

To the Attorney General, The Right Honourable Suella Braverman QC MP

We are writing in response to the recent prosecution of Peter Swailes Junior, who was sentenced on 4 February 2022 at Carlisle Crown Court under the Modern Slavery Act. Despite admitting his involvement in a case that saw a 59 year old kept in a shed for up to 40 years, Swailes Junior avoided a jail sentence.

Modern slavery charges are all too rare in our country. Despite estimates putting the number of victims at more than 100,000, there are only around 50 convictions a year. They are by nature complex crimes to investigate.

It is therefore hugely disappointing that in this case Swailes Junior has avoided a prison sentence. It would appear the prosecution and Judge accepted a plea by the defendant at face value - one that essentially put the blame of the survivor's treatment on the father of the defendant, who has since died. Surely his written plea flies in the face of the evidence gathered by investigators?

As anti-slavery charities with expertise rooted in survivor care, it seems highly questionable why Swailes Junior's plea, based on his claim that he did not know the living conditions in which the victim was being kept, was accepted. We struggle to understand how this could have happened despite the investigation uncovering Swailes Junior being involved in much of the exploitation - for example, as we understand it, he collected the victim, who was recovering from a broken back, from hospital before he was discharged. Accepting the plea in the face of such evidence baffles us and reinforces the sense that the criminals responsible for modern slavery calculate this as a high reward, low risk crime.

We are therefore writing to ask you to refer this case to the Court of Appeal for the sentence to be reviewed as unduly lenient. We will also be writing separately to the Director of Public Prosecutions asking for an urgent review, including why the basis of the plea was accepted in this case. Justice must be given the best chance to be done.

Yours sincerely

Christian Guy, CEO, Justice and Care

Jared Hodgson, CEO, Hope at Homes

Tim Nelson, CEO, Hope for Justice

Garry Smith, CEO, Medaille Trust

Andrew Wallis, CEO, Unseen

Helen Sworn, Executive Director, Chabdai

Major Kathy Betteridge, Territorial Director of Anti-Trafficking & Modern Slavery, Salvation Army

Caroline O'Connor, CEO, Migrant Help

Meg Heath, Co-CEO, Palm Cove Society

Emily Chalke, CEO, Ella's

Ed Newton, CEO, City Hearts

Patrick Ryan, CEO, Hestia

Jasmine O'Connor, CEO Anti-Slavery International

