



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACTS: [Brandon Bouchard](#), Polaris (Washington, DC): +1 202 507 7962
Unseen Press Office, (Bristol): +44 303 040 2888
UK Home Office Press Office (London): +44 20 7035 3535

Unseen Selected to Operate UK Modern Slavery Helpline and Resource Centre

Bristol-based charity to launch enhanced helpline in late 2016

WASHINGTON, DC (14 March 2016) – Polaris announced today that it has selected the UK charity [Unseen](#) to operate the enhanced UK Modern Slavery Helpline and Resource Centre. In December 2015, Polaris, UK Home Secretary Theresa May, and Google.org announced a plan to launch an enhanced UK helpline and Polaris issued a request for proposals from UK NGOs interested in operating it. Polaris is a global anti-human trafficking organisation based in Washington, DC that operates the [National Human Trafficking Resource Center](#) (NHTRC) hotline for the United States.

As the NGO operating the UK’s Modern Slavery Helpline and Resource Centre, Unseen will work with Polaris over the next year to prepare to handle calls about cases of modern slavery within the UK. Once launched in late 2016, victims and survivors of modern slavery will be able to contact the Centre to learn about their options and be connected to support services. The enhanced helpline will gather information about all types of modern slavery and human trafficking of both UK and foreign nationals. Additionally, it will collect data about how and where modern slavery is happening to identify trends and better understand the scale and nature of the crime. [Google.org](#) is providing £1 million in funding to cover Unseen’s start-up and operating costs to establish the enhanced UK helpline and Polaris’s role as a technical partner.

“The UK Modern Slavery Helpline and Resource Centre represents a major leap forward in support for victims of modern slavery. It will give victims the confidence to come forward, knowing that they will be listened to and helped out of their exploitation,” **Minister for Preventing Abuse Exploitation and Crime Karen Bradley said.** “This innovative approach between Polaris and Unseen, funded by Google, is precisely the kind of collaboration that will help us to stamp out slavery. I commend the ambition behind this project and I know that Polaris and Unseen will work closely with other NGOs, law enforcement agencies and partners to make it a success - helping more victims to escape and recover from their ordeal and seeing the perpetrators of slavery brought to justice.”

“The provision of a high quality Modern Slavery Helpline and Resource Centre is essential in order to allow those who are suffering to reach out and seek the help they need and deserve,” **said the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Kevin Hyland.** “The new helpline funded by Google will be developed in partnership between Polaris and

PO Box 65323
Washington, DC 20035

TEL: 202-745-1001
info@polarisproject.org

www.polarisproject.org



Unseen, both of whom have extensive experience within the modern slavery arena. This is a significant and welcomed advancement in establishing an effective response to this horrendous crime. Polaris and Unseen are committed to working with statutory agencies, non government organisations and the public to ensure the United Kingdom has a high quality helpline that will enable victims to seek safety in confidence. In turn the information gathered by the helpline will assist to detect those who perpetrate these crimes and allow for prevention measures to be implemented. This kind of collaborative enterprise funded by the private sector is an example of how businesses can proactively support front line services in the fight against modern slavery.”

“We are delighted to be working with Polaris to significantly enhance the UK’s fight against modern slavery. Victims will be able to safely seek the help and information they urgently need. Members of the public will be able to report potential and suspected incidences of modern slavery and trafficking,” **said Andrew Wallis OBE, CEO of Unseen.** “The enhanced helpline significantly increases the UK’s capability of dealing with the scourge of modern slavery and increased data and understanding of the problem will enable a more targeted and proactive response to the crime. Modern slavery is global; therefore, we will work with victims, NGOs, and law enforcement agencies from the outset to ensure this helpline is used to help as many victims as possible as we work towards a world without slavery.”

“Unseen is a leader in the fight against modern slavery and their expertise will be instrumental as they enhance the UK Modern Slavery Helpline and Resource Centre. We look forward to supporting their work to strengthen the safety net for survivors in the UK,” **said Bradley Myles, CEO of Polaris.** “Human trafficking is a global business that requires a global response and helplines are essential to ensure victims can be connected to the help and support they need.”

"Google.org is proud to support the launch of the enhanced modern slavery helpline in the UK," **said Jacqueline Fuller, Director of Google.org.** “Connecting and supporting anti-human trafficking helplines throughout the world not only provides victims access to the services they need, but also helps identify trends within the illicit business of modern slavery.”

Unseen’s successful bid follows an extensive and rigorous selection process led by Polaris that involved several highly qualified UK-based organisations. Based on Polaris’s experience launching the US national hotline and resource centre for human trafficking and operating it for nearly a decade, Unseen presented the most robust vision to re-launch the UK helpline. Unseen’s approach will support victims and survivors of all forms of modern slavery in the UK while developing data-driven efforts to disrupt and ultimately eradicate modern slavery networks.

Unseen was launched in 2008 to combat modern slavery in the UK through supporting both exploited people and tackling the systemic issues of slavery. In 2011, Unseen opened the WATER (Women’s Anti-Trafficking Emergency Refuge) project, the first and only 24/7 safe-house in the South West for adult female survivors of human trafficking, providing access to a range of specialist services and enabling survivors to safely recover and develop resilient independent lives. In 2013, Unseen developed a resettlement service, RIO (Resettlement, Integration, and Outreach), to provide ongoing survivor care. The charity provides training, advice, and resources to facilitate the identification and support of potential victims of slavery



and was also instrumental in setting up the [Anti-Slavery Partnership in conjunction with Avon and Somerset Police](#), which brings together 22 frontline agencies, NGOs, and businesses in fighting modern slavery across the South West. Currently, Unseen is working towards opening the UK's first specialist accommodation and support project for child victims of modern slavery, as well delivering as 24/7 high-level accommodation, care, and support for male survivors. By using their experience and research, Unseen seeks to impact and inspire transformation across legislation, policy, and society.

Today's announcement follows [the expansion of a national human trafficking hotline in Mexico](#) last September, as part of Polaris's work to support hotline coverage for victims of human trafficking worldwide. Hotlines are a fundamental component of a country's response to modern slavery and are an unparalleled resource to connect victims to critical services. By learning where and how human trafficking is happening, hotlines illuminate trends, criminal networks, and trafficking flows occurring within and across borders to better inform prevention and intervention efforts.

###

Note for Editors:

About Polaris

Polaris is a leader in the global fight to eradicate modern slavery. Named after the North Star that guided slaves to freedom in the U.S., Polaris acts as a catalyst to systemically disrupt the human trafficking networks that rob human beings of their lives and their freedom. By working with government leaders, the world's leading technology corporations, and local partners, Polaris equips communities to identify, report, and prevent human trafficking. Our comprehensive model puts victims at the centre of what we do – helping survivors restore their freedom, preventing more victims, and leveraging data and technology to pursue traffickers wherever they operate. Learn more at www.polarisproject.org.

About Unseen

Unseen is a Bristol-based charity, founded in 2008, that operates across three main areas: supporting survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery; equipping frontline staff with the tools to correctly identify victims and take appropriate action; and influencing government at a strategic level to create long-lasting solutions to modern slavery. In 2015, Unseen was awarded, Charity of the Year: with an income of less than £1 million, by Charity Times Awards.

Figures released for 2015 by the National Crime Agency state there were 3,266 reported potential victims of human trafficking in the UK – a 40% increase on 2014's figures.

Potential victims of trafficking were reported to be from 102 different countries of origin.

Albania, Vietnam, and Nigeria remain the most common countries of origin of potential victims referred.

Potential victims from Sudan saw the highest percentage increase in the number of referrals compared to the previous year.

The most common exploitation type recorded for potential victims exploited as an adult was labour exploitation, which also includes criminal exploitation.



The most prominent exploitation type recorded for potential victims first exploited as a minor, where known, was labour exploitation, which includes the sub category of criminal exploitation.

The Home Office estimates that there are up to 13,000 victims of modern slavery in the UK today.

Contact details:

+44 303 040 2888

info@unseenuk.org

www.unseenuk.org.uk

Twitter: @unseenorg

Facebook: unseenuk