



**CONSULTATION ON SECTIONS 9(2)(b)(i) OF
HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND EXPLOITATION (SCOTLAND) ACT 2015**

VSS RESPONSE

Victim Support Scotland believes that the relevant period in Regulations under Section 9(2)(b)(i) should be 90 days. The purpose of the reflection period, according to GRETA, is to allow the victim to recover and escape the influence of traffickers and to take an informed decision on cooperation with the authorities. As such, setting the reflection period at 90 days would provide victims of human trafficking with a level of reassurance, security and peace of mind to allow them to focus on their recovery.

The 30 days reflection period within the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings is provided as a minimum period. Although we would look for assurances that funding for services would not be linked into the reflection period, setting the reflection period to 90 days would provide a level of certainty for these services in being able to meet the longer-term needs of victims.

Victims should be afforded the opportunity to use support services at any time in their journey, so multiple offers of support should be made, where deemed appropriate. Support services should also be flexible in their approach, and neither time restricted nor dependent on the National Referral Mechanism.

There is of course no period within which it can be said that a victim of human trafficking would be sufficiently recovered. In fact, many trafficked victims suffer psychological symptoms such as depression, anxiety or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and are in need of long-term support and treatment. For this reason, we welcome the discretionary basis on which support can be provided out with the mandatory time period for recovery and reflection, but believe an increased reflection period would demonstrate the Scottish Government's commitment to better identify and support potential and confirmed victims of human trafficking.