



Press release – Monday 30th July 2018

A new app is being launched to help stamp out modern slavery in the UK - at the click of a button.

The UK-wide Modern Slavery Helpline was set up by leading anti-slavery charity Unseen in the autumn of 2016. New figures show dramatic increases in contacts to the Helpline during the first six months of 2018 (Jan-June) compared to the same period in 2017:

- More than double the number of potential victims indicated: from over 1,500 in 2017, to more than 4,100 in 2018.
- 80% increase in calls and online reports: over 1,500 in 2017, to more than 2,700 in 2018.
- Double the number of modern slavery cases: from over 450 in 2017, to more than 920 in 2018.
- 83% increase in referrals and signposts to law enforcement and other agencies: from over 870 in 2017, to more than 1590 in 2018.

The National Crime Agency estimates that there are tens of thousands of people being held in modern slavery in the UK, trapped in situations such as forced labour, domestic servitude or sex exploitation. In reality, the number could be far higher.

We are now launching the Unseen App to make reporting to the Helpline even easier. The App provides a simple guide to recognising the signs of modern slavery and reporting concerns in confidence to free more victims of slavery. The app was developed for Unseen by the Helpline's founding partner BT and can be found by searching 'Unseen UK' in app stores now.

Quotes

Andrew Wallis, CEO of Unseen:

“Traffickers are using ever-more sophisticated technology to control and exploit their victims. It is crucial that those of us combating modern slavery must innovate too. Whether that is technology for businesses to map their supply chains, or an app for everyone to have in their pocket at the nail bar, car wash or takeaway, this isn't just a gimmick, it's an essential part of the fight to eradicate slavery.”

Justine Currell, Director of Unseen:

“We know that apps work in the fight against slavery. After the Church of England's Clewer Initiative launched their 'Safe Car Wash App' in June 2018, which pointed to the Modern Slavery Helpline, we opened 11 cases involving 69 victims of modern slavery in car washes based on reports received through the Safe Car Wash App. This demonstrates how effective an app can be, and the need for one that covers all types and instances of modern slavery. The Unseen App will do just that.”



Eric Anderson Head of the Modern Slavery Programme at BT, who developed the app:

“We know increased awareness and action from the public is critical to turning the tide on modern slavery. The Unseen App makes it easier than ever to help people spot the signs and report concerns, because it’s there in your pocket when you need it.”

Roger Bannister, interim chief executive of the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority:

“Good intelligence is vital if we are to continue disrupting labour exploitation. The GLAA receives regular referrals from the Modern Slavery Helpline and anything that can help enhance and accelerate the reporting of concerns or issues relating to slavery and exploitation has to be welcomed. The public have always had a key role to play in being the eyes and ears for law enforcement in the UK and creating another mechanism for them to do this through the creation of an app makes a lot of sense.”

Deputy Director Tom Dowdall, National Crime Agency:

“The NCA is pleased to support the launch of the Unseen Modern Slavery App. Over the last year, we have worked closely with the Modern Slavery Helpline, including on the award-winning ‘Invisible People’ Exhibition, to raise public awareness and encourage more reporting. Having an app to provide the public with key information and enable quick and easy reporting to the Helpline is very much welcomed.”

Mark Burns-Williamson OBE, National APCC Lead for Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery, and Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire:

“The UK Modern Slavery Helpline and Resource Centre has made a significant positive impact on the way police, law enforcement, statutory and non-statutory agencies have been able to respond to modern slavery and human trafficking. It has improved the quality, quantity and consistency of intelligence gathering nationwide to better understand the nature and scale of this serious threat to our communities, and also, the multi-agency collaborative approach of the helpline has led to the identification and safeguarding of many vulnerable victims and provided an effective means to identify the perpetrators to bring them to justice. The new Unseen App is a fantastic development and I really welcome its launch. This technology provides another means of access to help for those in exploitative situations and a secure and direct link to the helpline for anyone to report concerns they may have, I have helped develop a similar App in West Yorkshire around Hate Crime and know it works. We all have a responsibility to take action and I am determined with colleagues to see all PCC’s work together with their police forces, partner agencies and communities to tackle these vile human crimes.”

ENDS



Notes for editors

About Unseen and the Modern Slavery Helpline:

Unseen is a modern slavery charity that operates a micro to macro approach to tackling slavery: by directly supporting survivors of human trafficking and modern slavery through safe accommodation, reintegration and outreach services; equipping frontline staff and businesses with the training and tools to correctly identify victims and take appropriate action; and influencing governments at a strategic level to create long-lasting global solutions to modern slavery. Unseen also operates the UK-wide Modern Slavery Helpline and provides consultancy and training to businesses to help them better understand the issue of modern slavery in supply chains and their own organisation. In 2015, Unseen was awarded, Charity of the Year: with an income of less than £1 million, by Charity Times Awards.

The UK-wide Modern Slavery Helpline and Resource Centre, established in October 2016, provides victims, the public, statutory agencies and businesses with access to information and support on a 24/7 basis. Potential victims, who call the Helpline, can talk to fully trained call handlers who will guide and assist them to access relevant services including Government-funded support through the National Referral Mechanism. Statutory agencies calling the Helpline will be supported in dealing with potential victims and signposted to the range of information, guidance and tools available through the associated resource centre. To raise awareness of the Helpline and ensure that it provides the services that potential callers want, we are working closely with a range of diverse stakeholders including law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organisations, businesses, media and faith organisations.

Calls and reports to the Modern Slavery Helpline can be made 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling 08000 121 700, submitting a report online at <https://www.modernslaveryhelpline.org/report>, or by using the Unseen App.