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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SAFE@LAST Founder Trustee Honoured with MBE

Hilary Massarella, Founder of Children's Charity SAFE@LAST which works in South Yorkshire and the surrounding areas with young people at risk through running away has been awarded an MBE in the New Years Honours List.

Eleven years ago SAFE@LAST was just a seed of thought beginning to germinate in the heart of Founder Trustee Hilary Massarella. Hilary saw a documentary about a 14 year old girl who was abused by a number of adults in whose care she was placed, beginning with her own mother and father. Finally she prostituted herself in a lorry park to earn enough money to run away from what was happening to her.

Hilary was inspired by this story to seek positive change for young runaways. As a housewife and mother of five small children for two years she researched the issues around running away. There was no doubt, in South Yorkshire, as in many places across the country; children were feeling they had no alternative but to run away. Awareness of the problem desperately needed to be raised and something practical and long lasting urgently needed to be created.

Six years since SAFE@LAST received its first phone call the charity now has sixteen staff members and many volunteers. It provides a Helpline service, a Missing Young People's Service encompassing ongoing one to one support, Preventative Workshops and, most remarkable of all the only Refuge outside of London for children and young people under the age of 16. Young people present SAFE@LAST with many complex issues including neglect, physical abuse, self harming, forced marriage, conflict and violence at home, sexual exploitation, mental health problems and many more.

Ten years on and SAFE@LAST has helped thousands of young people to make safer choices and Hilary is still very much involved in all aspects of the charity solely on a voluntary basis. Hilary's passion and drive to improve outcomes for children at risk through running away is still as strong as it was ten years ago and infects all those that know and work with her.

MBE's are awarded for achievement or service in and to the community which is outstanding in its field and for a local 'hands-on' service which stands out as an example to others.

Chair of Trustees Dan Dean said of the honour awarded to Hilary "I am delighted that Hilary's massive personal input and inspirational management have been recognised nationally at this level. In a year when the charity itself has won awards for the high levels of service that it gives to vulnerable young people, this award to Hilary herself is recognition for her tireless dedication for the wonderful charity that she created".

On hearing of the award Hilary Massarella herself said "The news that I had won this award was truly a shock. Receiving an award such as this was something I had never even considered but it is with great delight that it is received. Of course, awards really reflect the success of many more people than the person on which it is bestowed; I have been blessed to have been surrounded by a team of committed volunteers and staff and together we have turned those early hopes into a reality"

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For further information

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Note to editors

- SAFE@LAST is a registered charity working with young people who have run away from, or have been thrown out of, the place where they usually live.
- Young People that need help can contact SAFE@LAST on their 24hour helpline by calling 0800 335 SAFE.
- For more information about SAFE@LAST, the services it offers and how you can help visit www.safeatlast.org.uk. Young people wishing to contact SAFE@LAST can call on their 24hour confidential helpline on 0800 335 SAFE.