

Example of a grant awarded from Funds set up with Essex Community Foundation (ECF) and that received matched funding from the Proceeds of Crime Scheme also managed by ECF:

The Together Free Foundation is a charity that works towards ending modern slavery and human trafficking with a focus on Southend, Chelmsford and Colchester where they have in the region of 30 partner organisations in each location, including Essex Police.

Support from the Salix Trust which was set up with ECF and benefited from the Essex Police Proceeds of Crime Matched Fund Scheme, together with other funding, ensured the group received a grant of £8,505 to support their running costs and provide essential items to help individuals affected by modern slavery.

Together Free uses a community organising approach, exploring community assets and stimulating partnership responses to combat modern slavery and human trafficking. Partners in each antislavery partnership co-develop actions to stop localised forms of exploitation. They do this through community awareness raising, offering free training, safeguarding, referral pathways and survivor care for victims, as well as stimulating intelligence gathering and disruption activities.

The hidden nature of modern slavery makes it difficult to measure the exact number of those affected. However, in 2023, there were 17,004 referrals in the UK to the Home Office as potential victims of some form of modern slavery. This represents an upward trend and highlights the many forms of slavery, including forced criminality, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude and labour exploitation.

Tackling modern slavery and supporting the recovery of those affected is not straightforward, which is why Together Free works with other organisations, including Southend Against Modern Slavery and its Survivor Care Project, to raise awareness of the issue and support people at a grassroots level.

Proceeds of Crime funds with ECF contributed towards The Together Free Foundation initiating a new Chelmsford Against Slavery Partnership, which allows for greater outreach of their services. The Colchester Against Modern Slavery Partnership has also recently been established and these partnerships are each developing their own approaches to ensure slavery-free communities.

Dan Pratt is the Founder and CEO of Together Free. He said, "It has been encouraging that there has been so much commitment from community partners to respond to localised forms of exploitation.

"The quick development of three antislavery partnerships within Essex shows there is a determination to help those who are often vulnerable and exploited within our communities. Together we are partnering towards slavery-free communities."

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Together Free and Southend Against Modern Slavery (SAMS) campaigning to raise awareness of modern slavery

Colchester Against Modern Slavery Partnership launched at University of Essex in June 2023.



Survivor feedback

"I appreciate your help which brings me a bit calm in my chest. I feel more open with you which starts to make me feel confident. I deserve to be loved not hated and I am proud today. I found many good people coming to help me out of my past darkness. I am glad I met SAMS partnership."