

Email subject: Protecting migrant domestic workers from abuse and exploitation

{YOUR FULL ADDRESS}
{YOUR POSTCODE}
{DATE}

Dear **{MP NAME}**,

As your constituent, I am writing to you today because I am deeply concerned about the government's response to a parliamentary petition that called for migrant domestic workers (MDWs) to be protected from abusive employers (<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/326765>).

As you may know, there is widespread recognition that the conditions of their work places them in a position where they often fall victim to exploitation and abuse.

There have been many studies that show their vulnerability to exploitation is made worse by conditions attached to their immigration status. They are admitted on visas that only permit periods of work for 6 months with no right to have this renewed. Those who flee abuse find it impossible to find safe and decent re-employment with only months or weeks remaining on their visa. Many escape without possession of their passport so have no proof of their right to remain or right to work. They are then subject to the UK's hostile environment and at risk of further abuse by those looking to exploit their insecure status.

Up until 2012 a remedy to this situation was available in the form of a MDW visa which permitted extensions of stay beyond 6 months and the right to change employers if the conditions of work were unacceptable to the worker. The period since 2012 has seen a resurgence of abuse and exploitation in this sector.

In February 2021 a parliamentary petition closed with over 12,000 public signatures supporting the reinstatement of the visa regime in place prior to 2012. In response, the government said they do not intend for any worker to be subjected to forced labour or abuse or become undocumented and said a dedicated process exists for victims of modern slavery via the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). This response fails to address the need to prevent abuse from escalating to such severe forms of ill-treatment and does nothing to protect those workers who have experienced abuse but fail to meet the threshold for a referral to the NRM. Furthermore,

workers who enter the NRM after their visa has expired are denied the right to work for the years it takes for the NRM to process their claim to be a victim. During that time, they are forced into destitution and in some cases enter into exploitative work in order to provide for themselves and their families. This 'dedicated process' set up by the government to support victims who enter the UK as domestic workers fails to acknowledge the role played by government in making workers vulnerable to abuse without the right to renew their visa.

The government has also confirmed in April 2021 that they have abandoned implementing information sessions for workers newly arrived in the UK. This was a commitment made in 2016 in recognition of the fact that workers were not receiving information on their rights in the UK prior to or after their arrival. Such information would have included where workers can get help from if they are experiencing abuse.

As my MP, I am asking you to take action to support the campaign to restore rights for migrant domestic workers. If the UK is serious in its efforts to prevent exploitation and end violence against women and girls, it must restore rights for this workforce. I therefore ask you to pledge your support for the reinstatement of the pre 2012 visa regime and write with my concerns to the Secretary of State for the Home Department and Ministers for Immigration and Safeguarding.

A briefing produced by The Voice of Domestic Workers, Kalayaan, Anti-Slavery International, Unite the Union and TUC containing further information can be found in the below link: <http://www.kalayaan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/new-parliamentary-briefing.pdf>

I look forward to hearing from you about the actions you will be taking.

Please include info@kalayaan.org.uk in your reply.

Yours sincerely,

{YOUR NAME}