

the wish
centre

2020
2021



Annual
Report

A message from our Chair of Trustees

Pauline Geraghty MBE

I am delighted to present the Wish Centre annual report on behalf of staff members, volunteers and trustees. There is no doubt this year has been one of the most demanding we have faced since our inception. We have however managed to steer our way through the challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.



In a year that could have brought our services to a standstill we are proud of the way everyone at the Wish Centre have worked with commitment and passion to ensure the continuation of vital services was a top priority.

Whilst many of our staff members adapted to having to conduct their work remotely those working at our refuges needed to remain on site to ensure women and their children were safe and cared for. Everyone had to do things in a different way but this was undertaken positively and professionally so that front line services could continue with the least disruption. We thank every member of the team who has shown their dedication to those who require our support. We pay tribute too to people who found themselves in horrendous situations through lockdown periods unable to flee from violent, controlling situations. I know we made a difference to many people's lives by being available to them.

This has been a remarkable year for the organisation in terms of growth as we expanded our services across Lancashire. Whilst we have faced challenges we have been able to meet all our strategic objectives and end the year in a financially secure position. It is with thanks to everyone who has supported us along the way, our wonderful staff and volunteers, our partners, funders and local allies, that we are able to meet the new year in such a strong position.

As I end I want to pay tribute to Shaheda (SHAZO Rashid, IDVA, who sadly passed away through illness during the year. She will be remembered with fondness by all her team colleagues. As an IDVA she was committed to ensuring every person she supported had the best service. She was an excellent advocate for all those experiencing domestic abuse. She is greatly missed.

Pauline Geraghty, MBE



A message from our CEO

Shigufta Khan



In the last twelve months the Wish Centre like many other charities has faced the challenges that the global pandemic has brought. I am proud to lead an organisation that has worked with passion and commitment to adapt its services to ensure that its able to reach people in need of help and support.

Our helpline was diverted to staff work mobiles ensuring we were accessible to people in need of our services. In the last 12 months we have supported 2809 service users, 1395 of our service users presented with additional complexities including substance misuse and mental health.

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. In the last 12 months in addition to offering support at the point of crisis, ensuring safety planning and risk assessments are taking place, the IDVA team has also supported 102 service users via our sanctuary scheme, and 416 service users have been supported through the criminal and civil courts

Our refuge staff were the exception to remote working as they remained on site throughout the past year. Like other staff members they needed to adapt delivery when restrictions did not allow face to face work.

Our victim programmes AIM and Recovery Toolkit have been accessed by 264 service users. Our perpetrator interventions have expanded and from January 2020 we are delivering interventions in Blackpool and more recently funding has expanded our work to Skelmersdale. Data analysis, completed on men who have engaged on our interventions, by police analysts has highlighted that 74% of men who have engaged on the programme have not reoffended 6 months and 12 months after completion.

Our programmes reach out to children and young people, victims and perpetrators and our programme team have worked extremely hard to ensure that interventions could be delivered remotely and online. The dedication of the team has ensured that we are able to reach service users and continue to provide our interventions. In addition to delivering programmes, we also developed resources that we have shared with service users and practitioners locally, regionally and nationally. We reached out to parents of children aged under 10 and shared resources so they could support their children at home. In the last 12 months we have engaged with 206 young people and 113 parents.

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 2020/2021

Accreditations

In June 2020 the Wish Centre (BDDWA) were successful in being awarded the Women's Aid Quality Mark. The Panel were impressed by the wide range of services including two refuges, a helpline, a crisis service run by IDVA's, a drop in, educational groups for survivors, and children and young people. A counselling service and a programme for perpetrators, which is a county-wide service commissioned by Lancashire County Council and is Respect accredited.

In April 2020 the Wish Centre gained the full Respect Accreditation, the panel were very impressed by the services we offer and commented on the quality of our commitment and delivery of services in the context of Lancashire. They highlighted the strength of our equality strategy and approaches taken to ensure that we offered "services for all". This is noted as an area that is a challenge for many organisations, but the Wish Centre stands out as an agency who is clearly doing this to a high standard with skilled practice throughout all aspects of service delivery.

The Wish Centre has for many years been IIP accredited and underwent a full re-accreditation process in September 2020. The organisation received positive feedback which included -

- There is a clear purpose and vision in place which people understand.
- Open and trusting leadership and consistent line management
- People are given ownership and responsibility of their roles.
- Teamwork is very strong.

Since the last IIP review the service has expanded and new staff have been recruited. Therefore, it is extremely positive to receive the above comments from IIP.

Respect
Accredited



Service Provision

The Wish Centre is the commissioned provider of domestic abuse services for Blackburn and Darwen. From providing support at the point of crisis via safe accommodation to an IDVA service that is able to provide safety advice and risk assessments via phone or in a face-to-face setting. To a range of holistic services ranging from therapeutic programmes for victims, children and young people, support to access housing, mental health support, debt advice and support to access substance misuse services. In the last 12 months we have supported 2809 service users, 1395 of our service users have had additional vulnerabilities including substance misuse and mental health.

We are driven by a 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.

Our volunteers are a valuable and vital resource for us providing support in all areas of our work. During the last 12 months some of our activities have been restricted which has impacted the volunteering opportunities we have been able to provide, however our volunteers have remained connected and where possible we have utilised their valuable skills. 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 the last 12 months our reach has expanded, and we are providing perpetrator interventions as well as interventions for families impacted by adolescent to parent violence across Lancashire and Blackpool in addition to Blackburn with Darwen. Along with our services our team has also expanded from 24 staff members to 39. We have also expanded our counselling team from 5 to 7 counsellors. All 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. Victim programmes and programmes for children are provided on site as well counselling services. Resettlement support is provided to support victims to move on into their own accommodation. **In the last 12 months we have received 169 referrals and supported 41 women and 76 children.**



IDVA / Advice service - support is offered to anyone who is impacted by domestic abuse, and we welcome self-referrals, agency referrals and referrals from the police. Risk assessments and safety planning are offered to victims who maybe 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.

Programmes for perpetrators - 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 are being delivered in Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Preston, Lancaster, Blackpool and from June 2021 in Skelmersdale.

An data analysis by police analysts has highlighted that 74% of men who have engaged on the programme have not reoffended.



Programmes for children & young people - a range of therapeutic programmes for children and young people are being delivered in our refuges and in the community. These include:

- **Young People's Recovery Toolkit** which is a therapeutic programme for young people and is informed by Trauma Focused Cognitive Behaviour Therapy.
- **Expect Respect** which is programme aimed at empowering Young Women 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** is 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



New funding and Developments

Operation Provide - The Wish Centre have been involved in the implementation of a new project called Operation Provide - this is a joint initiative between Lancashire Police and the Wish Centre and covers East Lancashire. The project aims to ensure that specialist domestic abuse support is provided to victims as quickly as possible after the reported incident.

RYPP - RYPP is a new addition to our prevention work, and we are delighted to work with partners from the statutory sector in the co-delivery of this new project. The programme is accredited by Respect and practitioners delivering the project have all received training and will continue to receive practice supervision sessions from Respect. RYPP is being delivered across Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire.

Perpetrator Interventions - we have worked in collaboration with Rise Mutual CIC & Humraaz to embed a cultural thread in the programme we are now delivering. It was important for us to reflect the diverse communities that we are working in and ensure that the programme we are delivering reflects the cultures and practices of all our communities. We have also developed an awareness raising programme as a precursor to the perpetrator programmes which is ready for delivery. This has been developed in collaboration with practitioners working with the refugee and asylum-seeking communities.

Male IDVA - to ensure we meet the need of male victims funding secured from the Home Office has enabled us to employ a male IDVA

New website and social media channels - we launched our new website in September 2020 www.thewishcentre.org and have created a page dedicated to resources for service users and practitioners. We have also produced reports on the impact of domestic abuse on mental health and the impact of domestic abuse on children. We have also launched a you tube channel and are also utilising the Reels facility on Instagram to connect with different audiences.

The Impact of Covid 19 on Domestic Abuse - in mid-March following the announcement from the government on lockdown we had to radically change our service delivery whilst being mindful that lockdown will have a devastating impact on domestic abuse victims. Our refuge staff have remained on site and when restrictions have allowed, they have delivered socially distanced support to service users face to face, otherwise all the support has been delivered remotely. This has included support sessions, the AIM programme and counselling sessions. Activities for children and young people have also been delivered online. Our IDVA/Advice service, counselling and legal advice as well as our all of our programme delivery went online during lockdown and then face to face as restrictions eased. The impact of Covid has been so significant that we have produced a report on how we have reacted to the pandemic, and this can be found on our website.

Case Study - Tony & Leona

Tony and Leona have been known to the Wish Centre since 2014. Leona as a high-risk victim of domestic abuse, initially in relation to a former partner, and in the past few years to Tony and another male known to the service as a serial perpetrator of abuse.

At the point of first referral to The Wish Centre for victim support, Leona had one child and, as time passed and her relationship with Tony progressed, she gave birth to a further two children. Leona has 13 projects listed against her name on The Wish Centre database and this reflects the difficulties she has experienced, repeatedly trying to free herself from abusive relationships to protect herself and her children but failing to do so.

Tony in contrast has 4 perpetrator projects linked to him, having initially being referred for assessment by Children's Services for the Make the Change programme, January 2014. On three consecutive occasions, Tony failed to engage with the programme and his relationship with Leona continued, as did his abusive behaviour.

Both Leona and Tony have suffered several adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and their experience of being parented was quite poor, with brothers and sisters of both parties being known to services as victims and perpetrators of abuse. Other issues include prolonged substance misuse, mental health problems, unemployment, lack of education/training opportunities and in Tony's case a diagnosis of ADHD.

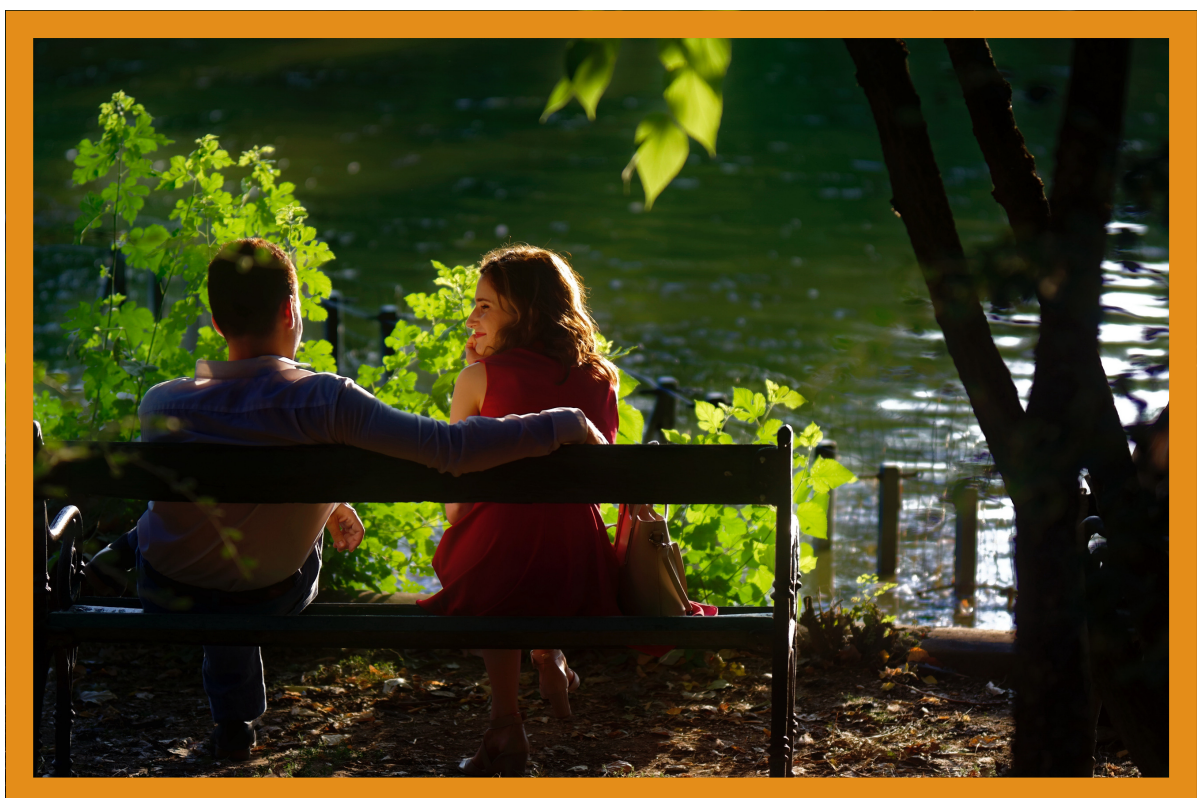
In September 2020, a Child Protection Conference concerning the unborn child of the couple resulted in a further referral for Tony to attend the Make the Change perpetrator programme. There was a further referral for Leona to engage with IDVA for the purpose of safety planning and to attend the victim programmes, AIM and Recovery Toolkit. At this point, all three older children were no longer in their care due to domestic abuse concerns.

It would be fair to say that at the time of referral, few people (including professionals involved in the case if we are honest) believed that either Tony or Leona would commit to working with services in any meaningful way. This was in view of their history of domestic abuse, repeated separations, and subsequent reconciliations, and failing to work with services in an open and honest way.

In January 2021, Anthony, was accepted onto the group perpetrator prevention programme which, due to the covid 19 pandemic was delivered by way of an online platform. Tony struggled to engage with this format and from a facilitator's perspective he was difficult to manage, continuously walking about, unable to settle and in and out of the sessions due to alleged connectivity issues. He was subsequently moved to one-to-one session delivery, and this proved to be much more successful as both staff member and Tony were able to work at his pace. Although the opportunity for group challenge is lost in such circumstances, the couple's history, together with the risk to the unborn in the event of discontinuing work, far outweighed the drawbacks.

Tony finally completed the programme in June of this year whilst Leona successfully completed her own programmes a few months before. The facilitator noted that during the final session of AIM, Leona ‘has shown excellent awareness and understanding’. Whilst Tony engaged with the Make the Change programme, Leona was offered the support of the integrated support IDVA to ensure that she was kept abreast of Tony’s progress, and to provide her with an opportunity to access further support should she require it.

Today, the couple’s situation has changed considerably. Tony and Leona remain in a relationship, and they reside together with their new-born baby girl, out of area and away from their dysfunctional support networks. Both have returned negative drugs tests throughout the period of the Child Protection Plan with the help of the local substance misuse service. The older children now have overnight stays with their parents and most services have now closed the family’s case.



In their own words.....

"I just wanted to say a big thank you to you and your team for delivering such intense but very important and essential sessions for DV victims. The sessions were very thought out and extremely informative and covered all bases. I think these life skill sessions should be taught in schools & be made mandatory as part of the curriculum and also taught in communities.



It's made a difference to me and my life and think it will make a difference and changes in many other lives, especially for the ones who aren't aware of the support available and not able to reach out. So thank you so much again."

Yvonne, AIM Participant

"You have made me interested in the programme, you have made me want to learn, I have looked forward to our sessions every Friday.

I couldn't have made the changes without you and I can't thank you enough for your honesty and commitment to me and my family"

Paul, MTC Participant



"In my view, the Make the Change Programme is a highly valuable resource for the Probation Service. Most of my caseload is for people convicted for domestic abuse and I have referred a number of people to it. It also allows us to make effective use of the RAR days that my cases are made subject to by the Court.

Furthermore, it is highly useful for cases that do not meet the criteria for the accredited Building Better Relationships (BBR) programme. I am impressed by the feedback from the Wish Centre provide in respect to the sessions my cases attend. Moreover, the staff at the Wish Centre are highly approachable and helpful in responding to any queries that I have in respect to the Make the Change programme.



My experience about the Make the Change programme has been nothing but positive. What was even more helpful that the Wish Centre continued to offer the above programme during the covid-19 pandemic, via Zoom classes."

Mick, Probation Officer

Our Funders

In the last 12 months we have received funding from:

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

Lancashire County Council

Blackpool Borough Council

The Henry Smith Charity

BBC Children In Need

Lloyds Bank Foundation

National Lottery Community Fund

Brian Mercer Charitable Trust

The Pilgrim Trust

**The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local
Government**

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.

