



Annual **REPORT**

2024 - 2025



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

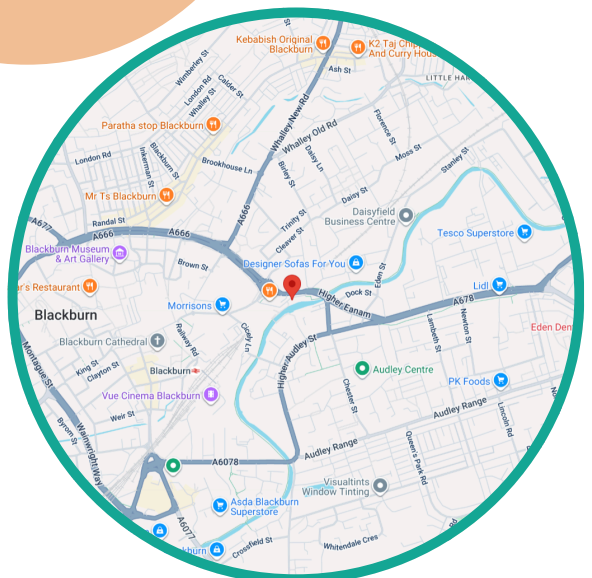
A special thank you to the Wish Centre staff, trustees and volunteers. Your dedication is inspiring and your work is vital in supporting our clients.



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 wonderful people.



Through the provision of support, advice and accommodation we will work with victims, perpetrators & children to secure the safety of those affected by domestic abuse.



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A Message from our CEO, Shigufta Khan and Chair of Trustees, Pauline Geraghty MBE



On behalf of the Wish Centre Board of Trustees, it is a great privilege to present the Annual Report for 2024-2025.

The past year has once again highlighted the vital importance of our services in supporting those who have been affected by domestic abuse. For over 37 years we have provided much needed support in our community, advocated for change in legislation and practice and challenged the barriers that prevent people living lives free from abuse.

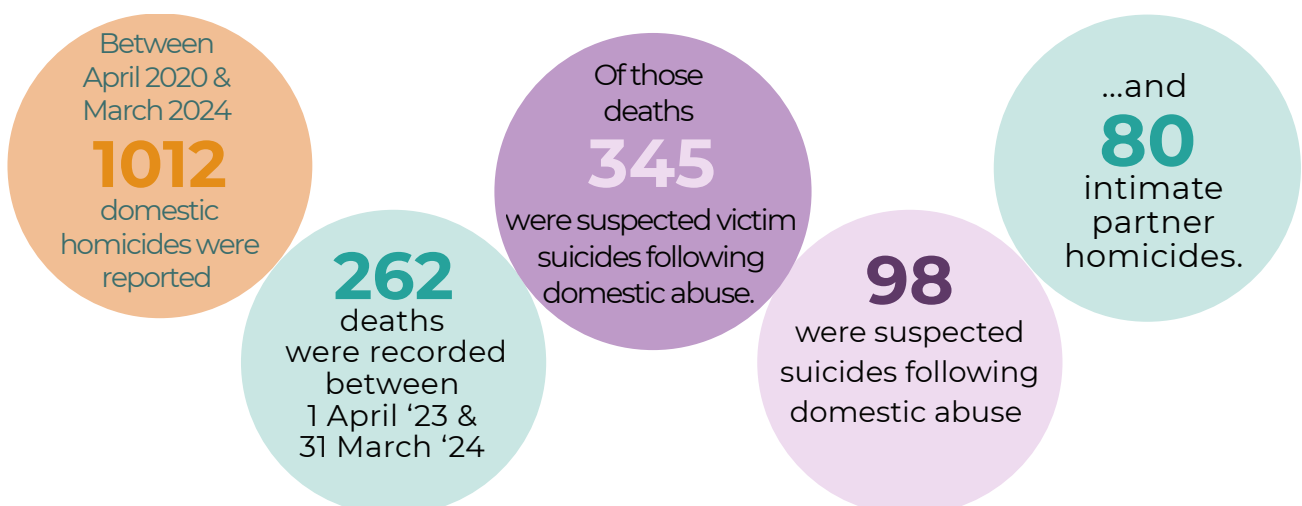
The statistics shared in this report show the number of people who have accessed our services and the difference we have made in their lives, but significantly it is the courage and resilience of those individuals and families that inspire us to continue in our goal to strive for a world free from domestic abuse. It is vital that we ensure their voices are heard and those voices shape the way services are developed, laws are made and enacted and they become a catalyst for change.

The year, has again, seen an increase in demand for our services. We have reviewed our service offer and made changes that have developed our provision.

Working with local partners and strengthening those connections has continued to be important to us and we have no doubt will lead to better, long-term impact. Of concern is the link between domestic abuse and suicide and for many years we have advocated for this issue to be acknowledged.

In Lancashire, the tragic death of Kiena Dawes highlighted the devastating effects of domestic abuse and coercive control on victims' lives. Here was a young woman and mother who was driven to suicide because of the abuse she experienced from her partner. Suicide is now the leading cause of death in domestic abuse cases.

The 4th annual report from the National Domestic Homicide Project which works across England & Wales was published in March 2025



We also recognise the serious risks associated with non-fatal strangulation, which was introduced as a standalone offence in 2022. Non-fatal strangulation is one of the clearest red flags for future homicide and leaves victims with long-term physical and psychological harm. Through our work we continue to see the impact this form of abuse has on survivors, and we are committed to ensuring they receive specialist, trauma-informed support. We are working hard with our statutory partners to ensure victims of domestic abuse receive the best, co-ordinated services. The development of our mental health and well-being provision and counselling service is testament to the importance we place on this support and on working with partners.

Children and young people are often the hidden victims of domestic abuse. According to *For Baby's Sake 2025*, 1:5 children experience abuse, some even whilst still in the womb. Any child witnessing domestic abuse will be emotionally impacted and some children are directly harmed within their own homes. This is why our young people's programmes are crucial so we can respond to their needs and identify the best support for them. Outcomes for children and young people accessing our services have been positive and their feedback invaluable in developing our work with them.

Every strand of our work is important to making the Wish Centre the crucial, specialist service it is. Our direct work within the community, our advocacy and training support, our fundraising, partnership and social media engagement and back-room support means we can provide high quality provision that makes a difference to people's lives. The case studies at the end of the report will give readers an insight into the work that is taking place at the Wish Centre.

None of this would have been possible without the steadfast commitment and dedication of our staff and volunteers. They have worked tirelessly and in often challenging circumstances to ensure the best outcomes for all who come to us for support. They are truly wonderful. Alongside our staff and volunteer team we must wholeheartedly thank our supporters and sponsors for their generosity, time and influence.

Support comes in all guises, a corporate company donating funding for a project, getting involved in a makeover at our safe accommodation, people sky diving or walking the Big One at Blackpool, individuals donating gifts for children and mums, collecting in one of the supermarkets. Big or small every contribution is warmly welcomed and is instrumental in helping us achieve our aims.



As trustees we remain steadfast in our commitment to the highest standard of governance. Working with our CEO, Shigufta Khan and the senior leadership team we have improved our structures, reporting and financial processes and have begun to develop our 2026-2029 Strategic Plan. We want to continue to ensure transparency, accountability and sustainability and safeguard the charity for years to come. We began the year in a secure position and have managed our finances well to ensure we ended the year as a viable, going concern. We will continue to be bold in our vision of advocating for all those affected by domestic abuse and making sure their voices are at the forefront of everything we do.

Looking ahead, we know that demand for our services is unlikely to decrease and the landscape for charities remains challenging. We want to continue to provide services that are meaningful and successful, safeguarding people from harm and contributing to their recovery from abuse.

Thank you once again to every person who has supported our work throughout the year. Together we are a dynamic force helping to build positive futures for people so they can live lives without fear.



Shigufta Kahn
CEO



Pauline Geraghty MBE
Chair of Trustees

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 counselling and 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.

“ I FOUND THAT IT IS OK TO NOT
BE OK AND TO TALK TO
SOMEONE AND ALSO THAT
THERE ARE OTHER PEOPLE IN
THE SAME SITUATION ”



We continue to provide services across Lancashire in addition to Blackburn with Darwen. We have 37 current staff members, as well as support from sessional staff, with a team of around 8-10 student 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.

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 212 referrals and supported 89 women and 123 young people.

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 2095 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 ISAC.

Recovery Programmes



We offer a range of interventions for victims including AIM - a recovery 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.

“ I FOUND THE AIM PROGRAMME VERY USEFUL. THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRAINER WAS OUTSTANDING. IT HAS WIDENED MY KNOWLEDGE IN ALL AREAS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE AND I HAVE LEARNED A LOT FROM THE PROGRAMME PERSONALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY... ”

Perpetrator Programmes

The Wish Centre has been delivering interventions for perpetrators since 2011 in Blackburn with Darwen. We are advocates of breaking the cycle of domestic abuse, delivering the Make The Change programme to challenge perpetrators in their beliefs and take accountability for their harmful behaviours.

Programmes for Children & Young People



Young People's Recovery Toolkit

For children who have witnessed or experienced domestic abuse. The overall aims of the course are to help children and young people come to terms with their experiences and to develop positive lifestyle and coping strategies. 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.



Growing Together

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.

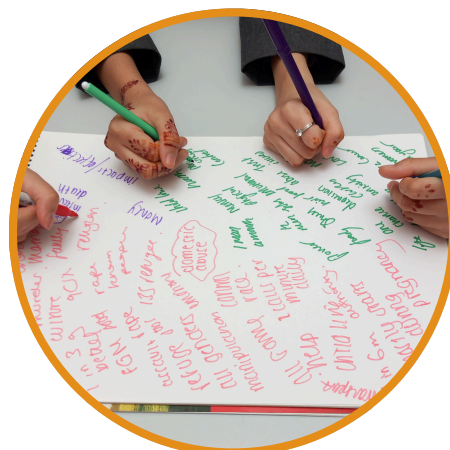


Respect Young People Programme

For families where children or young people aged between 11 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.

“THE PARACHUTE PROGRAMME
TAUGHT ME HOW TO CONTROL
MYSELF WHEN I AM ANGRY,
AND TO WALK AWAY”

Our young people's team also delivers healthy relationship work, taking place in four schools in Blackburn with Darwen 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 the decision making processes.



The Data

Lives we have changed

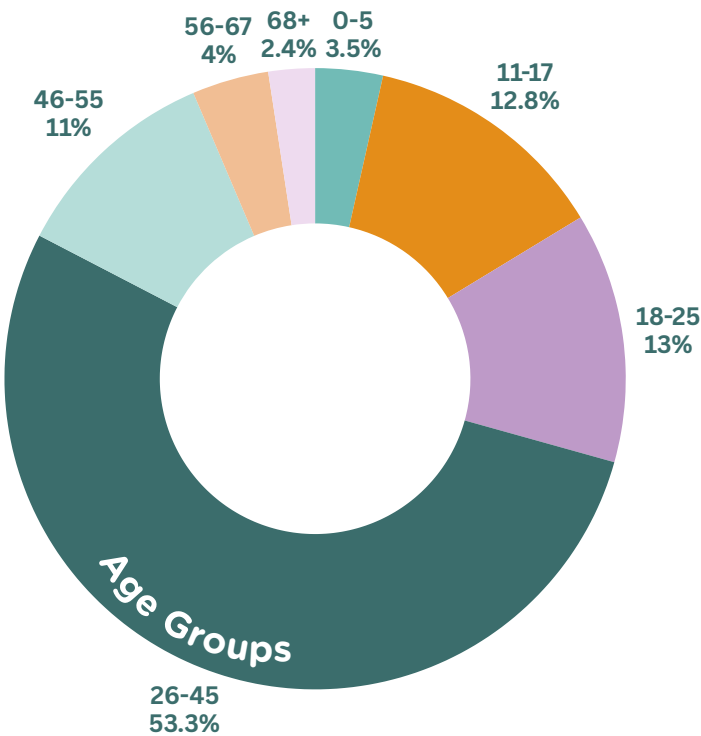
2024 - 2025

3637

BwD residents supported

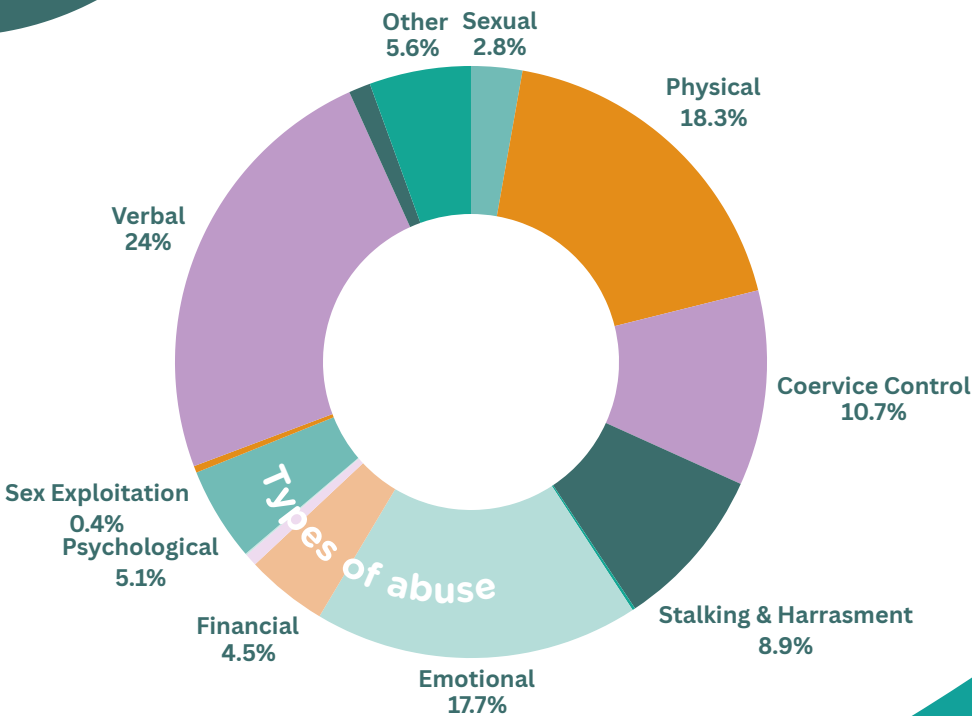
879

Males



2726

Females

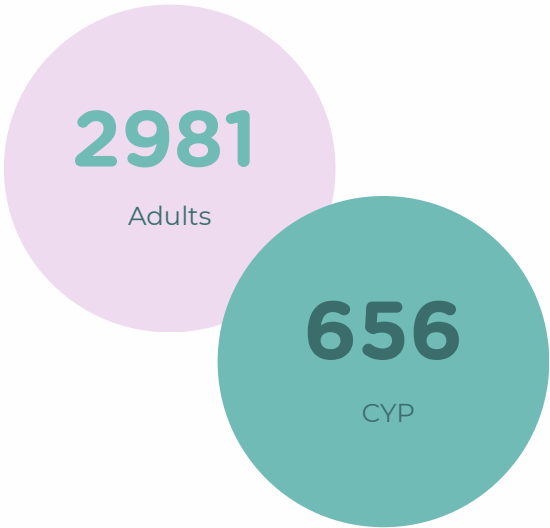


Wish Centre Referrals

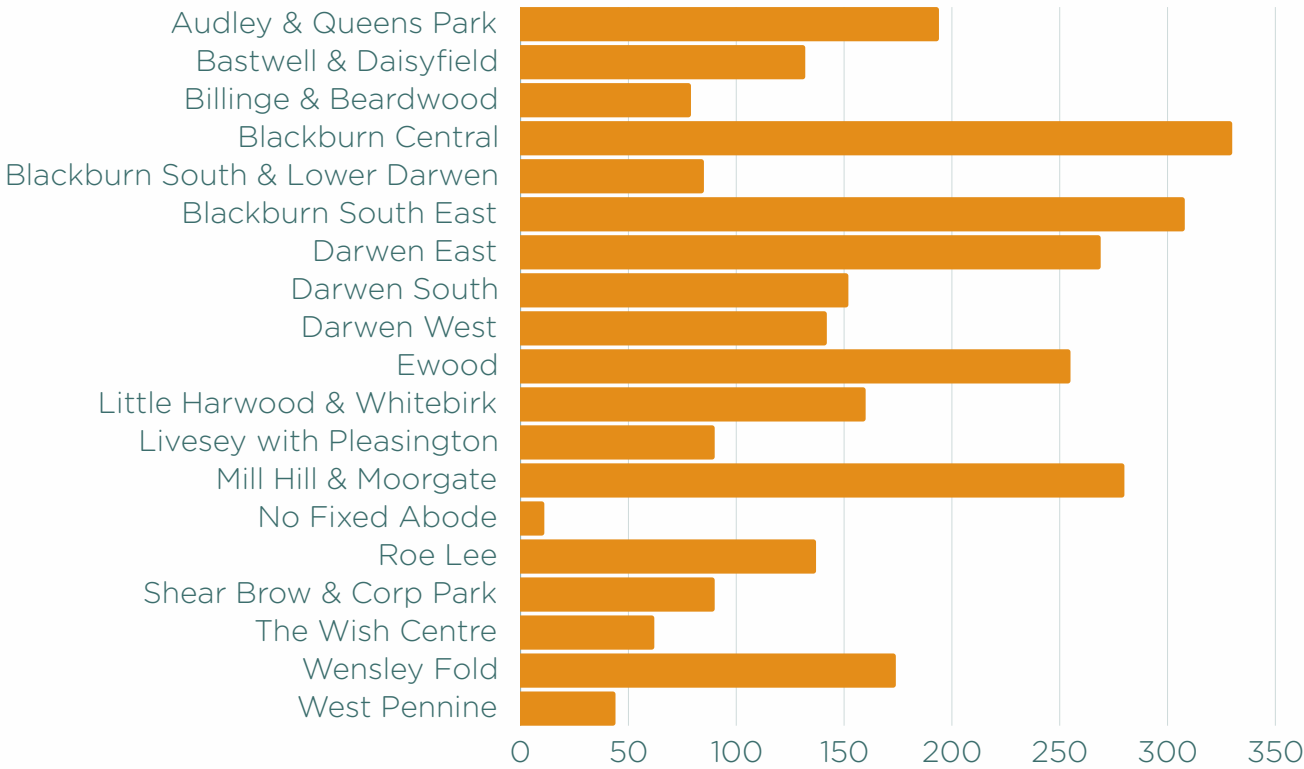
BwD

IDVA	2095
Training	560
Young Peoples Programmes	431
AIM/Recovery Toolkit	399
Reaching Communities	148
Refuge	130
Perpetrator Programme	89
Counselling	60
Advice	59
1-1 Therapeutic Work	45
School Programmes	30
Children in Need	29
IRIS	3
Other	3
Floating Support	2
CIN IDVA	1
ISVA	1

The Wish Centre was able to house 30 women and 52 children in refuge.



Abuse by Ward



What's New?

Refuge Courtyard Makeover

At the beginning of 2025, we received a pot of funding from Blackburn Chemicals and the JD Foundation to makeover the refuge courtyard area. This is a shared space for families who have escaped domestic abuse and are living in our emergency accommodation with their children.

The work has completely transformed the space, it is now safe and colourful, including a pergola for shelter and a new bike track and bikes. Families are already making full use of the space, for socialisation, making new memories and attending meetings with staff.



BEFORE



AFTER



The residents and staff were over the moon with the transformation, it is now a place to play, relax and unwind. Staff have since held garden parties, picnics and BBQs for the residents to get together and build new friendships.

Case Studies

Young People's Programmes



Parachute

Family Background/Activity

Adam (not real name) lives with mum and younger siblings. Adam has witnessed and experienced abuse from dad and mum's ex-partner when he was young resulting in Adam's defensive/attachment issues.

Key Issues

Gets defensive when confronted by other peers, feels responsible to stand ground when challenged.

What did we do?

All sessions were completed online via teams. Adam engaged well in all sessions and was very determined to change his ways. Adam completed the programme in full. In sessions we discussed consequences and the effect they can have on others.

We helped Adam, concentrating on how to be positive and be heard and why time out and using strategies to calm down are so important. This was achieved by supporting him and his emotions through active listening, talking about domestic abuse and the effect on everyone involved and how to have a self-awareness of emotional regulation, coping skills and navigate emotions into being positive, building positive relationships, friendships and boundaries.

Effectiveness of Intervention/Improved Outcomes

- Being assertive with good communication skills and building trust.
- Understanding what healthy relationships are.

- Understanding the consequences from his actions
- Action plan for time out in school and at home
- Improved Outcomes: talking and understanding positive things about home and school and why he needs for things to change,

Good Practice

Example/Compliments

Supported Adam by using my listening skills to understand the unhealthy emotions and to build a healthy relationship with peers by using coping strategies. This was implemented with listening, providing guidance using holistic approaches.

Feedback from Parents/Child/Young Person

Adam said, "I stay away from conflict and concentrate on my education and building my future career, I've learnt that

- I need to be a better role model for my sibling
- I can't let my mum down as she has been through a lot
- I have future goals and plans to become successful
- I need to concentrate on my GCSE's I have good support system who want the best for me and that my dreams will keep me grounded."

Case Studies

Recovery Programmes

AIM

Family Background/Activity

Linda's (not her real name) GP and social worker identified abusive behaviours, both emotional and physical, within her 17 year marriage. The perpetrator, Linda's husband, was on bail for assaulting their teenage daughter and therefore CSC was involved.

Key Issues

Linda was very emotional and reported that she was suffering with PTSD, not sleeping and was scared to go out. She had also witnessed and directly suffered abuse during childhood.

What did we do?

Linda was referred to AIM and a duty IDVA continued with support around the ongoing harassment and witness intimidation in relation to an assault charge against her daughter.

When first attending the sessions, she wouldn't show her face on the camera and only answered yes/no when prompted. Understanding that she may be feeling very anxious, Linda wasn't pushed to contribute but was kept involved as much as possible.

The facilitator noticed her opening up more and in one session Linda alluded to having experienced sexual abuse but mentioned feeling let down by a previous counsellor as it was disclosed without her knowing. Our AIM facilitator suggested that she would like to access future counselling with the Wish Centre and it would be made very clear what may be disclosed so that she is referred to an appropriate professional who can deal with her needs/trauma.



Linda appeared to react positively towards this and said she will think about it moving forward.

After a discussion with Linda's IDVA, she decided to report the sexual abuse to the police and was fully supported during this process.

Effectiveness of Intervention/Improved Outcomes

Written by facilitator: Very positive final session, totally focused and contributed well. Linda has grown in confidence significantly over the past few weeks. Initially would remain quiet and presented very anxious, now she remains on camera and has become more vocal.

Demonstrated an excellent awareness around risk levels and safety planning. Fully aware of the consequences of staying in an abusive relationship.

Linda would like to engage with Recovery Toolkit, she is also doing an online DA course.

She shared that engaging with AIM helped her to disclose sexual abuse.

Good Practice Example/Compliments

The facilitator gave the victim time to become comfortable with the online sessions, relating with her about her dog and not forcing participation.

Feedback from Parents/Child/Young Person

"I have managed to be strong and speak out".

Case Studies

Wellbeing & Mental Health

EMDR

(Eye Movement Desensitisation & Reprocessing)

Family Background/Activity

Mary (not real name) had experienced emotional and coercive control and family issues. Long-term low self-worth, internalised belief of “I’m not good enough,” linked to childhood experiences and reinforced by adult relational control.

Key Issues

- Chronic feelings of inadequacy and self-blame
- History of people-pleasing, poor boundaries, and emotional dysregulation
- Difficulty asserting needs and making decisions without guilt
- High levels of distress are linked to early education experiences and ongoing family dynamics

What did we do?

Mary came to therapy with a core belief that had followed her throughout her life: “I’m not good enough.” This belief had developed early in childhood and was reinforced over time through repeated experiences of shame, rejection, and blame in both personal and professional relationships. During the assessment and preparation phases of EMDR, we worked to establish safety and trust while identifying the root experiences behind this belief. Using the float-back technique, the client was able to recall a significant memory from when she was young and had struggled to read in front of her class. The distress associated with this memory was profound, evoking intense physical sensations and emotional pain.

Through EMDR reprocessing, her distress rating (SUD 0-10 scale, zero no distress, 10 very high distress) reduced from an 8 to a 2, and she was able to reframe the belief, reporting for the first time, “I don’t feel shame when I think about that now.”

Subsequent sessions focused on other reinforcing memories—being forced to give up an item she valued at school, and a more recent memory involving family conflict. These seemingly disconnected experiences all fed into the same entrenched belief of being “less than.”

Effectiveness of Intervention/Improved Outcomes

As therapy progressed, Mary began to make meaningful changes in her life. She became more assertive in her life. She was able to demonstrate healthier boundaries in family relationships and took steps to care for her own needs with reduced guilt. As her therapist, I observed improved emotional regulation, and visible relief from long-held shame.

Good Practice Example/Compliments

The use of EMDR allowed her to access and process traumatic experiences that talking therapy alone may not have fully reached. She began to internalise the belief “I am good enough”—not just as a rational thought, but as something she could feel and act upon.

This case is a powerful example of how structured, evidence-based interventions like EMDR can lead to long-lasting change for those who are ready. It also highlights the importance of offering trauma-informed, personalised therapy that addresses the root of distress rather than treating surface-level symptoms only.

Feedback from Client

One particularly striking moment occurred after processing a family-related memory. Mary said, “I don’t think I’m broken anymore. I just needed to understand where it all came from.” For a client who initially struggled even to articulate her emotional needs, this marked a profound shift in self-awareness and empowerment.

Case Studies

Refuge

A Woman and her 3 Children

Family Background/Activity

The family had self-referred after being prompted by Children's Social Care.

Key Issues

- Mum really wanted things to work out with the perpetrator
- Mum struggled managing the children's behaviour and home which led to damaged refuge property and unsanitary living conditions.
- She was reluctant to seek help about her mental health

What did we do?

The family were provided with welcome packs, registered with schools, nurseries, dentists and GPs. Mum was referred to a debt advice service because of the financial abuse she'd suffered.

Referrals were made to the Henry programme at the local children's centre and a referral to our counselling. Staff also attended child protection meetings with Mum to support her and helped her apply for a domestic abuse easement on Universal Credit.

Whilst at refuge, Mum was still struggling and any meetings with staff would trigger the children to pull her hair and hit her. She was reluctant to seek help for her mental health as the perpetrator had convinced her the children would be removed. She was also struggling to budget her allowance and was missing debt repayments.



Staff noted the need for increased support and visited the house daily to help guide Mum with daily household jobs, she now feels on top of cleaning and feels like it has become more of a home. They also support her in doing a monthly budget plan to manage her money better and encourage her to keep track of the children's appointments to improve their attendance with dentists and opticians for example. As the children got settled into schools and nursery, Mum had time to attend the AIM programme.

Effectiveness of Intervention/Improved Outcomes

Mum now feels more organised and on top of things. Her confidence has grown and after attending the AIM programme has been changing her thought process when it comes to her relationship with the perpetrator. She is now more open with staff about her needs for emotional support and has visited the GP about her mental health.

Good Practice Example/Compliments

Staff recognised that increased check ins and support was needed to get Mum on track. They didn't pressure her, just put measures in place for her to more easily access the support she needed. Staff made her feel comfortable and she now comes to them with any emotional or practical needs.

Thank You To Our Funders

In the last 12 months we have received funding from:

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Charles Hayward Foundation

Children in Need

Department for Levelling Up

Garfield Weston

Housing and Communities

Lancashire County Council

Leathersellers

Ministry of Justice

The Office of the Police & Crime

Commissioner for Lancashire

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.

Alana Hoyle, AR Events, Asda, Atom Comms, Beaverbrooks The Jeweller, Blackburn Chemicals, Boots, Cartwright King Solicitors, Cathedral Collection, Charity Shop Collection Box, Cheques Deposited, Cummins Mellor Recruitment, BAE Systems, Southport Sisters, Eco Giants, Fazenda, Festive Crafts, Gareth's Ultramarathon, Graham and Brown, Haydock Finance, Haydock Staff Skydive, Herbert Parkinson (John Lewis), JD Plc, Blackburn Job Centre, Lancashire Football Association, Laura Ashley, Lush Cosmetics, Morecambe Bay Walk 2024, Morecambe Bay Walk 2025, Morrisons, Mytton Fold Hotel, Next, Oddfellows and Blakey Moor Old Girls, Pierce Accountants, Red Rose Pest Control, R U Comfy, Safestrip, Sisters Together-Southport, St Mary's Catholic Church Brownedge, The Business Network, Central and East Lancashire, The Dunkenhall Hotel, The Flower Bowl - Barton Grange, The Rum Fox, Tiggis Ribble Valley, Tropic Skincare, TT Games Studios, Walk For Wish, Watson Ramsbottom Solicitors, Whalley Golf Club, Whalley Wine Shop Wine Tasting, WIBN Ribble Valley, Withnell Fold W.I., Woods Fruit & Veg Stall.