



UK Research  
and Innovation

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CENTRE FOR  
THE  
RULE  
OF  
LAW**

## Prime Minister announces new Modern Slavery Centre

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The Prime Minister has announced the investment of £10million of public funding from UK Research and Innovation's Strategic Priorities Fund to create an ambitious new **Policy and Evidence Centre on Modern Slavery and Human Rights**. The Centre's job will be to bring about a step change in our understanding of modern slavery and to transform the effectiveness of the legal and policy framework which is designed to eradicate it.

Modern slavery has been described by the Prime Minister as "the great human rights issue of our time" and the world's governments have agreed, in the Sustainable Development Goals, to work towards its elimination by 2030. The UK led the world with its legal and policy response in the Modern Slavery Act 2015, but as the Prime Minister said in her recent speech to the International Labour Organisation in Geneva, there is still much work to do. The growing urgency of the problem means that work must be accelerated, which requires increased collaboration, dialogue and knowledge sharing, both nationally and internationally. The new Centre will respond to that challenge.

The new research centre, funded by **UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Strategic Priorities Fund** and led by the **Arts and Humanities Research Council ("AHRC")**, in collaboration with other research councils, will bring together academics, policy-makers, businesses and charities to drive forward new studies, share knowledge, and improve collaboration both at home and overseas, to further strengthen our response. The multi-disciplinary Centre will be led by the **Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law** and will be a consortium of universities and Independent Research Organisations with a track record in world class work on modern slavery. The partners in the consortium are the **Rights Lab at the University of Nottingham**, the **Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery and Emancipation at the University of Hull**, the **Centre for the Study of International Slavery at the University of Liverpool**, the **Bonavero Institute of Human Rights at the University of Oxford** and the **Alan Turing Institute**, the national institute for data science and artificial intelligence, in London.

The purpose of the new Centre is to provide independent, impartial and authoritative insight and analysis on modern slavery, based on high quality research, of real practical utility to policymakers, legislators, international organisations, businesses, civil society and the public. It will bring together existing work and commission new and innovative research on modern slavery to enhance understanding of this complex and evolving

threat and to significantly improve the evidence base which underpins legal and policy responses.

The Centre will be independent from Government. To ensure that its work is policy relevant, and capable of informing, influencing and where necessary challenging Government policy, it will work closely with policy-makers across Government. The Centre will focus its efforts on improving the evidence base on four key themes:

- Preventing modern slavery
- Transparency in supply chains
- Understanding survivor needs and enhancing victim support
- The effectiveness of legal enforcement measures.

The Centre will be highly collaborative in nature and will be seeking partnerships with non-academic partners with a strong interest in its work.

Announcing the Centre, the **Prime Minister Theresa May** said *"More than a 100 years ago the world condemned slavery to the history books, but the stark reality for around 40 million men, women and children is that they are still trapped in Modern Slavery.*

*As both Home Secretary and Prime Minister I have endeavoured to shine a light on this hidden crime, to speak out for victims and put modern slavery firmly on the domestic and international agenda. There is much we can be proud of in our progress so far, but we need to accelerate our efforts, better share knowledge and build on our expertise.*

*That is why ... I am pleased to support new, innovative research to inform global efforts to end this barbaric crime by 2030."*

UK Research and Innovation Chief Executive, **Professor Sir Mark Walport**, said *"The Modern Slavery Policy and Evidence Centre is the first of its kind in the world, designed to bring together researchers, policymakers, businesses, charities and NGOs on a scale not seen before in the UK to reduce modern slavery.*

*The UK must continue to lead the world on this fundamental issue of human rights in terms of regulation and research and innovation will play a vital role in this work. The funding announced today through the Strategic Priorities Fund further demonstrates the UK's commitment to ending modern slavery."*

Executive Director of the AHRC, **Professor Andrew Thompson**, said *"The centre will seek out solutions to the dehumanising and abhorrent crime of modern slavery by mobilising world-class research from the arts, humanities, social sciences and beyond. The centre will provide new independent, impartial insight and analysis into the causes and consequences of modern slavery – speaking to questions of prevention, enforcement, supply chains, victims' recovery and survivor needs."*

Director of the Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law and the Director of the new Policy and Evidence Centre, **Murray Hunt**, said *"The creation of the new Centre is an exciting opportunity to transform the effectiveness of legal and policy responses to the scourge of modern slavery, which shames humanity. The Bingham Centre is privileged to have the opportunity to work closely with some of the world's leading experts to bring about this much needed step change."*



## Notes for editors

### Contacts:

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### References:

**UK Research and Innovation** (“UKRI”) is the new UK-wide umbrella organisation for research funding, working in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities and government to create the best possible environment for research and innovation to flourish.

The **Strategic Priorities Fund** supports high quality research and development priorities identified by researchers and businesses at the cutting edge of research and innovation. This fund is designed to:

- Drive an increase in high-quality multi- and interdisciplinary research and innovation
- Ensure that UKRI’s investment links up effectively with Government departments’ research priorities and opportunities
- Ensure the system is able to respond to strategic priorities and opportunities.

**The Arts and Humanities Research Council** (“AHRC”) which is part of UK Research and Innovation, funds world-class, independent researchers in a wide range of subjects: archaeology, area studies, the creative and performing arts, design, digital content, heritage, history, languages, philosophy and much more. This financial year we will spend approximately £98 million on research and postgraduate training in collaboration with a number of partners. The quality and range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides economic, social and cultural benefits to the UK, but contributes to the culture and welfare of societies around the globe.

The **Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law** is an independent research institute which exists to advance the Rule of Law worldwide. It is part of the British Institute of International and Comparative Law.

The specific **objectives** of the new Policy and Evidence Centre will be to:

1. create and deliver against a dynamic and agile research agenda on modern slavery that both responds to and informs the priorities of all these stakeholders and users of research;
2. oversee and implement an inclusive, collaborative and internationally recognised research and policy engagement programme that generates new

data and insights and exploits existing research to address challenges of importance to combating modern slavery;

3. produce evidence-based policy recommendations and guidance for policymakers, legislators, businesses and international organisations; and
4. build and sustain new networks of academics, policymakers, legislators and businesses to share knowledge, and communicate research findings and policy recommendations.