



the wish  
centre

# Annual Report

2022-23

**we Listen**

**we Support**

**we Empower**



# Thank You

We'd like to thank our supporters and funders. With your help we have, and will continue to, fight against domestic abuse in Lancashire.

A special thank you to the Wish Centre staff, trustees and volunteers. Your dedication is inspiring and your work is vital in supporting our clients.

The generosity of the community never ceases to amaze us. Thank you to those who spread the word, campaign, and donate. We are surrounded by amazing people.

# A message from our Chair of Trustees, Pauline Geraghty MBE

It is always a privilege to present the Wish Centre annual report and showcase the tremendous work that has taken place over the past year.

On behalf of the trustees it gives me an opportunity to thank our dedicated and passionate staff team and volunteers for their exceptional work. We are grateful to our CEO, Shigufta Khan for her leadership throughout the year and the management team for their commitment to their teams and service users. Of course we must pay tribute to the many victims and survivors of domestic abuse who have reached out for support.

We started the year coming to terms with a post-Covid world and the lifting of restrictions that had put immense pressure on victims of domestic abuse. Factors in the external environment also meant that people were impacted by the cost of living crisis. Services like ours faced significant challenges to continue offering valuable support. We rose to those challenges and began the year in good shape. With prudent management our financial position was strong and we were able to sustain services.

**THIS YEAR WE  
RESPONDED TO 3742  
NEW REFERRALS  
WHICH WAS AN  
INCREASE OF 11% FROM  
2021/22.**



We also succeeded in developing some new areas of work. Year on year requests for support has increased and this year we responded to 3742 new referrals which was an increase of 11% from 2021/22.

Having a creative and flexible team has always meant that we can adapt our services to meet need.

Listening to service users and other stakeholders is central to being able to develop support that is meaningful and positive.

We have achieved outcomes that have been valued by people and truly changed lives. We have seen survivors empowered to live their lives free from abuse and create positive memories for them and their children.



Men who accessed our perpetrator programmes ending their abusive behaviours and respecting the rights of others to be free from abuse. Children and young people who could enjoy their childhoods without fear and harm.

We developed our new 3 year strategic plan in 2022 which focused on maintaining our current services whilst investing in new opportunities that would enhance our offer. We wanted to concentrate on providing high quality, high impact services, strengthen governance, respond to external drivers, maintain our focus on equality, diversity and inclusion and care for our environment. Regular reviews have shown we are progressing well with our goals.

As we look ahead we are excited to be undertaking new work with partners,



developing a new post to strengthen governance, investing in our fundraising activity and after many years of deliberation opening our first charity shop. We believe all these activities will enhance the work we undertake in the community.

A final word goes to all the individuals, businesses and groups who support us tirelessly. We know without that continuous, dedicated support our challenges would be far greater. Thank you from everyone at the Wish Centre.

Pauline Geraghty MBE

Chair of Trustees

"I'VE STARTED TO COPE WITH THINGS IN A HEALTHY WAY AND BETTER WAY THAT DOESN'T DO HARM TO OTHERS OR MYSELF."

Young people's programme feedback


"I WANT TO GIVE ALL MY CHILDREN A SAFE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT AND BE A BETTER PARENT"

Make The Change service user

"I HAVE ENJOYED COMING TO THE CENTRE, EVERYONE IS VERY SUPPORTIVE AND CARING AND MY CONFIDENCE HAS GROWN"

AIM programme participant

# A message from our CEO, Shigufta Khan



"WE CONTINUE TO WORK  
IN CHALLENGING TIMES,  
SO I AM ESPECIALLY  
PROUD OF WHAT WE  
HAVE ACHIEVED IN THE  
LAST 12 MONTHS"

Taking a pause and writing this introduction provides an opportunity to reflect on the last 12 months. In last year's annual report, I reflected on our transition from lockdown to a new way of working, embracing a blended approach that suited our staff and our service users. The blended approach that we adopted is embedded 12 months on and the additional flexibility it provides has been welcomed by staff.

## Cost of Living

The challenges that the pandemic left us with included rising prices for food and fuel and the Board were keen to respond to this by ensuring service users and staff were supported.

Service users were helped to access available funds via central government and local schemes that were made available. All service users in refuge accommodation were provided with additional support and resources when needed to alleviate hardship.

We also responded to the needs of staff by ensuring a cost of living rise as well as a one off support payment given in December. In addition we made a decision to review staff holidays and improve them, increase the employer contribution to staff pensions and ensure access to health insurance was maintained.

## Remaining Focused

We continue to work in challenging times, so I am especially proud of what we have achieved in the last 12 months, through our: direct delivery of vital services for children, young people, victims and perpetrators Pan Lancashire. We have remained focussed on ensuring our core services are delivered to the highest standard as well as focussing on creativity, innovation and partnership working. as you read this report you will see the work we have delivered and the number of people we have been able to reach.

Our 3-year strategy which we published earlier this year focuses on a world free from domestic abuse and sets out our vision for the next 3 years and our strategic priorities.

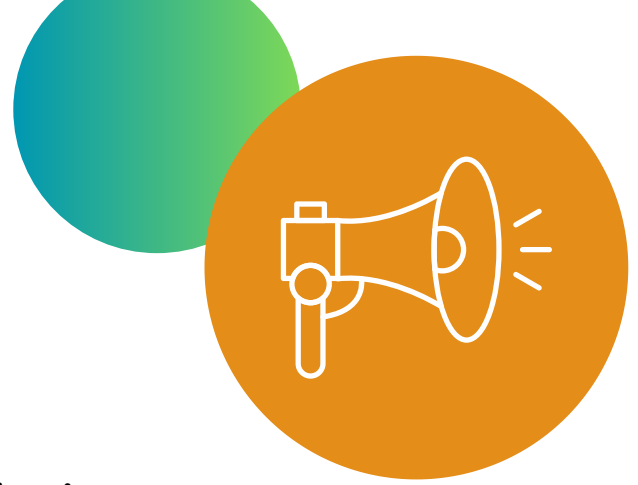
We remain focussed on ensuring that we deliver services that meet the needs of our communities and Listen to our service users and stakeholders, we want to ensure we achieve the best outcomes for the people who come to us for Support by providing high quality services and we want to Empower people who access our services by giving them the tools they need to design and create their own futures.

### **Maintaining financial stability**

In the last 12 months we have secured funds to maintain the vital work we are delivering for young people in Blackburn and Darwen and Lancashire. Our partnership work with children services Pan Lancashire to deliver these interventions has strengthened and increased the number of families we have been able to reach although demand continues to remain high. We have secured continuation funding to provide behaviour change interventions Pan Lancashire. And funding for our work on Operation provide continues in collaboration with Lancashire constabulary staff.



We are excited to secure funding and deliver the IRISi programme which is new to Lancashire in collaboration with Lancashire Victim Services, Fylde Coast Women's Aid and clinical leads from the ICB. This programme will embed identification of domestic abuse and referral pathways in primary care ensuring victims are identified at an earlier stage and offered the right interventions and support.



### **Raising Awareness**

Raising awareness of domestic abuse is a key priority for us and we have delivered on this in a number of ways in the last 12 months. We actively took part in the campaign to raise the age of marriage from 16 to 18 and are delighted that on the 27th of February 2023 the Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022 entered into force. This means that 16 and 17-year-olds will no longer be allowed to marry or enter into civil partnerships, even with parental consent.

Our profile on social media has increased across all our platforms providing us with an opportunity to share information, advocate on behalf of service users and collaborate with partner organisations.

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 Empower and to Support the communities that we work with.



# Our Services

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.

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.



We continue to provide services across Lancashire and Blackpool in addition to Blackburn with Darwen. We have 40 current staff members, as well as support from sessional staff, with a dedicated team of 6 counsellors.

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.



**"I HAVE REALISED I  
AM A VICTIM AND I  
SHOULDN'T BE  
EMBARRASSED ABOUT  
IT"**

## Refuge

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 229 referrals and supported 53 women and 72 children.

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.



## IDVA/Advice Service

This year we have supported 2114 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.



# 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

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.

"I LEARNT TO  
ACCEPT  
MYSELF"  
L AGED 12

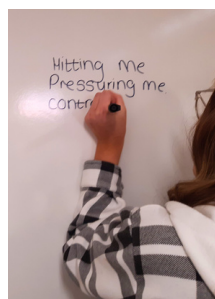
## RYPP

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  
KNOW ABOUT DOMESTIC  
ABUSE AND LEARN  
WHAT A HEALTHY  
RELATIONSHIP IS" H  
AGED 13



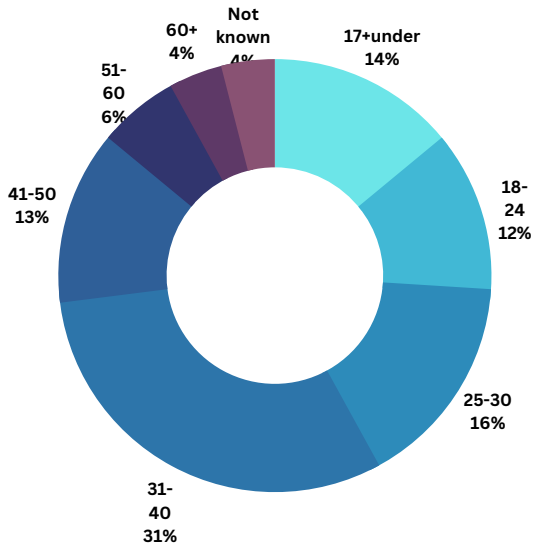
Our young people's team also delivers healthy relationship work, taking place in four schools in the borough via a combination of workshops and assemblies. The Wish Centre strives to listen to young people's voices, involving them in dialogue to create opportunities to become genuine participants in decision making processes.



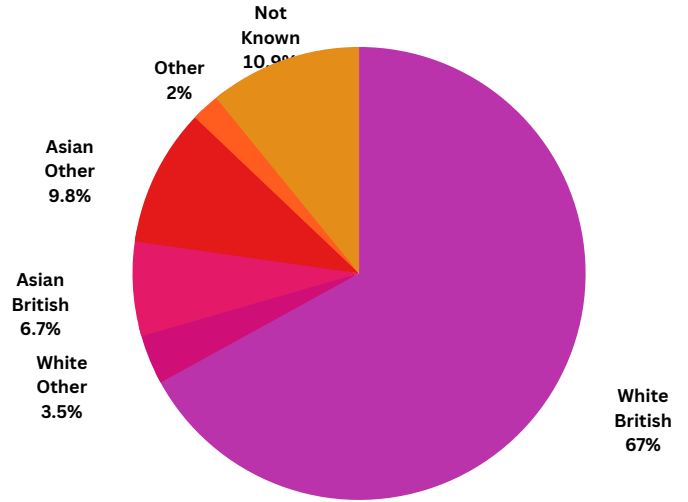
# The Data

## Lives we have changed in 2022/23

### Age groups



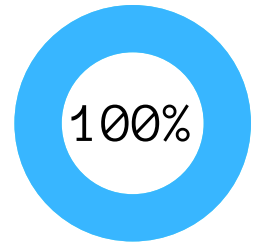
### Ethnicity



10% of clients had drug misuse issues and 12% had alcohol issues upon referral

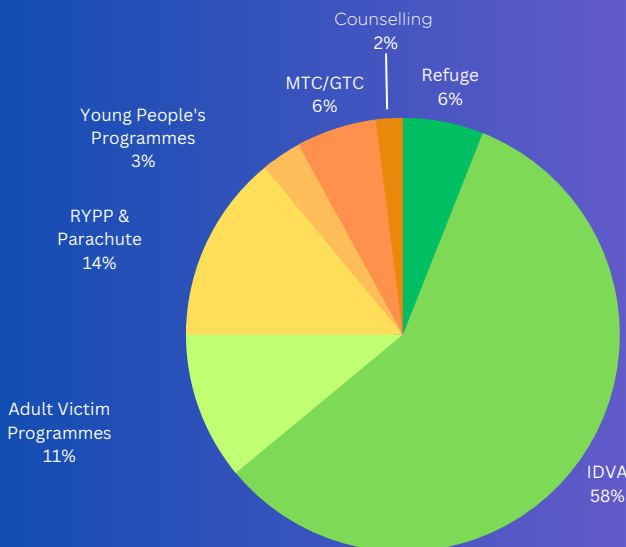


33% of clients had mental health vulnerabilities

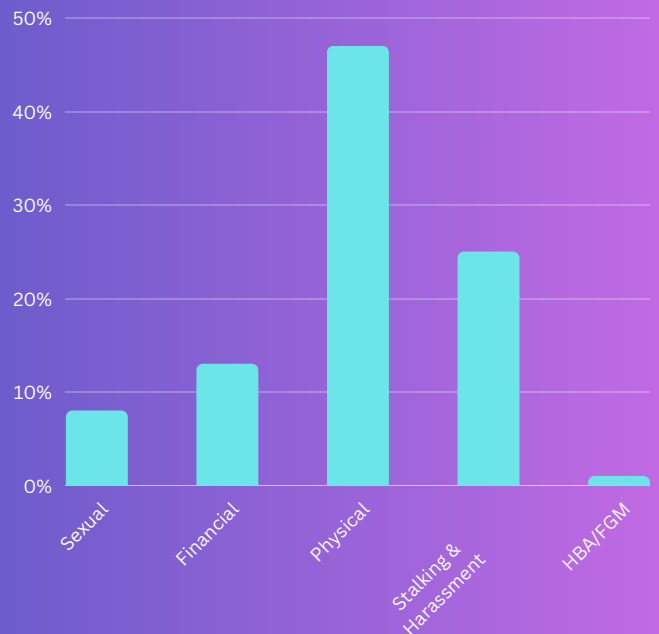


100% of victims experienced emotional abuse

### Areas of work



### Types of abuse experienced



# Total referrals

**3742**

in  
2022/23

11% increase



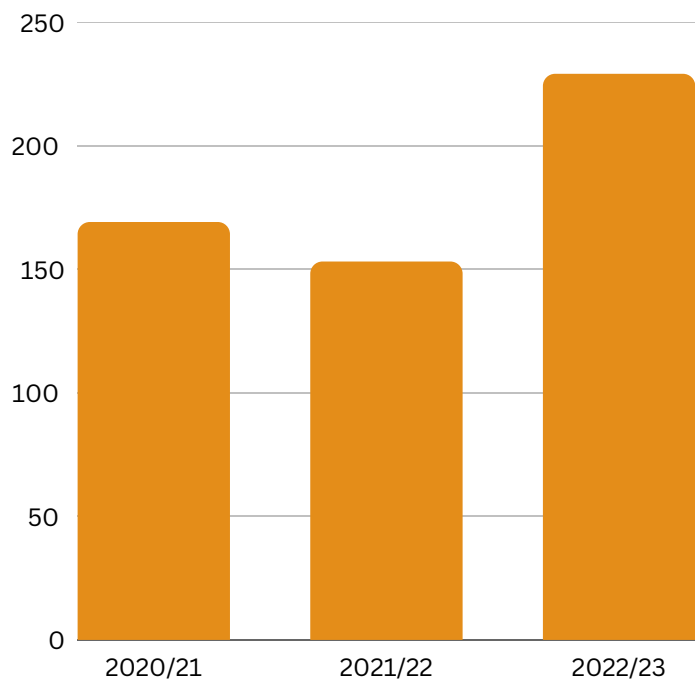
**3376**

in  
2021/22

**Refuge referrals  
have seen an  
increase of**

**50%**

**since 2021/22**



# What's new?

## Investing In Children Award

In February 2023 The Wish Centre was evaluated by the Investing in Children team. After discussions with our young people's team and the children we work with we received hugely positive feedback.



'Having completed the evaluation for The WISH Centre last year it was a pleasure to be given the chance to complete the re-evaluation this year and to see how the service continues to provide meaningful opportunities for young people to be involved in dialogue resulting in change. I fully endorse the recommendation that The WISH Centre once again receive the Investing in Children Membership Award™ which, most importantly, the young people agreed with: "I think they should get the Award as they've really helped me and really listened to me a lot." Another young person said: "I'd really like to see that they get the Award as they're really deserving of it."

Chris Affleck, Investing in Children

## IRISi

Since February, Lancashire Victim Services, Fylde Coast Women's Aid and The Wish Centre have been working collaboratively to deliver IRISi which is a programme working to increase awareness of DA within GP Practices. Working to ensure that more GPs can identify the signs of DA and have a simple referral route for their patients to reach the most adequate support.

"Our hope is that by taking services to the heart of communities, such as GP surgeries, it will let those needing support know that there is help readily available. Often domestic abuse services are sought out at crisis point, but by making services more visible and accessible it gives a greater opportunity for early intervention leading to reduced harm and lowered risk"

Rebekah Wilson, The Wish Centre  
IRIS Advocate Educator.



## Young People's work

In July, a funding bid for expanding the work that we do with young people was submitted by the Police & Crime Commissioners office. One of the asks for the bid was to hear voices of young people to support the bid. Some key points to note from all of the young people is that they wanted the interventions earlier, they wanted the abuse to stop and agencies to do more. Some of their quotes were:

'I felt I was listened to'

'It was non-judgemental even when I thought I had done something bad'.

'You were honest and down to earth'

'You helped me find information that I needed'

'I felt I was given a chance to talk and listened'



## Three year Strategy



The Wish Centre's 3 Year Strategy was created to document the charities vision for the near future, enabling us to explore our strategic themes: Listen, Support and Empower.

In the report we evidence our impact in 2022, describe what aims we have for 2025, and finish with actions to achieve those aims.

## Impact Report

Our Impact Report marks out some of the key changes and developments in the work of the Wish Centre and how it has operated as a grassroots domestic abuse charity over the last 10 years.

"Sometimes it's good to lift your foot off the accelerator, take stock of how far you've come and reflect on how you got there...We look back over the last decade and consider the journey the Wish Centre has taken over this time, highlighting some key developments with some reflections on how things have changed along the way"

**The 3 Year Strategy and Impact Report can be found on our website**

# Case Study

## Bradley - Parachute Programme

Bradley was referred to complete Parachute in April 2021, but when staff spoke to him, he initially declined to engage stating it wasn't something he wanted to do. Bradley was also referred to our perpetrator programme but because of his age he was not accepted and was again referred to Parachute in March 2022, beginning to work with our team member near the end of June.

Concerns with Bradley were the behaviour with his then former partner Anna and aggressive and abusive behaviours towards family members. In the first session Bradley was open and honest about why he wanted to complete the programme giving the reason he wanted to see his newborn, he also said there is a possibility the child is not his but feels strongly that it is. Bradley also suggested having suffered abuse from his Dad when he was younger, and this does not occur anymore. He stated that the relationship with Anna was one that has been off and on and how he would do things to her in response to something she did as an act of revenge, and she would do the same to him. Our team member spoke about domestic violence and how the way Bradley spoke about the relationship sounded very toxic. Bradley agreed with this and several times through the programme he said he does not want to reconcile with Anna but wants to do what he can to be able to see his daughter.

After a few sessions our team member was informed that Bradley had been arrested with the charge of burglary with aggression.

Staff focused on consequences and conflict management and used the example of the police incident and how this could have been avoided. Whilst completing the programme Bradley had confirmation that he was the father to the baby as CSC had completed a DNA test. Bradley had mixed emotions as he was not allowed to see the baby until the risk assessments had been completed and because of YOT involvement too. Staff discussed strategies he could use to calm down and suggested looking for work or an apprenticeship as this will fill his time up and keep him away from people he deems as bad influences.

Staff also incorporated some work from the perpetrator programme to complete with Bradley with help from a colleague from the perpetrator team. This was used to highlight the behaviours Bradley showed with Anna and how his child could be affected because of these behaviours.

Overall, the programme was successful as parents had said they had seen some changes in Bradley and he wasn't getting as angry. On his feedback form, Bradley mentioned:

**"I HAVE LEARNT WHAT HAPPENS TO ME WHEN I GET ANGRY, I'VE LIKED TALKING THROUGH STUFF I HAVE DONE."**



# Case Study

## Maria - Refuge

Maria, a Moroccan national who moved to the UK in 2012, came to our refuge with her son in 2022.

### Background

Maria met Nick online and the relationship progressed quickly, living together a year later and their child born the next when they also got married. Maria told us that Nick was very controlling, he used the fact that she was not born in the UK and did not have a very good understanding of English at first as a way of controlling her. Maria had to work full-time to provide for the household and transfer all her earnings to Nick who was unemployed.

After events started to escalate and Nick became violent, a GP advised Maria that what was happening to her wasn't right and it was abuse, however due to threats from Nick to take their son away, Maria minimised the abuse to a DA service.



An incident occurred outside of their sons school where Nick became verbally and physically abusive with school staff witnessing the incident. Nick was arrested and bailed with conditions that he does not go near Maria or the family home. Maria was so afraid of Nick that she felt it was safest to move to our refuge.

### Interventions whilst in refuge

- Dash Risk assessment completed by refuge IDVA and referral to Blackburn Marrac.
- Signposted to Immigration Solicitor and supported in applying for and getting Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK.
- Supported Registering with GP and School Nurse.
- Help completing admissions forms for school.
- Referred to Wish Centre Counsellor who visited Maria in refuge and she attended weekly support sessions

Maria completed our AIM programme and her son completed the Helping Hands Programme.

She was signposted to Blackburn College for ESOL classes and passed her driving test. After helping Maria register for housing with Be With Us she was offered a property. Refuge staff applied for several grants for vital household appliances and items for her and her son. She was helped with utilities at the new property and change of circumstance for benefits.

Staff signposted her to a Family Law Solicitor when her ex made an application to the Family Court and she was supported throughout the Court Process. She was also supported in applying for Child Maintenance. For 6 weeks after Maria left refuge she was visited by staff offering practical and emotional resettlement support.

**ON LEAVING REFUGE MARIA ADVISED THAT THE SUPPORT SHE HAD RECEIVED FROM REFUGE STAFF HAD HELPED HER TREMENDOUSLY AND THAT SHE FELT EMPOWERED TO FACE THE FUTURE WITH HER SON FREE FROM DOMESTIC ABUSE.**



# Case Study

## Lucy - IDVA service

An IDVA started to work with Lucy in 2022 after receiving a medium risk referral. She had been referred to our AIM programme the previous year but had failed to attend. Lucy disclosed she had been in a relationship with the perpetrator for over 12 years and they separated over a year ago due to his controlling behaviour. She stated that he had a tracker on her phone and she did not recognise how controlling he was until towards the end of the relationship.

The couple had a son and child contact was facilitated by her mum. Lucy had contacted police to report post-separation stalking, after being informed that her now ex-partner had been driving past her house with their son in the early hours of the morning to see if she was at home and if she was alone.

Safety planning was completed with her, and she was linked in with legal surgery and a referral was made for AIM. At first, Lucy didn't engage with the sessions but did engage later in the year and completed our AIM programme in early 2023.

Lucy then went on to attend recovery toolkit and during one of her sessions she made a disclosure, of coercive control, including psychological, physical

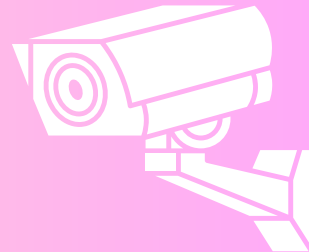
and sexual abuse throughout the relationship and post-separation stalking.

Her ex-partner had made her sign a contract, this was forwarded to the

facilitator - the wording of the contract was abusive and controlling. Lucy also shared pictures of how she was punished if she did not do as she was told.

At this time, Lucy was on court bail conditions as her ex had followed her and assaulted her on the street and she had retaliated. Despite this being on CCTV, both were charged, her ex was given a caution and as she wouldn't accept a caution, she was kept in the cells for 12 hours and charged with assault.

Her solicitor on viewing the CCTV advised her not to enter a guilty plea and a trial was set.



Charges/bail conditions play into the hands of a coercive controller and can be misused. This was passed to the IDVA Service Manager who spoke to the Lucy, safety advice was given and consent to share the information with her solicitors, both the Family and Defence solicitor, so they were better able to support her. Lucy was advised to report the control and abuse suffered throughout the relationship at an appointment at Greenbank and was linked in with the OP Provide IDVA.

Following the statement being taken the OP Provide IDVA spoke to the SGT as the initial response hadn't been appropriate. Lucy continued to access support from the IDVA and was referred to the in-house counselling service.



# Case Study

## Lucy - IDVA service

### On Reflection

This case study highlights that victims often make disclosures of abuse several months after engaging with services. Often a level of trust needs to be developed before a disclosure of sexual abuse is made.

A service needs to offer more than crisis intervention, in this case if the victim had not engaged on a DA programme further disclosures may never have been made.

The importance of good working relationships with police and CPS are highlighted too, despite the poor response in the first instance the follow-on response was as a result of relationships that have been built as a result of OP provide.



**A SERVICE NEEDS TO  
OFFER MORE THAN  
CRISIS INTERVENTION**

Unconscious bias is also highlighted in this case study and we often see this in cases of counter allegations where services are inclined to believe the male over the female.

### In Lucy's words...

“I don't even know where to begin. I cannot thank you enough for everything. From the AIM programme to the Recovery Tool Kit programme, I have come a VERY long way. Thanks to you I have been able to open up completely about my past which is helping me on the road to recovery from abuse. You've seen things in me that I could never see. You've encouraged me and supported me. You've always been there for me whenever I have needed you. I genuinely do not know where I would have been today if it wasn't for you and the Wish centre. In a way you have all saved me. You have helped me find myself and you have made me feel like I have a friend. Someone I can confide in and trust. Please, please, please keep doing an amazing job. Your work is inspiring for many including myself and I hope one day I can be in your shoes helping other women and making them feel inspired”.

# Thank You to our funders

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 Commissioner for Lancashire  
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 Justice  
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.

