



2021/2022

Annual Report

A message from our Chair of Trustees, Pauline Geraghty MBE



Welcome to our annual report for 2021-2022 which reflects on a year where we had many things to celebrate but also continued to face some challenges. Like everyone during the past year, we had to deal with the continued impact of Covid-19 whilst ensuring the needs of service users were kept in focus in an ever-changing landscape of rules and regulations. For those experiencing domestic abuse, home is often not the safe place it should be.

This was compounded by lockdowns and enforced isolation making it incredibly difficult for people to manage these experiences. The Wish Centre has been a safe haven for many in our community and we are proud of the help we have been able to give them as we now start to emerge from the aftermath of the pandemic.

Our strapline is We Listen – We Support – We Empower and we believe we have lived up to these values, focusing on the needs of those who put their faith in our services, improving wellbeing and life chances and enabling people to live life without abuse. One of the ongoing achievements of the Wish Centre is how we are able to give confidence to those who have faced great adversities, empowering them to make sustained and positive changes in their lives.

There is no Wish Centre without our amazing team of highly skilled, professional and resourceful staff and volunteers who bring to life our mission and values. It has therefore been important to understand the needs of our staff and volunteers throughout the year and identify ways to support them so they can continue their life changing work. They have shown tremendous resilience and flexibility as they embraced and embedded new ways of working but we have also been mindful of the toll working through the pandemic has taken on staff well-being.

we Listen

we Support

we Empower

We are a different organisation than we were twelve months ago, having made some fundamental changes to the way we work with those seeking support. These changes have been made after listening to the views of beneficiaries, staff and other stakeholders and being mindful of the ever-changing Covid environment. We moved to a blended work model, where appropriate, of online/remote and face to face support to service users and this has been well received. We took the decision to move to more suitable offices saying goodbye to our King Street base. This has fit well with how we want to deliver our services in the future.



What is clear is that our doors remained open again this year, not least at our refuges where women and children continued to find a safe space whilst being supported by highly skilled staff. Living in refuge is a necessity for the many families who come to join us and it is crucial individuals feel it is their home for the time they spend with us. This is the environment staff members have created over the past year, even when people had to isolate because they contracted Covid.

Our services continue to grow as, sadly, do the numbers of people requiring those services. Pressures on people are growing and we have seen an increase in the complex issues people face. Over the year, staff and volunteers have been there to support people and find ways to keep them safe, address their emotional needs caused by the abuse and empower them.

Challenges have been thrown at us but we can proudly say we have met those challenges head on and offered sanctuary and hope for the thousands of people who relied on the Wish Centre. Our services are crucial, and we know this because people who have used them have told us...

“I just want to say how wonderful the Wish Centre is”

“I thank you from the bottom of my heart”

A message from our CEO, Shigufta Khan

In my introduction in the 2021 Annual report, I highlighted how we had risen to the challenges that the pandemic had brought to our door. I was proud then of how the Wish Centre had risen to the extraordinary and unprecedented challenge. Our initial expectations were that the changes we had made to work safely in the pandemic would be short-term, however over 800 days later we have fundamentally changed the way we work.



The aftermath of the pandemic has seen an increase in social pressures. The cost-of-living increases have further compounded the crises that people in our community's face. If I was proud of the resilience that staff, volunteers and trustees showed then, I am even more proud of the organisation now when the challenges we face don't have an end date.



As the commissioned domestic abuse service for Blackburn and Darwen we have worked with partners to support the delivery of the new Marrac model. We are also proud to work in partnership with Lancashire police to deliver Operation Provide in the east of the county.

This intervention supports victims following an incident where IDVAs based in the safeguarding team contact victims following a police call out and attend with police colleagues to reduce risk.

Our data over the last 12 months has highlighted that we have provided support to 3376 service users and of these 450 were assessed as high risk at the point of referral. We have received 1934 referrals to our IDVA service, and 303 referrals for our adult victim programmes AIM and Recovery Toolkit.

We have received continued funding for our behaviour change programme Make the Change to deliver the intervention in Blackburn with Darwen, Lancashire and Blackpool. We have developed a short awareness raising programme Gate way to Change that precedes Make the Change and have received 254 referrals for these interventions

We have received continued funding for our young people's behaviour change interventions RYPP which is a Respect accredited programme delivered to families where adolescent to parent violence is taking place. We are delivering this programme in partnership with family support workers in Blackburn and Darwen, with the family safeguarding teams across Lancashire and delivering it on our own in Blackpool.



Parachute is another adolescent behaviour change programme that we have delivered for some time now in Blackburn and Darwen and we are now delivering these interventions to young people across Lancashire and Blackpool. We received 427 referrals for both of these interventions. 182 referrals were for our other young people's programmes, and we received 153 referrals for our refuges and 123 referrals for our counselling service.



Our staff are our most vital asset and in 2021 we undertook a consultation to see whether our team wanted a full return to the office or preferred a blended work model. The results were overwhelmingly in favour of a blended work model, and this has resulted in the organisation adopting a blend of face to face and remote delivery of our work in the community. The exception to this is our refuge provision where changes have taken place over the last two years, but staff have provided a full presence on site.

Reaching out to our service users has shown us that a blended approach works well for them, flexibility means that people who cannot travel can be reached via phone or online, we are better able to meet people's needs by providing more programmes in the evening because we are allowing our staff to work more flexibly. Where we had focussed in the past on face-to-face groups many of our service users have said they prefer 1:1 as they feel more comfortable sharing their personal experiences in private.



Face to face work will always remain in place but technology and a change in how people want to access services means that we are better able to meet their needs in the way they want us to. Flexibility has enabled us to deliver interventions to people who have mobility issues, shift workers, people with childcare or other caring commitments, people travelling away for work. We have even delivered our behaviour change programme to a Lancashire service user who was working in the Netherlands for a few months. Prior to the pandemic these were options that we hadn't considered, the changes we have implemented have made us more accessible and we will continue to strive to do better.

During the first 12 months of the pandemic, we developed resources focussing on safety that we shared online, our aim was to make sure that people in our communities and frontline practitioners had access to safety planning advice. We have been innovative in our approach to engage and reach people using a variety of platforms.

We have continued to develop more resources and some of these will be shown to you later on this evening.



Finally, I want to thank the staff team, our volunteers and our board of trustees for their commitment to reach out and ensure that we continue to Listen, to Support and to Empower the communities that we work with.

Objectives

Blackburn and Darwen District without Abuse, working name The Wish Centre, is a provider of specialist domestic abuse services protecting victims and their families from harm. The organisation does this by providing services at the point of crisis via a helpline and safe refuge accommodation.



Preventative work is delivered via programmes for victims, children and young people and interventions for perpetrators to support behaviour change. To support these objectives the Wish Centre has identified the following priorities for 2021/2022.

Accreditations

In September 2021, following a rigorous selection and assessment process, the Wish Centre (BDDWA) was chosen from more than 350 charities across the UK as one of the 10 winners of the GSK IMPACT Awards. The awards recognise significant achievements in improving health and wellbeing in the community.



Winners receive £30,000 in unrestricted funding as well as expert support and leadership development provided by leading health and care charity, The King's Fund.



The Award recognises The Wish Centre's significant impact in the community and its commitment to preventing and addressing domestic abuse in Blackburn with Darwen.

Katie Pinnock, Director of UK Charitable Partnerships at GSK

We are extremely proud to hold two national quality awards, Investors in People and Investing in Children. Investors in People is awarded to organisations that demonstrate the very best in people management and Investing in Children is given to organisations for good practice and active inclusion of children and young people in dialogue which results in change. We are also fully Respect accredited.



Respect
Accredited

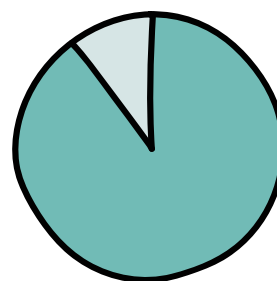
Service Provision

The Wish Centre is the commissioned provider of domestic abuse services for Blackburn with Darwen providing a range of holistic services. Offering support at the point of crisis via safe accommodation and an IDVA service that is able to provide safety advice and risk assessments via phone or in a face-to-face setting. We also provide therapeutic programmes for victims and young people, support to access housing, debt advice, substance misuse services and mental health services.



In the last 12 months we have supported 3376 people, with many of our service users having additional vulnerabilities including substance misuse and mental health issues.

We are driven by an ethos of providing services for the whole family, so it is heartening to find that over 90% of our service users have said that they feel safer and able to access services as a result of our interventions. Our case management system links records therefore we can ensure that victim's safety is at the forefront of our work. In addition, by providing services to young people, adult victims, and perpetrators under one service we are able to ensure effective communication and information sharing.



>90%
of
service
users say
they feel
safer

Due to the increase in hybrid working and prolonged Covid safety measures, opportunities for volunteers haven't been as prevalent in the last year, however our volunteers have remained connected and where possible we have utilised their valuable skills. Looking forward, we are aiming to deliver more in person fundraising events which will call for an uptake in volunteer activities.



The Wish Centre is also a placement provider for students as well as an organisation that supports training and development of staff across the voluntary and statutory sector so that our collective response to domestic abuse improves.



In May, The Wish Centre moved from King Street to Eanam Wharf Business Centre. We continue to provide services across Lancashire and Blackpool in addition to Blackburn with Darwen. We have 39 current staff members, as well as support from sessional staff, with a dedicated team of 6 counsellors.

All of our team bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience from disciplines such as police, probation and social care. We are proud of our induction and training process and ensure that on-going training and development opportunities are provided to all staff members and volunteers.

Safe accommodation

Safe accommodation provided in Blackburn with Darwen consists of five individual houses with a staffed support block as well as 9 flats with a staffed flat. Emotional and practical support is provided to enable women to live a life free from abuse.

Programmes for victims and for children are provided on site as well as counselling services. Resettlement support is provided, aiding victims to move on into their own accommodation. In the last 12 months we have received 153 referrals and supported 39 women and 58 children.



Creating a friendly, welcoming environment

Residents have often left family and friends to escape abuse, leaving behind their support system. The Wish Centre endeavours to create a welcoming environment, encouraging adults and children to take part in various activities, to build new relationships and share their experiences.



Some of the activities this year included a Jubilee party and BBQs

IDVA/Advice Service

This year we have supported 1934 people through our IDVA service. We welcome self-referrals, agency referrals and referrals from the police. Risk assessments and safety planning are offered to victims who may be impacted by physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, economic abuse including forced marriages, Honour based abuse or female genital mutilation. In April 2019 we became Blackburn with Darwen's commissioned domestic abuse service.

To best serve the communities we work in and ensure we are able to meet the needs of our service users we employ specialist ethnic minorities IDVAs as well as a specialist stalking ISAC case worker.

Programmes for Adults

We offer a range of interventions for victims including AIM - a therapeutic programme that educates victims on domestic abuse and the impact that it can have on them and the way they parent.



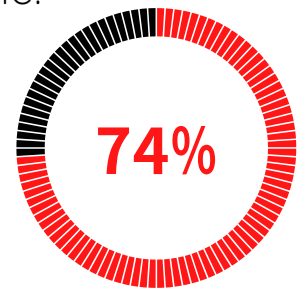
In addition, we offer The Recovery Toolkit which is a support programme that supports women to move on from an abusive relationship. The programme helps women to develop their own strengths, resources and healthy coping strategies.

Perpetrator Programmes

The Wish Centre has been delivering interventions for perpetrators since 2011 in Blackburn with Darwen. In April 2019 we became the commissioned provider for Lancashire and in January 2020 thanks to new funding from the Home Office we were commissioned to deliver perpetrator interventions in Blackpool. Group programmes and 1:1 sessions are being delivered in Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Preston, Lancaster, Blackpool and since June 2021 in Skelmersdale.

Data analysis by police has highlighted that

74% of men who have engaged on the programme have not reoffended.



Programmes for Children & Young People



Young People's Recovery Toolkit

A therapeutic programme for young people informed by Trauma Focused Cognitive Behaviour Therapy.



Expect Respect

Aimed at empowering young people to expect respect in their relationships. Through a range of engaging activities and discussions, this programme aims to enable participants to learn about domestic abuse, identify healthy and unhealthy relationships.



Helping Hands

which addresses the challenging issues of personal space, awareness of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, and safety planning. Three themes, called the Protective Behaviours, are reinforced throughout the programme



Parachute Programme

aimed at young people who have been identified as needing help in managing conflict in their relationships. Parachute is aimed at young people who may already have a history of resorting to violence to try and solve conflict. They may have a history of frequent conflict at home, in their relationships, or at school.



RYPP

is a programme for families where children or young people aged between 10 and 16 are abusive or violent towards the people close to them, particularly their parents or carers. This abuse may be physical, verbal, financial, coercive or emotional and may include behaviour like hitting, making threats or causing damage in the home. The parent or carer and the young person both complete the programme.



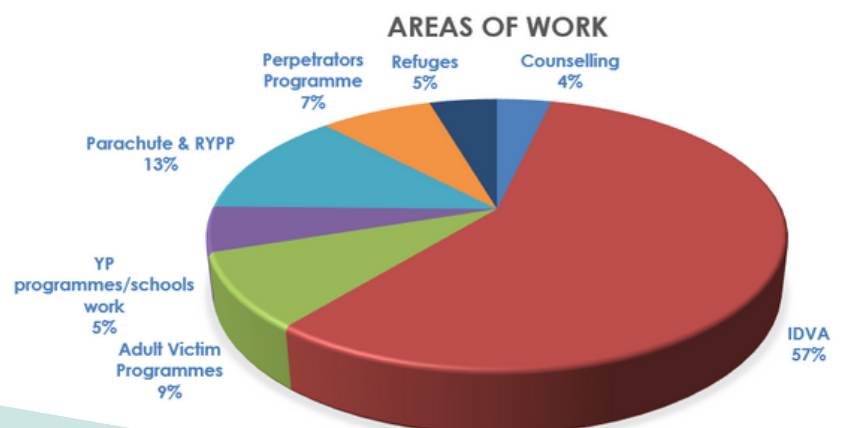
**I find it useful to think
about how I cope with
being angry'**

J aged 14

Areas of work over the last 12 months

The total number of service users the Wish Centre has supported over the last 12 months is 3376, an increase of 567 from 2020/2021. We are happy to have provided 123 people access to counsellors specialising in domestic abuse, a significant increase from 34 people last year.

Our victim and young people's programmes continue to be in high demand with consultations from service users showing how valuable they are to people.



New Funding and Developments

Investment into Communications - Many of our service users have stated that they wish they had heard about the Wish Centre sooner. For this reason, and to continue spreading awareness, we have invested in our communications, reaching new audiences through social media tools such as Instagram reels and TikTok. Our updated website, launched in September 2020, is constantly evolving to be more user friendly, helping our services run smoothly and offering the latest updates through a news blog. Our YouTube channel has been utilised to promote our perpetrator programmes and share training videos to Lancashire Police.



Training and Awareness Raising Sessions - We have been delivering sessions to all the Primary Care Network groups, carers service, health L&D staff and training booked to deliver to CSC teams as well as attending their team briefings to update them on the range of services we are offering. Also, healthy relationship work is taking place in four schools in the borough via a combination of workshops and assemblies.

Impact of Cost of Living Crisis - With prices of food, gas and electric rapidly rising in early 2022, refuge have utilised the help of local food box delivery services, and provided families with additional support where needed.

Surveys have found that rising living costs are an additional barrier that victims are facing when trying to escape abuse and in many cases it is



preventing victims from leaving. The Wish Centre continues to support victims in any way possible, including aiding clients in becoming financially independent from their abuser.

Case Study

ALIA

BACKGROUND

Often women and children who access our refuge services have been impacted by lifelong trauma in addition to the trauma that impacts them due to the domestic abuse they have suffered.

The family in this case study are from Afghanistan. In a short period of time, Alia lost her father and her mother, following the trauma caused by her brothers' kidnapping in 2014. Alia's father lost his business and turned to drugs then went on to murder his wife. He was found dead a few years later.

Although Alia was not forced into marriage after her mother's death and fathers' desertion, she felt she had no choice but to marry a man she was introduced to as she had no means to support herself. The domestic abuse started soon after and included verbal and physical abuse. A year into the marriage Alia and her husband came to the UK and stayed with her husband's family. Alia was expected to look after everyone, do all the chores and obey the rules that were imposed on her. Her father-in-law was very controlling and demanded she wore a burka and no makeup. Whilst pregnant with her first child, she was beaten so badly she started to bleed. Alia was taken to a private hospital and told to tell them she had fallen.

The physical abuse increased, and one assault resulted in Alia's hand being broken. On one occasion Alia fled to a female relative but was coerced into reconciling and the abuse worsened resulting in Alia living every moment of her life in fear. When she asked her extended family for support she was told 'she wasn't a good enough wife'. Extended family members would come and take her children whenever they wanted sometimes for days at a time, and she could not stop them.

Earlier this year whilst taking a driving lesson Alia disclosed to the driving instructor that a family member was sexually abusing her son, the driving instructor called the police, and as a result of their intervention the family were moved to refuge.



PRESENTING ISSUES

The perpetrator continues to make threats which are being passed to Alia by her family. This, combined with the significant trauma that Alia has suffered has led to issues around parenting, decision making and the very real concern of reconciliation. Alia's case study is not an exception - we find similar cases of prolonged trauma in families that access our support. Interventions need to be in place for months to ensure that when our support ends, service users are able to sustain the change that has been made.

INTERVENTIONS SINCE ARRIVAL

- Refuge IDVA completed a risk assessment, and the case was referred to MARAC with a score of 15.
- Work completed around staying safe online and changing mobile number.
- Supported Registering with GP & Health Visitor, School nurse.
- Parenting support put in place.
- Staff empowered Alia to obtain orders
- Supported with Claire's Law disclosure application.
- Supported accessing ESOL classes.
- Staff registered the family for housing.
- Mum attends monthly core groups and PLO meetings.



The Wish centre staff have supported Alia in reporting the ongoing abuse to police and have helped her gain legal advice due to PLO. She completed our AIM domestic abuse programme and support sessions.

Alia's children are now settled into new schools and nurseries after The Wish Centre helped with admission forms. She has registered for a college course in hair and beauty and is looking to pass her driving test with ongoing lessons.

After Alia and her family received emotional support in refuge and engaged in activities, crafts and coffee mornings, their confidence has grown in creating new friends. Linking in with community to provide fresh food boxes to assist with cost of living and joining local clubs and activities.

Funding

In the last 12 months we have received funding from:

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Lancashire County Council

Blackpool Borough Council

Office of Police & Crime Commissioners

The Henry Smith Charity

BBC Children In Need

Lloyds Bank Foundation

Awards for All

National Lottery Community Fund

Garfield Western

The Pilgrim Trust

The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Charles Hayword Foundation



We would also like to say thank you to all the individuals, businesses and community groups that have supported us throughout the year with fundraising and donations of Christmas gifts, Easter Eggs, household items, food and toiletries. Your donations make such a huge difference to the families we work with.

New communal kitchens in
refuge thanks to Blackburn
Chemicals and Howdens
Joinery

