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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **New business mentoring scheme for women trafficked into prostitution**

Homeless women's charity Eaves – along with partners Imperial College Tanaka Business School and the Women to Work Initiative – has launched a new scheme aimed at helping formerly trafficked women back into the workplace.

HERA, which stands for Her Equality, Rights and Autonomy, offers women from the POPPY Project entrepreneurial skills and mentoring from some of the UK's most successful business women and men, and aims to give them the life skills and confidence they need to set up their own businesses or move back into work.

The scheme was set up in response to growing demand for employment training from POPPY service users, who face formidable barriers in finding a job or starting a new venture in London.

"The vast majority of the women who access our services are intelligent and articulate and want to start new lives," says Eaves chief executive Denise Marshall. "However, businesses can be reluctant to employ women who have had such experiences and who have a patchy employment history.

"The HERA programme is about empowerment. We want to give these women, who are already survivors, the opportunities that they deserve to lead fulfilling, successful lives."

The programme will be launched officially at 6.30pm on Wednesday 6 February at Imperial College to a select group of potential mentors, and the first sessions will start in March.

### **Some comments from those on the first round of the HERA programme:**

"My dream is to get married, have children and a normal job; to have a happy family life," Ana\*

"When you can work, you can make everything else possible," Alika\*

"I want to find a job, to support myself and my child," Shu\*

"The best future I can imagine is work, higher education studies, and a place to live. Just three wishes!" Maria\*

\* Names have been changed to protect identity

**– NOTES FOR EDITORS –**

The POPPY Project is funded by the Ministry of Justice to provide accommodation and support to women trafficked into the UK for the purposes of sexual exploitation. It is the only Government-funded service in the UK for women trafficked into prostitution. It has 35 bed spaces and an outreach team which works with women still involved in the sex industry. It also has a research and development unit, which specialises in counter-trafficking and exiting-prostitution work.

Eaves also runs Eaves Women's Aid – a series of refuges for women and their children fleeing domestic violence – and a research department called the Lilith Project, which works to support the violence-against-women sector through research, education and training.

For further information about the HERA programme, Eaves or the POPPY Project, contact Eaves' communications officer Anna Bowden on 020 7840 7126 or at [anna.bowden@eaveshousing.co.uk](mailto:anna.bowden@eaveshousing.co.uk).