



Dame Sara Thornton DBE QPM  
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Dear Sir/Madam,

**Safeguarding international students against the risk of exploitation**

As Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, I am writing in connection with my statutory responsibility to encourage good practice in the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of modern slavery offences and the identification of victims. I am aware of media coverage concerning the fraudulent use of Tier 4 student visas and potential links to exploitation. Particular concerns have been raised around students from Vietnam. This was raised with me by the Prime Minister's Office before the Covid-19 crisis which I appreciate will have severely disrupted the attendance of children from overseas in British schools. However, at some point the recruitment of overseas children will resume and I still thought it important to reach out directly to the independent schools sector.

It is vital that vulnerable children receive appropriate support and protection, and I know that the Home Office and Department for Education are taking steps to further improve existing safeguards. I am also aware of good work being undertaken by organisations representing independent schools. This includes work by the Association for the Education and Guardianship of International Students to highlight good practice, and the Boarding Schools' Association development of a Certified Agent Scheme.

Whilst the vast majority of international students should pose no concern, all independent schools and associations representing the sector should be alive to the fact that some may be particularly vulnerable. I commend the good work already taking place to safeguard these children and request that you remain vigilant on this matter.

I would encourage you to ensure that your staff are sighted on this risk. You may find the NSPCC [website](#) and guidance [leaflet](#) for education workers useful to raise awareness of the indicators of child trafficking and how to respond.

Yours sincerely,

**Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner**