



08000 121 700

Press release – Friday 28 June 2019

CALLS TO THE MODERN SLAVERY HELPLINE DEMONSTRATE SIGNIFICANT LINKS BETWEEN HOMELESSNESS AND MODERN SLAVERY, WITH 7% OF ALL MODERN SLAVERY CASES REPORTED INVOLVING HOMELESSNESS.

ENGLISH VICTIMS MOST COMMON AMONG HOMELESS PEOPLE RECRUITED INTO EXPLOITATION.

A new report from Unseen, the charity behind the Modern Slavery Helpline, reveals that over the two and a half years since launch in October 2016, over 350 potential victims indicated by the Helpline were homeless either before, during or after they escaped from exploitation. This represents 2.5% of all potential victims reported.

These individuals were involved in 276 cases of modern slavery (some cases involve more than one victim), comprising 7% of all modern slavery cases reported.

The report exposes the fact that **traffickers are purposefully targeting homeless people for exploitation**, with 48 potential victims reported to have experienced homelessness before exploitation. Labour exploitation was the most common form of exploitation for this group, and English the most common victim nationality.

Common locations of recruitment targeted by exploiters included homeless shelters, and public spaces such as the street and in parks.

In addition, the report demonstrates that **homeless people are being forced to commit crimes for their exploiters**, most commonly forced begging. 86 people were indicated to be homeless during their exploitation, mostly in either forced criminality or forced labour.

The report also highlights the high number of people who are **escaping from modern slavery only to find themselves homeless**, with 234 people indicated to be homeless after exploitation.

Unlike those who were homeless before or during exploitation, those who were homeless after included significant numbers escaping sexual exploitation and domestic servitude.

This all emphasises the need for Local Authorities, homeless charities and other frontline services to be aware of the risks, the signs of slavery, and the Modern Slavery Helpline as a resource for advice and expertise.

The report kicks off a campaign to raise awareness among rough sleepers, homelessness charities and members of the public, to be aware of the signs of slavery and report to the Helpline.

QUOTES

Rachel Harper, Manager of the Modern Slavery Helpline, said:

“The Modern Slavery Helpline receives calls about individuals who have escaped situations of exploitation but are still in need - without a home and vulnerable to re-exploitation. And, we know that recruitment tactics include targeting varied vulnerabilities such as poverty, substance dependencies and language barriers. The Helpline’s data on reported cases of modern slavery and

homelessness can be used to better inform prevention efforts and responses to exploitation. This report also demonstrates why awareness and collaboration with homeless charities, members of the public and housing agencies is crucial. Anyone could see and report signs of present or past exploitation, and the Modern Slavery Helpline stands as a free, confidential service ready to help 24/7.”

Andrew Smith, CEO of Hull Homeless, Chair of Humber Modern Slavery Partnership, said:

“Traffickers often gain people’s trust at soup kitchens and drop ins and trick them into slavery through false stories of success and money. We know from working with partners around the UK that exploiters and criminal gangs have tried to register as volunteers with homeless charities, using a position of trust to coerce service users into forced labour.

We must look to help all frontline homeless services to better understand the signs, risk factors and potential harm to homeless and roofless people as regards modern slavery. Only by working together in partnership can we make the homeless sector a hostile environment for traffickers and exploiters.”

Notes for editors

Unseen is a UK-wide national charity which believes that modern slavery can and must be eradicated. Unseen runs safehouses and outreach for survivors, the Modern Slavery Helpline, and works with businesses, the police, government and others to end slavery.

The Modern Slavery Helpline is open 24/7 every day of the year, free, confidential, and can take calls in over 200 languages.

www.unseenuk.org

www.modernslaveryhelpline.org

Twitter @UnseenOrg @MSHelpline