to be employed in the informal economy, putting them at higher risk of labour exploitation and abuse’.

Meanwhile, the Women for Refugee Women report [*‘Safety and Survival: How the Work Ban Fuels Violence Against Women Seeking Asylum’*](#) demonstrates that the current working restrictions on people seeking asylum are driving women into sex work and exploitative situations. They found 10% of women interviewed have been [*forced into sex work in order to survive*](#), in many cases to feed their children, while 38% were forced into abusive relationships or situations.

The APPG on Poverty and the APPG on Migration [*jointly found*](#) the current work restrictions to be a driver of destitution, poverty, and economic scarring. An Asylum Matters [*report*](#) found that the work ban trapping people on poverty-packet asylum support rates meant 91% of people seeking asylum struggle to afford food. A joint briefing by Praxis and over 70 organisations [*highlights*](#) how hostile immigration policies are driving families into destitution and homelessness, which leaves people open to exploitation.

We urge you to consider that no amount of violent enforcement raids or cracking down on delivery companies will solve the underlying issues that are driving people seeking asylum into irregular work and labour exploitation - which is the limbo, poverty and isolation that hostile policies including the work ban and inadequate support rates trap people in. We urge you to take immediate steps to address these policy failures.

We hope you will agree to meet with us to discuss the solutions to the exploitation of people seeking asylum in the shadow economy.

Signed:

Paola Uccellari, CEO of Young Roots

Joanna Pienkowska, Policy and Campaigns Coordinator, HMSC

Lucila Granada, CEO, Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX)

Nathan Phillips, Head of Campaigns, Asylum Matters

Josephine Whitaker-Yilmaz, Head of Advocacy, Praxis

Andrea Vukovic, Co-Director, Women for Refugee Women

Gisela Valle, Director, Latin American Women’s Rights Service (LAWRS)

Susan Cueva, Trustee, Southeast and East Asian Women’s Association (SSEAWA)

Nick Beales, Head of Campaigning, RAMFEL

Eiri Ohtani, Director, Right to Remain

James Wilson, Director, Detention Action

Zoe Bantleman, Legal Director, Immigration Law Practitioners' Association (ILPA)