

Press release

For immediate release

24 November 2021

Slavery helpline launches fundraising drive as latest figures reveal a large jump in calls

The UK Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline has launched a Christmas fundraising appeal as its latest figures reveal a 20% jump in calls.ⁱ

For one week only in December, any donation received will be doubled as part of the annual Big Give match-funding scheme.

The Helpline is part of anti-slavery charity Unseen. With professionally trained staff on call 24 hours a day it is free for all to use, and relies entirely on donations from members of the public and organisations such as philanthropic trusts.

Since its launch in October 2016 it has received over 28,000 calls and nearly 8,000 contacts through its website and app. During this time it has indicated more than 24,000 potential victims of modern slavery.ⁱⁱ

Uniquely, the data it gathers is used by government, police, business and other charities to inform anti-slavery strategies across the UK, and to better support victims and survivors.

There are around 10,000 people caught up in slavery in the UK at any one time, according to government figures. Experts, however, put the figure at more than 100,000ⁱⁱⁱ.

Exploitation ranges from forced labour to domestic servitude, sexual exploitation to child trafficking.

“We’re seeing growing demands on our Helpline services and it’s vital we’re able to continue to offer a way out of exploitation for some of the most vulnerable people in society,” says Dugald McNaughtan, Head of Fundraising at Unseen.

“We rely on the generosity of the public to keep the Helpline going, so I urge people to donate during the Big Give at the beginning of December, so that every pound will be doubled. Let’s offer some hope to people trapped in unbelievably cruel situations this Christmas.”

The Helpline in action – Admir’s story

If it wasn’t for a compassionate member of the public and the Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline, Admir’s future would have looked very different.

Just hours before Admir* was found sleeping rough, he'd taken the brave decision to run from his traffickers in a bid to free himself from exhaustion and the physical and mental abuse he'd suffered.

He'd been trafficked from Albania to the UK to work on farm in Buckinghamshire.

Aged 55, he was forced to work 14-hour days, seven days a week, on-call at night, and threatened if he didn't comply. With only a squalid caravan to sleep in, he had no bathroom, no shower, intermittent electricity and was barely paid – if at all – for his painting and cleaning work. Ashamed and exhausted, he was near breaking point.

Finally, he decided to risk it and managed to escape. Thankfully, a passerby found him and, together with a local charity, called the Helpline. Admir was finally free of his horrific ordeal.

The Helpline was a linchpin for Admir. He needed expert care for the trauma he'd gone through and help to take back control of his life. The Helpline made sure he was linked to all the right support and, crucially, ensured the police had expert statements so they could investigate his case and bring his perpetrators to justice.

Notes to editors

For all press enquiries and interviews, contact 0303 040 2888 (out of hours 07943 498239) media@unseenuk.org

About the Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline **08000 121700**

- The Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline is part of the leading anti-slavery charity Unseen, www.unseenuk.org
- It is confidential and independent, providing information, advice and guidance to potential victims, businesses, statutory agencies such as the NHS and police, and the public about any modern slavery issue.
- The Helpline is free to use, can take calls in more than 200 languages, and operates 24/7, 365 days a year.
- People can also contact the Helpline via the website and the Unseen App.
- The Helpline is funded by grants from trusts, businesses, fellow charities and other organisations, and donations from the general public.

About Unseen

Unseen is working towards a world without slavery. We provide safehouses and support in the community for survivors of trafficking and modern slavery. We also run the UK Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline, and work with communities, business, governments, other charities and statutory agencies such as the police and NHS to stamp out slavery for good.

www.unseenuk.org

About the Big Give

The Big Give is a registered charity that runs the Christmas Challenge, an annual match-funding campaign which raises millions of pounds for good causes. www.thebiggive.org.uk

Ends

ⁱ Quarter two 2021 compared to quarter one 2021

ⁱⁱ To October 2021

ⁱⁱⁱ Centre for Social Justice, It Happens Here