

Strictly embargoed until: Tuesday 4 December, 2018

Over £320,000 of National Lottery funding to tackle human trafficking and modern slavery in the West Midlands

Over £320,000 of National Lottery funding has been awarded to a Birmingham-based project which aims to tackle human trafficking and modern slavery across the West Midlands. The cash injection has been made by the Big Lottery Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK.

The West Midlands Anti Slavery Network connects the statutory, private and third sectors involved in tackling human trafficking and modern slavery. It will use the new grant to provide a safe house and support for victims after they have been rescued.

The West Midlands has the highest numbers of modern slavery victims in the UK outside of London, with over 400 victims identified in the region so far this year. The number of people being found and rescued from modern slavery and human trafficking is increasing year on year.

Centuries after slavery was officially abolished, thousands of people are still being exploited and sold as slaves across the UK. They can be forced to work in the sex trade, used as domestic slaves, exploited for labour or criminal activity, or have their organs removed to be sold. At least one of these things happens in the West Midlands every day.

Thanks to the National Lottery funding, a safe house will be set up in the West Midlands to provide a place of safety, initially for male victims, after they are first identified as having been victims of modern slavery. It will offer refuge for up to four people at a time, where they can rest and recover in their own private room with access to home comforts such as clean clothes, toiletries and food in a safe and secure environment.

At the safe house, they will decide whether to enter the National Referral Mechanism - a framework for identifying victims and ensuring they receive the appropriate support. The West Midlands Anti Slavery Network will work with its partners to help victims transition into this system, or to act as navigators to alternative long term care and support.

The funding will also be used to set up a resource centre, where workshops will help people to learn new skills such as growing their own food, cooking healthy meals, managing their money and paying bills, whilst boosting their confidence and self-esteem. There will also be

the opportunity for former victims to mentor others who have recently experienced modern slavery, as well as be involved in the design of support on offer.

The West Midlands Anti Slavery Network is the first organisation of its kind in the UK, meeting with up to 60 organisations every six weeks to prevent modern slavery, including Birmingham City Council and the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner.

Robin Brierley, Chair of the West Midlands Anti Slavery Network, said: “Thanks to National Lottery players, we will be able to improve the care and support provided to victims of human trafficking and modern slavery, which will in turn gain their trust so we can help them recover in the best way possible.

“It is so important for people to feel safe and comforted after being discovered as victims and going through what can be extremely traumatic experiences. Victims are quite often experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder and may have alcohol, drug and mental health issues as a result of their exploitation. Their needs are complex and their trust needs to be gained in a welcoming and comfortable environment allowing time for them to feel safe at last and begin their long road to recovery.”

Matt Poole, Senior Head of Regional Funding for the Midlands at the Big Lottery Fund, said: “All over the country, National Lottery money is being used by people who are taking the lead in developing great ideas to help their communities thrive. The West Midlands Anti Slavery Network is a brilliant example of this, where people who have experienced human trafficking and modern slavery will be provided with a safe place to recover and receive support. Thanks to National Lottery players, people will be equipped with skills to help them change their lives for the better.”

The West Midlands Anti Slavery Network isn't alone in enjoying a funding boost. It was announced today that 300 community projects in the West Midlands have been awarded more than £9.5 million of National Lottery funding this quarter. £3.4 million of this was distributed to 87 organisations in Birmingham. The total pot awarded to over 2,200 groups across England this quarter is almost £80 million.

The Big Lottery Fund is responsible for giving out money raised by National Lottery players for good causes. Last year it awarded over half a billion pounds and supported over 11,000 projects across the UK for health, education, environment and charitable purposes. To find out more visit www.biglotteryfund.org.uk.

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Notes to Editors:

About us:

We are the largest community funder in the UK - we're proud to award money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Since June 2004, we have made over 200,000 grants and awarded over £9 billion to projects that have benefited millions of people.

We are passionate about funding great ideas that matter to communities and make a difference to people's lives. At the heart of everything we do is the belief that when people are in the lead, communities thrive. Thanks to the support of National Lottery players, our funding is open to everyone. We're privileged to be able to work with the smallest of local groups right up to UK-wide charities, enabling people and communities to bring their ambitions to life.

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