

Press release

15th November 2016



Bristol charity Unseen receives £308,899 from Big Lottery Fund for its 24-hour safe-house for female victims of slavery

Unseen is set to receive a £308,899 grant from the Big Lottery Fund over the next three years. The money will go towards the specialist staff needed to support survivors of modern slavery and human trafficking at the charity's eight-bed 24-hour safe-house and at its resettlement service. Staff will help survivors right from their moment of rescue through to them transitioning into independent living in the community.

The safe-house provides shelter and a place of comfort for many women, including **Favour** who came to Unseen because she needed 24-hour care and support. She said:

“I was living a miserable life – cooking, cleaning – just a slavery job. For 10 years I didn't go outside. Whenever my boss wanted me, I had to sleep with him. I was a slave.”

After 10 years, she was found by a neighbour who helped her escape. Finally free, and with the support of Unseen, she was given help to access medical and sexual health care, legal advice, therapeutic activities like gardening and relaxation sessions, and techniques to help her cope with the anxiety and flashbacks she was experiencing. Watch her interview [here](#).

Kate Garbers, Unseen's Managing Director, said: “We are thrilled to receive this funding for our women's safe-house. We work with some of society's most vulnerable women and this funding will enable us to provide the specialist staff necessary to help them journey from victim to survivor, to rebuild their lives and create a new future for themselves.”

Unseen also provides life-skills sessions for survivors where they can learn about safe relationships and rebuild confidence, along with basic educational courses like English, maths and computing. This varied support acts as the first stage on each survivor's long and difficult journey towards rebuilding their lives. Women recover their self-esteem, build their confidence and gain the key skills vital for their future independence.

The Home Office predicts there may be as many as 13,000 victims of slavery in the UK alone. To date, Unseen has provided nearly 11,000 nights of safe, emergency accommodation to more than 135 victims from 37 different countries, and this funding will enable Unseen to continue this vital work.

James Harcourt, Deputy Director of Big Lottery's Responsive Programmes, said: “The specialist care Unseen offers survivors of human trafficking is crucial in helping them rebuild their lives. We're delighted our funding is supporting women to gain the skills and confidence they need to move forward.”

One survivor recently said Unseen's work has had a huge impact on her recovery:

“This place has changed my life, from nothing to something, hopeless to a future. Thank you, and thanks to donors, everybody who keeps this house going.”

This is one of hundreds of projects across England sharing around £16,044,008 of funding today from the Big Lottery Fund to enable people to improve their lives and communities.

Visit <http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/> for more information.

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Notes for editors:

- Figures released for 2015 by the National Crime Agency state there were 3,266 reported human trafficking victims in the UK – a 40% 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 2country 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
- In October 2016, Unseen launched a new 24-hour Modern Slavery Helpline and Resource Centre for potential victims, members of the public, frontline professionals and businesses to call if they need help or advice: 08000 121 700
- 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, statutory agencies in fighting modern slavery in the South West.

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