

FLEX statement on the passing of the 'Illegal Migration' Bill

18 July 2023

FLEX deeply regrets the passing of the 'Illegal Migration' Bill which has now passed through both houses of parliament and is set to become law.

The Bill is devastating and will have far reaching consequences for people both directly and indirectly affected. It will drive large numbers of people underground, creating fear of authorities and public services. People in exploitation will fear seeking help. The Bill has been described as a 'Traffickers Charter' as it provides traffickers with the ultimate coercion tool.

Authorities encountering victims of trafficking and modern slavery who entered through channels the Home Office deems 'irregular', would find that the UK's anti-trafficking systems are now worthless for their protection, even in cases where their entry was outside of their control due to them being trafficked. While they may be identified as a 'victim of trafficking' they will never be able to have a secure status in the UK and will ultimately face either indefinite limbo or immigration removal despite risks of re-trafficking. In addition to the devastating impact on the individuals held in limbo in this way, this will also put local authorities and communities under great pressure.

The Bill is ultimately unworkable. It will cause catastrophic human suffering, confusion and chaos. The Government is presenting a gift to exploiters.

Despite this Bill, FLEX will continue to work for the implementation of policies which address the structural causes of exploitation, and which support people to challenge abuse or exploitation, including at early and preventative stages and which offer opportunities to rebuild lives.