



For Immediate Release

11th August 2015

Unseen receives £488,000 from Big Lottery Fund for UK's first 24-hour safe-house for male victims of slavery

Unseen, the Bristol-based charity that works directly with victims of modern slavery and human trafficking, is to receive £488,000 over three years from the Big Lottery Fund towards a new 24-hour safe-house for male victims found in the UK. The project will be the first dedicated service of its kind in the country and will support up to four survivors at one time.

Unseen's managing director and co-founder Kate Garbers says: "Most people tend to think of human trafficking and modern slavery as something that only happens to women and girls. But through our outreach work we've met male victims who have been exploited in the UK – either working for little or no money, who've been badly treated, psychologically manipulated or who've been exposed to extremely poor working conditions – who need our specialist support.

"We are delighted to receive this funding. It will enable us to open a dedicated centre where men with multiple, complex needs can begin to start their recovery in a safe, nurturing environment. The house will be staffed 24 hours a day by trained staff who understand the complexities of this hidden crime and who can give these survivors the support they need and deserve."

Official government statistics show there were 2,340 potential victims found in the UK in 2014, 40% of whom were male. However, Home Secretary Theresa May admitted in December that there could be as many as 13,000 men, women and children enslaved in the UK.

Victims like Asif, who escaped persecution in his home country and arrived in the UK vulnerable and desperate for work. He was subjected to labour exploitation for three years, working in various restaurants for little or no pay, sleeping on their floors and working in hazardous conditions, frequently receiving burns and scars, which caused him great mental and physical stress. Thankfully, a former colleague put him in touch with a refugee support service, which eventually led him to get help from Unseen's outreach service. Asif says that if he'd had 24-hour support when he needed it, "it would have changed my life. I would have had my basic needs met and felt there was someone there beside me".

Unseen will help survivors like Asif to access healthcare, legal assistance, emotional and psychological support, education and employability sessions, therapeutic activities and support to move on. The project's aim is to empower survivors to become resilient and independent so they can contribute to the community around them.

Unseen's grant is just one of many announced today by the Big Lottery Fund. A total of £32,780,196 is being given towards projects that will help improve the lives of people and communities across England. The Fund is responsible for giving out 40% of the money raised by the National Lottery for good causes and invest over £650 million a year in projects big and small in health, education, environment and charitable purposes.

Since June 2004 it has awarded over £8 billion to projects that make a difference to people and communities in need, from early years intervention to commemorative travel funding for World War Two veterans.

Since the National Lottery began in 1994, £33 billion has been raised and more than 450,000 grants awarded.

ENDS

Notes for editors:

- Figures released for 2014 by the National Crime Agency state there were 2,340 reported human trafficking victims in the UK – a 34% increase on 2014's figures.
- Unseen began in 2008 and works to support survivors, train frontline staff to correctly identify victims, and collaborate with government and other agencies to combat modern slavery in the UK and abroad.
- Unseen's WATER (Women's Anti-Trafficking Emergency Refuge) project is the only safe-house in the South West of England and is one of only three services in the country offering 24/7 support to female victims of human trafficking. Unseen also offers a resettlement service to help survivors continue their journey of recovery within their chosen community.
- Unseen runs a Room Sponsorship Scheme for people to directly support women survivors at our WATER project. For details, go visit www.unseenuk.org/donate/sponsor-a-room
- The charity was instrumental in setting up an Anti-Trafficking Partnership with Avon & Somerset Police and Bristol City Council, which brings together other NGOs, local government, businesses and statutory agencies in fighting modern slavery in the South West.

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