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HSBC UK PROVIDES SUPPORT FOR SURVIVORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

HSBC UK has launched a scheme to provide bank accounts for victims of human trafficking and modern slavery as they work to rebuild their lives after the trauma of trafficking, forced labour, sexual exploitation or domestic servitude.

HSBC UK is working closely with a number of charities, including the Salvation Army, Kalayaan and Migrant Help, to provide Basic Bank Accounts to survivors via a tailored application process that is aligned to the National Referral Mechanism, the UK Government framework for identifying and referring potential victims and ensuring they receive appropriate support.

In the UK 6,993 people were referred to British authorities as potential victims of trafficking in 2018. This is up from 5,142 in 2017, according to figures from the National Crime Agency, and 3,804 in 2016.

Victims of trafficking typically find themselves working for little or no money, often housed in unsuitable accommodation, with their lives controlled by organised crime gangs. For those who escape, the future can still be bleak, as they lack basic necessities and may not even have any formal identity such as a passport.

In the UK support is provided by a number of charities and bodies working with national and local government. This includes the provision of safe accommodation, health services and practical and financial assistance.

For victims who want to rebuild their lives in the UK, getting a job, finding somewhere permanent to live and opening a bank account is critical. However, many cannot meet the requirements they need to open an account, such as a valid proof of address.

A bank account provides one element of support that victims may need to avoid ending up back in the hands of the traffickers.

Services for survivors of human trafficking were piloted in HSBC UK branches in Nottingham and Glasgow between June 2018 and March 2019 during which charity partners introduced survivors to specially trained bank staff to work through the process of opening an account. Twenty-four people were helped to open an account during the pilots.

HSBC UK has now rolled out the initiative to another 18 branches in areas of high potential need, including Bishopsgate (London), Birmingham and Manchester.

Case study:

Michael* left his country of origin to work in a wealthy country so that he could provide for his family. When Michael questioned his employer about his excessive workload and low pay, he was assaulted and locked inside a room. He was also threatened with being reported to the police and denied food. Fearful of what his employer could do to him and his family, he felt trapped. Unable to leave, Michael was coerced into accompanying his employer when he travelled to the UK. Michael entered the UK on the Overseas Domestic Worker visa which tied him to his employer. His passport was confiscated. The abuse and exploitation continued, until he finally managed to escape. After his escape, he was assisted by Kalayaan, a charity based in Holland Park, London, that supports migrant domestic workers. The charity referred his case to the National Referral Mechanism and he has since been

recognised as a victim of modern slavery. He has also been awarded compensation as a result of his experiences.

Rita Gava, Director of Kalayaan, comments: “Many basic services such as having a bank account are often denied to victims of modern slavery on the grounds they cannot provide certain documents. The victims Kalayaan supports often have their passport confiscated by their trafficker and cannot provide proof of their address if they are staying in a safe house.

“Kalayaan has accompanied several of our clients to banks along the high street but has always been turned away. The impact this can have on victims can be hugely damaging to their recovery and can often result in victims giving any money they may have to friends or acquaintances, taking away control over the financial affairs.

“HSBC UK has led the way in understanding the issues faced by victims of modern slavery. Michael can now start to move forward with his life and use the compensation he has been awarded to access English classes and further education. He has also been able to start supporting his family.”

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability Victoria Atkins said: “We are absolutely committed to stamping out modern slavery and supporting victims as they rebuild their lives.

“Financial independence is a vital part of this rebuilding process and HSBC’s services for survivors will prove invaluable to those who don’t currently have the credentials to set up their own bank accounts.”

Stuart Haire, Head of HSBC UK’s Retail Bank, said: “It is a tragedy that people who have escaped their traffickers can face such a struggle to rebuild their lives. I am pleased that HSBC UK has been able to take such a careful, considered approach to assist charities in providing the support that victims need. We are a small but important piece in the jigsaw.”

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* Michael is not his real name

Notes to editors

An HSBC UK Basic Bank Account provides a debit card and includes access to banking through the internet, telephone and mobile. It does not include the provision of credit. See: <https://www.hsbc.co.uk/current-accounts/products/basic-bank-account/>

Services for survivors of human trafficking are available in the following HSBC UK branches:

Birmingham	New Street
Bishopsgate	Bishopsgate
Blackpool	Oxford Square
Bradford	Market Street
Bristol	Cabot Circus
Cardiff	Queen Street
Croydon	Croydon Central
Dover	Biggin Street
Glasgow	Buchanan Street
Leeds	Park Row
Liverpool	Lord Street
Manchester	St Ann's

Nottingham	Clumber Street
Sheffield	Sheffield City
Southampton	Southampton City
Swindon	Canal Walk
Middlesborough	Albert Road
Newcastle	Grey Street Old Christchurch
Bournemouth	Road
Peterborough	Cathedral Square

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HSBC UK:

HSBC UK serves around 14.5 million customers across the UK, supported by 32,000 colleagues. HSBC UK offers a complete range of retail banking and wealth management to personal and private banking customers, as well as commercial banking for small to medium businesses and large corporates.

HSBC Holdings plc:

HSBC Holdings plc, the parent company of HSBC, is headquartered in London. HSBC serves customers worldwide from offices in 66 countries and territories in our geographical regions: Europe, Asia, North America, Latin America, and Middle East and North Africa. With assets of \$2,659bn at 31 March 2019, HSBC is one of the world's largest banking and financial services organisations.

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