**PRESS RELEASE – 13/02/19**

**Bradford-based Sexual Violence Charity Receives £20k Funding**

**Survivors West Yorkshire, the Yorkshire region’s ONLY online specialist support service for male survivors of child sexual abuse and adult rape - Ben’s Place – receives £20k worth of funding from People’s Postcode Lottery.**

On 1st February 2019, Survivors West Yorkshire received a very welcome £20,000 cash injection from Postcode Community Trust, a grant giving charity funded entirely by players of People’s Postcode Lottery. Some of this money will be directed to its specialist online counselling service for male survivors, ‘Ben’s Place’.

The organisation, which promotes the public awareness message, *“Sexual abuse is something I experienced, it’s not who I am!”*, said it was delighted to be able to continue offering such a crucial service.

Researchers have found that 1 in 6 men have experienced abusive sexual experiences before the age of 18. This is probably a low estimate, since it doesn’t include non-contact experiences, which can also have lasting negative effects. West Yorkshire has some of the highest rates of sexual crime in the UK.

The free counselling service is available to all males (aged 16 years plus) throughout the whole of West Yorkshire.

Ben’s Place is named after a West Yorkshire male survivor who experienced childhood sexual abuse between the ages of 10 and 13. Ben took his own life shortly after his 23rd birthday.

The mission of Ben’s Place is to deliver a professionally qualified and informed specialist support, counselling and advice service to adult male survivors (currently aged 16 plus) who are ready to look for help with their experiences of sexual crimes committed against them. Simply knowing they’re not alone is powerful and healing for many male survivors, especially given society’s denial of sexual violence-abuse, as evidenced by the latest reports from the Inquiry into Childhood Sexual Abuse (IICSA) led by Prof, Alex Jay.

Ben’s Place is a pioneering and secure specialist digital cloud based free counselling service. It currently provides professional counselling, emotional support and advice during its operating hours. Its counsellors are BACP registered and have undergone specialist training to work online.

Ben’s mother said:

“I am moved that the life and memory of my son will not be forgotten in Ben’s Place. I am also overwhelmed that Ben’s Place will be a free service to help, support and counsel male survivors of sexual abuse."

Ben’s Place currently only offers online services. However, as its virtual service develops and becomes sustainable its objective is to combine its virtual offerings with a range of off-line workshops and outreach to support male survivors to live a thriving and healthy life beyond their individual experiences of sexual violence-abuse.

One of the first clients using the video platform commented:

“This is so easy to use, I’m going to buy a better camera and set of head phones - thank you.”

The founder and CEO of Survivors West Yorkshire, Bob Balfour said:

“My ambition for Ben’s Place is that any male survivor anywhere in West Yorkshire will be able to connect easily to counselling support using the internet and have a simple message spoken to them:

“You’ve never been alone – we’ve been working hard for decades to create safe spaces and we’re pleased you’ve found us.”

Survivors West Yorkshire has, for 20 years, proactively lobbied to improve services. It believes that when society listens to the stories of recovery and growth that survivors experience when they are able to access good practice specialist services, it will want to support the amazing courage males show by breaking their silence to recover from the sexual crimes - done to them - as children or adults.

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**CONTACT INFORMATION**

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