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MODERN SLAVERY: REFERRALS FOR LABOUR EXPLOITATION IN THE UK INCREASE BY A THIRD

- *Vietnam, Albania and Poland top the list for the number of potential victims referred in the UK*

LONDON – May 25, 2017 – The number of potential victims of labour exploitation referred as part of the framework set up to identify victims of modern slavery in the UK increased by 33 per cent from 2015 to 2016, according to analysis of National Crime Agency data¹ by Kroll, the global leader in risk mitigation and response solutions.

The data, which is taken from the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the framework in which potential victims of human trafficking or modern slavery are referred by authorised agencies such as police forces, the UK Border Force or Social Services, reveals that there were 1,575 referrals for labour exploitation in 2016. Seventy per cent (1,107) of these were adults, and 30 per cent (468) minors².

The number of adults referred increased by 24 per cent on the previous year, and the number of minors increased by a huge 63 per cent².

According to Kroll, who helps companies ensure their partners and suppliers guard against the risk of modern slavery, the increased numbers cast a spotlight on an issue that is of increasing concern to businesses, particularly in sectors such as retail and manufacturing.

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 (the “Act”) passed into UK law in March 2015. As well as consolidating existing offences of slavery and human trafficking, the Act increased the maximum sentences available for such offences, strengthened law enforcement powers and implemented new measures to protect and support victims.

The Act’s Transparency in Supply Chains provision introduced a disclosure requirement for businesses with an annual turnover of £36 million or more after tax, obliging them to make public the steps they are taking to ensure that modern slavery offences are not taking place in either their business, or their supply chain.

Kevin Braine, Head of Kroll’s Compliance Practice in EMEA, explained: “There is sometimes a false assumption that modern slavery only occurs in certain countries or certain types of industry but the increase in the number of referrals of labour exploitation victims indicate that modern slavery is very much an issue for UK employers. Any commercial activity involved in the production of low-margin, low-skill, labour-intensive goods or services is potentially at risk of modern slavery offences.

“We are doing a lot of due diligence and screening work in this area for businesses involved in all sorts of commercial activities. Even lower risk businesses such as professional services firms are now waking up to the fact that they may be sourcing goods or services from third parties that have few or no modern slavery controls in place, for example wholesalers that source staff uniforms, or contractors handling cleaning and maintenance services for their offices. Risks tend



to increase when a business relies on seasonal, casual or migrant workers, uses third party agents to source labour, or sources goods or services through convoluted or opaque supply chains.”

Kroll’s analysis¹ reveals that Vietnam was the country of origin for the highest number of potential labour exploitation victims in the UK referred in 2016, with 307 individuals. This was followed by Albania with 194 potential victims and Poland with 140. However, Kroll says these numbers may just be scraping the surface of the true picture of modern slavery in companies operating in the UK.

Top ten countries of origin of victims referred for labour exploitation¹

Nationality	Number of referrals in 2016
Vietnam	307
Albania	194
Poland	140
China	139
Romania	130
United Kingdom	85
Sudan	75
India	63
Slovakia	57
Eritrea	41

Kevin Braine continued: “these numbers demonstrate two things: firstly with an estimated 13,000 victims of modern slavery, the UK is still far from immune to this type of appalling human rights abuse. Secondly, the sharp increase in the number of referrals shows that awareness and detection of modern slavery has improved since the introduction of the Act. One way businesses can contribute is by auditing their supply chains and making sure that they are not at risk of endorsing or supporting these terrible labour practices. There are relatively simple steps companies can take to ensure there are no issues in their increasingly complex supply chains.”

While over half the cases reported in the 2016 data are pending a final outcome, analysis of the previous three years’ data¹ across all types of exploitation reveals that 37 per cent of referrals have reached a positive conclusive decision, and another 16 per cent are still pending.

ENDS

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Notes to editors

¹ Kroll analysis of National Referral Mechanism Statistics, End of Year Summary 2016, published 07/04/2017

² National Referral Mechanism Statistics, End of Year Summary 2016, published 07/04/2017

About Kroll:

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