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For immediate release

Government awards trafficking contract to ‘prayer and fasting’ organisation

The Poppy Project is appalled to announce that, in a triumph of ideology over victims’ needs, the Ministry of Justice has awarded the new contract for trafficking services to the Salvation Army, an organisation which advocates “**prayer and fasting**” for victims of trafficking as an “integral part of the battle for justice”.

As a religious group, the Salvation Army will also have certain exemptions from the Equality Act 2010 even though they will be providing a public service. This could allow them to discriminate against potential clients in various ways, including around their religion or belief, or sexual orientation.

Denise Marshall, Chief Executive of Eaves, which runs the Poppy Project, says:

“We are obviously disappointed not to have been awarded the contract, but this is part of a much wider, more serious issue.

“This decision reflects a wider shift in the Government’s approach to trafficking. Responsibility for managing the contract has moved within the Ministry of Justice from the Victims and Witnesses Unit to the National Offender Management Service. And now the contract has been awarded to an organisation which we know has such practices as taking away service users’ mobile phones and restricting their freedom of movement – replicating the trafficking situation by keeping them under lock and key or not allowing them out alone.

“This speaks volumes for the Government’s attitude towards these vulnerable people.

“Right from the start of the bidding process, when the MOJ first released the contract specification, it was clear that the contract would go to the most ‘economically advantageous’ – or cheapest – bidder. Quality of provision just wasn’t a priority. And we’ve been told that one of the reasons we weren’t successful in our bid is because we advocate offering victims of trafficking 90

days to recover, as per their needs, instead of the minimum 45 days that the Government is prescribing.

“Poppy has never provided, and is not interested in providing, a cheap and cheerful service; we give victims the time, and all the specialist support they need, to recover.

“This obviously represents a huge cut in resources to Poppy, but we will survive and we will go on supporting women who have been trafficked with accommodation and community outreach. We will also be monitoring the new service closely, and notifying the Government every time a victim does not receive the standard of care they are entitled to as per European legislation.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

For further information, or interviews with Eaves' Chief Executive Denise Marshall or the Poppy Project's National Coordinator Abigail Stepnitz, please contact Eaves' communications department on 020 7840 7132 or 020 7840 7126.