



Supporting people affected by rape and sexual abuse

Annual Report

2022-23





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Chair's Review

The past twelve months has seen a consolidation of the Birchall team to ensure we can provide accessible, quality services to survivors of all forms of sexualised violence, using our expertise to inform and support, reduce sexual violence, and promote healthy relationships.

As evidence has accumulated of the impact of trauma on the individual, we have reflected on the implications for Birchall. The Board has recognised the need for trauma informed principles to apply throughout the organisation. We have used our application for One Small Thing Trauma Informed accreditation to ensure everyone who works for, or has contact with Birchall, is supported and respected.

While the transition to a fully trauma informed service was the foundation of our development in the past year there have been many other achievements including the renewal of our Lime Culture accreditation for services to male survivors. Our Well Being service has been established and has worked with 64 clients over the year enhancing Birchall's holistic approach. The Ambassador volunteer programme has developed, representing Birchall at events such as university fresher weeks.

An awareness of the barriers there may be to victims accessing services has resulted in work being done on community engagement,

an update to our website as well as providing school-based sessions on Healthy Relationships. Professional relationships have been enhanced by joint working with our partner organisation in North Cumbria both to obtain funding and to organise the first Cumbria Trauma Informed Conference last November.

Elsewhere in this report you will find details of the work that is going on every day which contributes to the recovery and empowerment of those unfortunate to be the victims of sexual violence. I hope you will find the time to read these accounts.

Finally, I need to thank all our staff, including those who have moved on, whatever your role, it is essential to delivering our service. A particular welcome to our new team members and for me this includes welcoming our new board members Paula Cook and Cat McIntyre. Sadly, we had to say goodbye to Teresa Jennings during the year.

All we have achieved would not have been possible without the support of our funders to whom we must express our gratitude for recognising the value of our services.

Dr. Elizabeth Taylor



About Us

We are an independent charity that provides specialist support services to adults, children and young people who have experienced sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse.

We strive to provide high quality, specialist trauma informed services within a safe, non-judgemental environment.

Our mission is to empower people affected by rape, sexual abuse or sexual violence to recover from their trauma so they can lead safe and fulfilling lives.

Through a trauma informed approach we...

Realise

We realise the potentially damaging consequences of traumatic experiences and the opportunities that exist for healing through safe relationships

Recognise

We recognise the signs of trauma, and seek to address the underlying causes

Respond

We respond with empathy, integrating the knowledge of trauma into our policies and practice

Resist

We resist retraumatising people and aim to de-escalate the deep anxiety that adversity can cause

Recover

We support people who have experienced trauma to recover from their trauma, by enabling them to live in the present without being overwhelmed by the thoughts and feelings of the past.



Our Values

Safety

We recognise the impact of shame, we create safe spaces and make people feel safe, by building trusted relationships

Trusted

We avoid judgement and understand shaming and blaming language can damage people and harm relationships. We are emotionally aware. We believe and do not judge

Choice

We ensure that the people using our services have a voice and their choices are important, We understand that everyone's experience matters

Collaboration

We work together to achieve the best possible outcome, we are person centred and see the person's strengths, building upon them, We are reflective and learn together

Empowerment

We seek to make a difference, innovative and be the change we want to see. We make a difference, we are transparent, and take responsibility.

Our Services



Trauma Informed Counselling, F2F and Online counselling, Pre-trial work, Play & Art Therapy

For adults and CYP



Wellbeing Programme – supporting people pre counselling – grounding, stabilisation, active signposting, practical & emotional support

For adults and CYP



Prevention – raising awareness and educating through training in schools, community settings and to other professionals



Peer support & Groups – safe space for people to share and build supportive relationships and strengthen their resilience



Family Collaboration – working with parents/carers, friends of people affected by rape and sexual abuse to understand the impact of trauma

The scale of the issue

Sadly, rape, exploitation and sexual abuse are common in our society.

More than **1 in 4 women** and **1 in 18 men** have been raped or sexually assaulted as an adult 1 in 6 children have been sexually abused

Source: Office for National Statistics (2023) , NSPCC (2011)

67,169 rapes were recorded by police in 2022. By the end of the year, charges had been brought in just **1,276 (1.9%)** of these cases. Not all these cases are likely to make it to court. But, of those that do, around **3 in 5 will end in a conviction.**

Source: Office for National Statistics (2023), Home Office (2023), Crown Prosecution Service (2023)

5 in 6 women who are raped don't report – and the same is true for **4 in 5 men.**

Source: Office for National Statistics (2021)

Across Lancashire and Cumbria, we have seen an increase in sexual offences being recorded.

Figures from the Office of National Statistics show that in the year to March 2022, Cumbria recorded **1712** sexual offences, an **increase of 38%** on the previous year.

Lancashire recorded **5259** sexual offences, an **increase of 34%**



The effects of trauma

Abuse inflicts deep trauma – the effects of which can last a lifetime if left untreated. Trauma affects a person’s physical health, emotions, impulse control and self-image.

It also affects their ability to think, learn, concentrate and form relationships. Many people who have been abused have mental health issues and suffer from depression, anxiety and PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder).

Common side effects include nightmares, panic attacks, self-harm and thoughts and attempts of suicide. In response to the abusive experience, people can develop a range of complex feelings, including anger, shame and guilt.

Many find it difficult to trust others and to form relationships. Poor self-care and low levels of confidence and self-esteem can occur, as well as poor physical and mental health. Adults and young people often turn to drugs and alcohol as coping strategies.

Many self-harm and have eating disorders. As a result of our support, our service users can process and recover from the trauma they have experienced. This results in improved mental and physical health. Many find employment or go back to education. Some get involved in their local community, expanding their circle of social support. All of this enables our service users to heal and move past their abusive experiences, with the aim of improving their lives

Head of Services Update

This has been my first full year in Birchall, and it's been a year of expansion and ensuring our teams are well supported to deliver quality counselling and wellbeing support to our clients.

Our 3-stage model of Stabilisation & Understanding, Processing & Acceptance and finally Integration and Engagement has become fully embedded and feedback from both the team and those using our services has been positive. It's allowed us to refine our case management process and focus on our waiting list.

As a service, we've seen an increase in young people experiencing abuse. This has included an increase in young girls seeking services in response to sexual assault and rape.

We've also seen an increase in sexual activity amongst children under 16, including sexting and sending nudes.

In response to this we have expanded our Children and Young People's team, and diversified our services to work in schools and other agencies where young people feel safe. We recognise the need to work collaboratively with parents and carers and this remains integral to our offer. We developed a new Parent Carer group this year to offer psycho educational support to people whose children are receiving help from us – this peer support has proved successful and will expand over the coming year.

Our service users are also experiencing increasingly complex needs related to the trauma they have experienced. In 2022 – 2023, over 84% presented with moderate to high trauma symptoms.

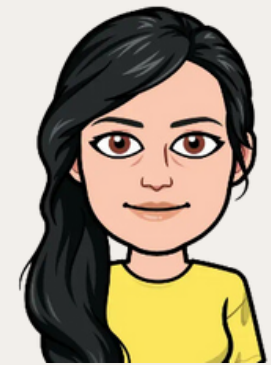
The wellbeing service is an important part of someone's journey through offering practical and emotional support to stabilise and ground someone to ensure that counselling is then effective for them at that time. Again, the wellbeing team has grown and we're now proud to offer that to clients across all the geographical areas we cover.

The education project in schools has proved a great success over the last year with many of the team now trained to deliver sessions around Protective Behaviours. Our partnership with 'We are Survivors' to deliver the Outspoken Talking Therapy Project to male survivors in HMP Haverigg and HMP Lancaster Farms continues.

We continue to support student counsellors by offering placements and we have seen growth, professionalism and enthusiasm displayed by everyone who has been involved. We are proud that several students have been successful in moving through our Birchall student pathway to become Birchall counsellors once they have successfully graduated.

I'd like to thank all the team for their hard work, dedication and trust over the last year and an excited about the upcoming year and the development of our new Senior Operational Management Team.

Nicola Lord – Head of Services



Focus on some of our services

Wellbeing

The Wellbeing Service is now well established within the Birchall Trust, and we have 4 Wellbeing Workers working across Lancashire and Cumbria – and we continue to grow. Wellbeing offers up to 12 sessions, online or face to face, and we work in a trauma informed way, and with whatever our client's need. The Wellbeing Service is in the main, accessed prior to the counselling service with the intention of preparing clients for counselling. Wellbeing also works collaboratively with counselling to ensure clients feel safe and stable enough for continued engagement.

Our Wellbeing Workers are multi-functional, and we advocate, empower, and collaborate with our clients. Wellbeing isn't prescriptive as we work with what the client wants, we are led by them, and always in a trauma-informed way.

Examples of the work we have completed over the year include:

1. With young people (14+) we have supported in advocating their needs to school, speaking to headteachers in helping them understand the impact of trauma whilst ensuring the right support is in place for their students.
2. We have attended Citizens Advice appointments to support with debt management or to GP appointments to ensure clients feel listened to when discussing medication, or when seeking diagnosis.
3. We have worked co-operatively with health professionals and clients when having to undergo invasive procedures such as smear tests.
4. We have attended PIP assessments and spoken to DWP assessors in helping them understand the impact of trauma – which for one client has led to PIP being awarded.
5. We have advocated or supported with complaints to mental health services, victim support, police etc. and have ensured that the client is receiving all entitled and eligible services.
6. We have worked with clients experiencing flashbacks and explored techniques to manage such as the 'flashback protocol'
7. We have worked with self-harm and suicidal thoughts, ensuring safety plans are in place and that clients understand who they can contact in times of crisis.
8. We have offered techniques to reduce feelings of panic and anxiety such as the 5,4,3,2,1 method, breathing exercises, relaxation, and challenging of automatic negative thoughts.
9. We have explored the impact of trauma on the brain with clients, helping them understand why they may be feeling the way that they are- validating their experience.

Sophie Dabbs – Senior Trauma Informed Wellbeing Practitioner



Protective Behaviours

This has been a busy year for our new Protective Behaviours Education Programme, which we have been delivering in schools across our regions. The programme consists of an experiential workshop which centres around teaching schoolchildren (in groups of 10) in primarily Year 6 (ages 10 and 11), and Year 9 (ages 13 and 14) how to recognise what it feels like when they don't feel safe:

We do this through introducing the idea of “early warning signs”, and through a series of exercises allowing the children to experience how their bodies can signal to them when they find themselves in a situation, they don't feel comfortable with. The workshop then focuses on how to deal with this, and helps the children identify where they can go for help and who they already have around them as a support network.

So far, we have delivered this programme in 17 schools in the Barrow, South Lakes, Kendal, Morecambe, and Lancaster areas.

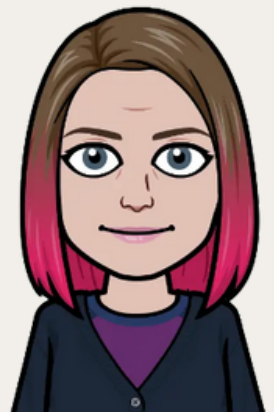
We ensured 249 children in Years 6 and 9 have been able to learn how to recognise when they feel unsafe, and what to do about it.

The feedback we have had from teachers across the schools has been very positive, and a question we often get asked by the children during the sessions is “can we do this every week?”.

The programme will form a part of our regular offering going forward, whether this be to the same schools again or to a further variety of schools – both have already been requested.

The Protective Behaviours workshop will also be joined by further workshops comprising Safe Relationships and Staying Safe Online in the coming year.

**Monica Jaklin Taylor -
Counsellor**



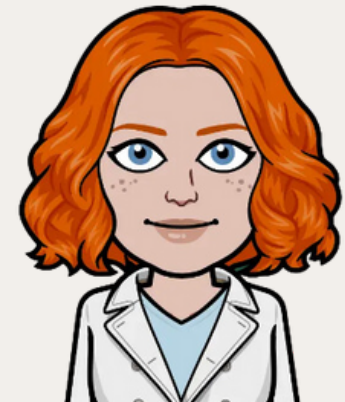


Community Engagement

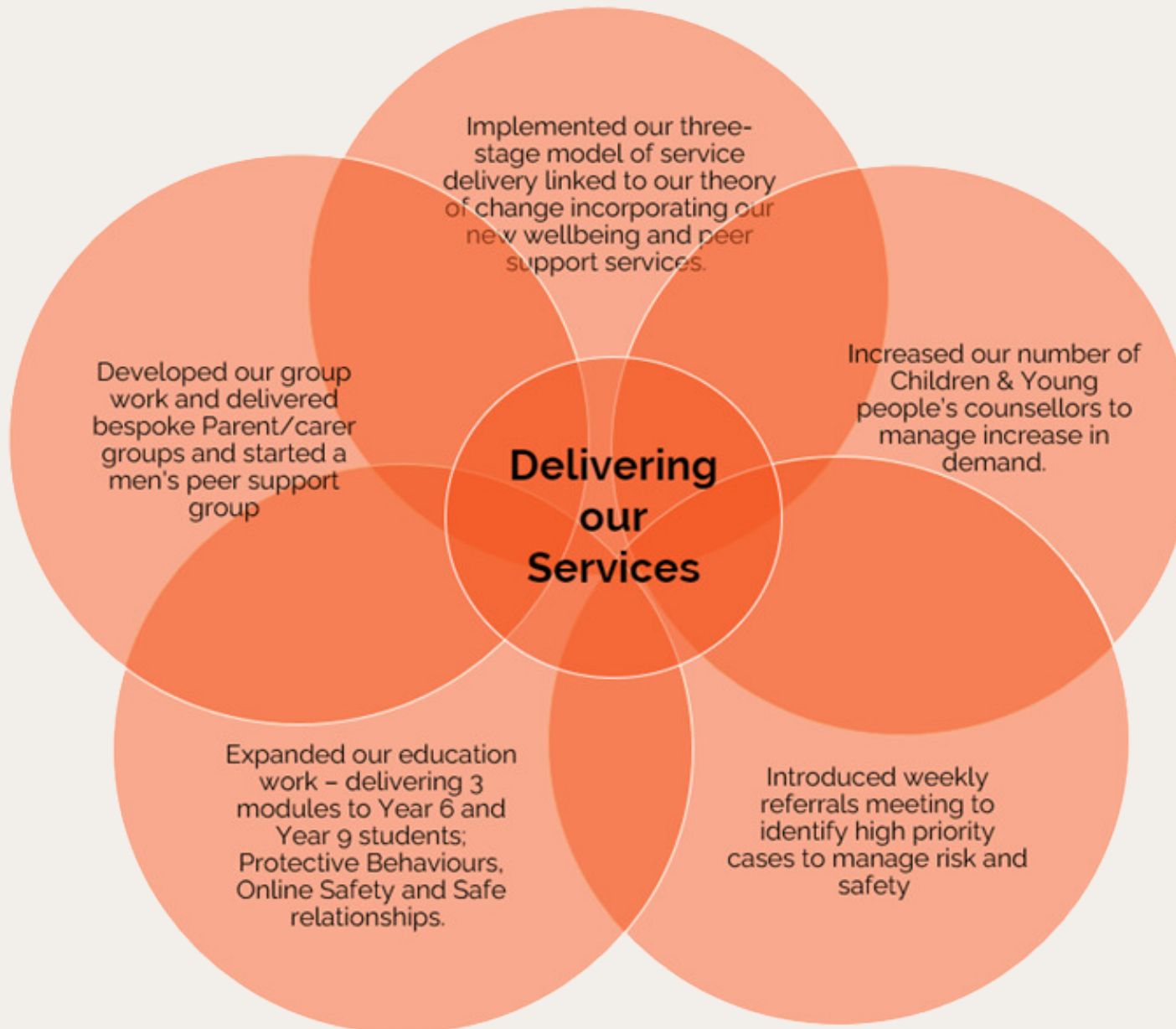
This year we started to focus on raising awareness of issues within our communities. We have been involved in several student fresher events, attended PRIDE events, and held Ambassador days. We've developed lots of opportunities for our communities to have conversations with us and feedback about our services to help us ensure we're relevant, up to date and reaching those people who may not know about us but need our support. We involved local young women to help shape a specific proposal for funding from the Pilgrim Trust which resulted in 3 years' worth of funding – co production and design at the Heart of what we want to do.

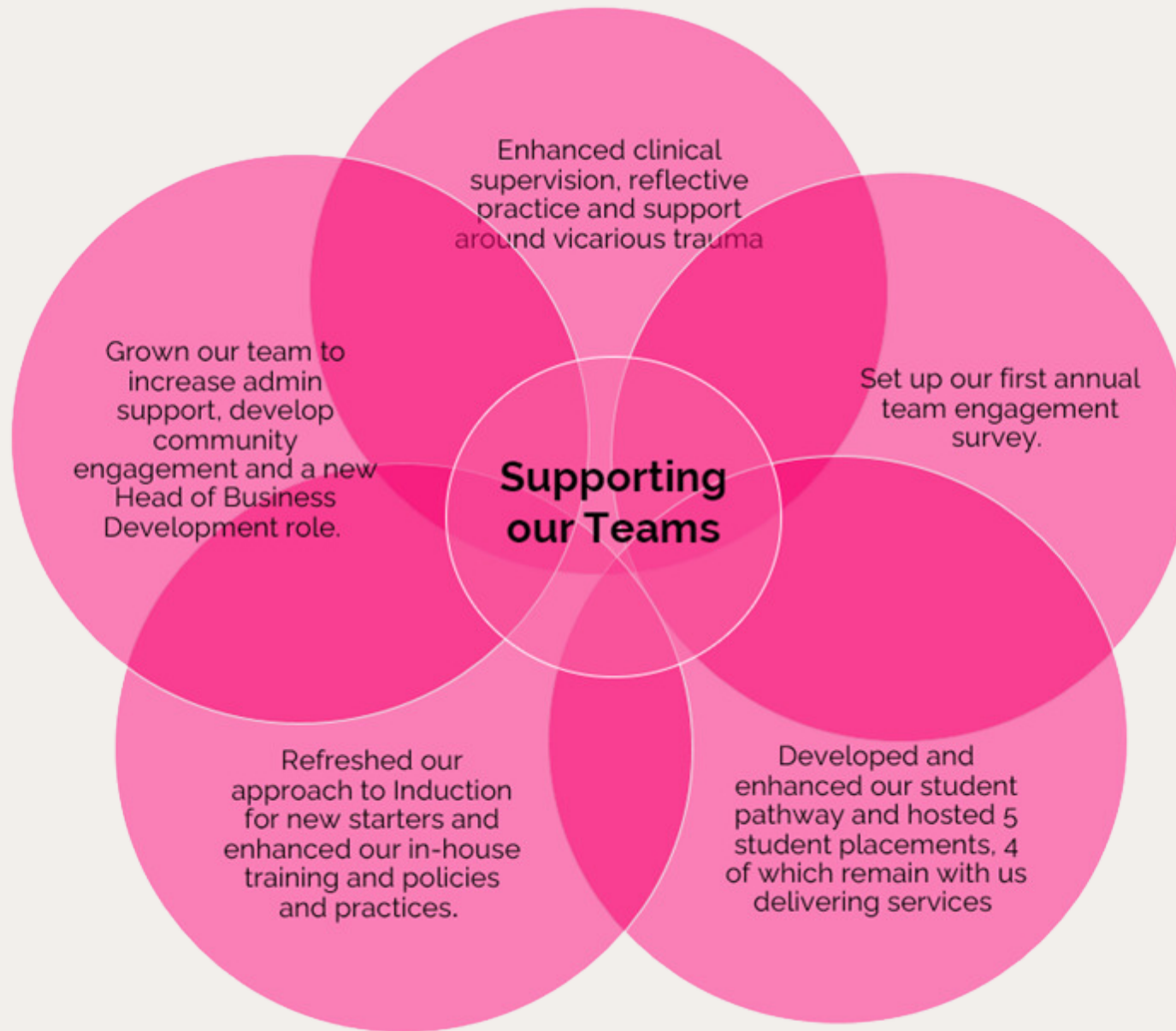
Our Ambassadors supported out Big Christmas Give fundraising campaigning by sharing their stories, poetry and artwork and many people took part in fundraising events to raise money – from the Great North Run to Keswick to Barrow walk to completing the Yorkshire three peaks challenge – each and every person is a Birchall star and we look forward to community engagement being at the heart of what we do next year.

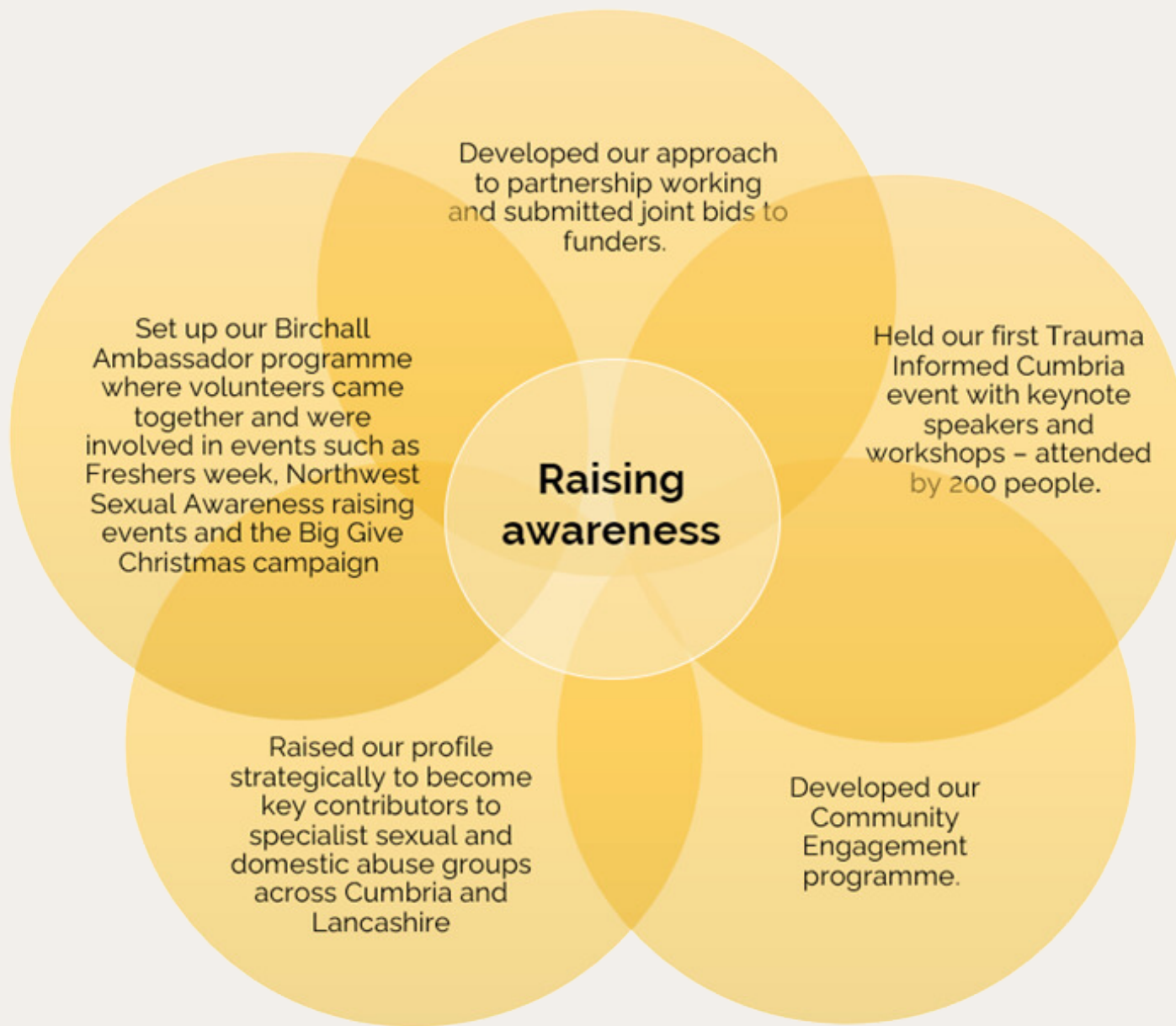
Bethany De Hert
Head of L&D, Community Engagement



Our key achievements in 2022-23









Our Impact – Making a Difference

“My experience with the Birchall Trust has changed my life. Before I felt terrified all the time that something was going to happen to me and I felt it would still have been my fault. Now I feel confident in asserting boundaries, asking for help and fully understand that what happened was not my fault. Birchall helped me put myself back together again after feeling lost for so long.”

1,490 people contacted our services for information, advice, support and counselling



300

people
accessed
advice and
information
at
community
events



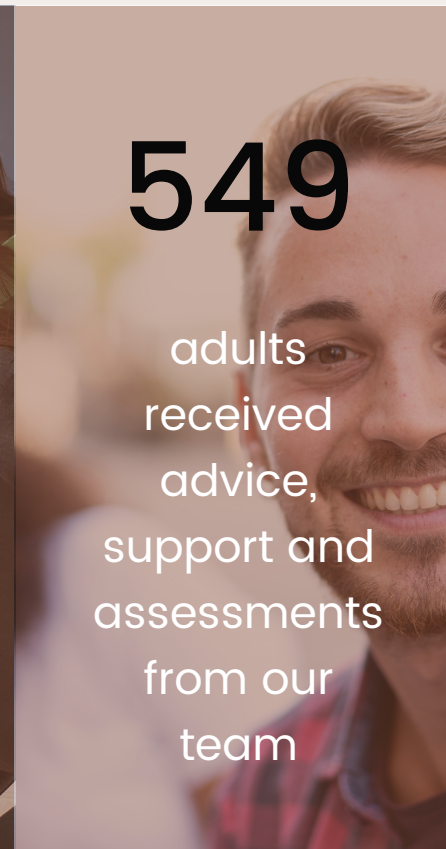
200

delegates
attended our
Trauma
Informed
Cumbria
Conference



249

children
attended our
Protective
Behaviour
programme



549

adults
received
advice,
support and
assessments
from our
team



192

children and
young
people
accessed our
services

“The reason that my overall health and well-being went up (which in my opinion was the hardest section of my health and wellbeing to improve) is because each week I had a session with [wellbeing worker], I felt heard and understood. I actually started looking forward to our sessions. This is something that has been hard to find with a counsellor. As an independent individual I had no one I felt I could turn to before my experience with Birchall Trust.”

408 people accessed longer term wellbeing support and counselling services



64

people
received
wellbeing
support



229

people
received
adult
counselling
(an average
of 21
sessions)



33

children
accessed
play therapy
(an average
of 27 weeks)



82

young
people
received
specialist
counselling



4,711

counselling
and
wellbeing
sessions
were
delivered by
the team



Sam's Story

Sam was a 6 year old child, who had been abused by a member of her family. Sam initially came to Birchall for support before the trial took place, once the sentencing had happened, she came back to explore her feelings more freely through play therapy.

Sam had frequent emotional outbursts at home, she would become very angry and lash out at her parents both physically and verbally, she struggled to control her emotions and her triggers were unpredictable.

During her sessions with the play therapist she was able to use the sand and miniatures to express the notion of 'baddies' and 'goodies'. She used paints, clay and glitter to create pictures, initially these were often more about creating mess rather than a picture.

At the beginning and throughout, she experienced the need to be seen and known through the mess she was making, which seemed to be a metaphor for the internal 'mess' she was experiencing with her emotions. She did not/could not seem to use words for her emotions, but she showed them through her play and 'mess'. She was starting to experience control and power in her creativity and play.

Sam came along to 22 sessions of play therapy and during that time she experienced change in her ability to self-regulate more easily at home, having experienced acceptance, unconditional positive regard and empathy whilst with her therapist.

She has become more trusting of the relationship and as a result has become more confident and freer in her play, she 'let go', she increased her eye contact and laughed more, feeling safe in her relationship with the therapist.

Mum has fed back that she is much more confident now, she seems able to recognise her emotional triggers before they happen and how to ask for help or self-regulate.

Frank's Story

Frank initially came for adult counselling presenting with anger, frustration and a sense of not knowing who he was. Due to a seismic event the previous year, the mask/persona he felt he had been wearing for decades had fallen away. He felt that he didn't know who he was without his mask and he didn't know how to process the myriad of emotions he experienced daily. He felt overwhelmed by anger and frustration. He struggled with trust and was nervous about what he might experience in therapy.

Through his sessions, Frank explored his timeline and processed his experiences through the lens of his abuse by his grandfather and the persona he created as a result. Through the process, he learned how to feel his emotions instead of pushing them down, thereby learning to cope with his anger and frustration. He now feels calmer and is able to cope with the stressful experiences brought on by his job and family life in ways that would have felt foreign to him before they started therapy.

The signposting to the work of Brene Brown helped Frank understand the effect shame can have on a person and their lives. By reading *Daring Greatly* and bringing the learning into session, Frank explored how he had been groomed by his grandfather and how he has felt over the last four decades. It has helped him heal from the different wounds inflicted on him by his trauma and shame. Frank now feels a lot safer with himself and no longer talks of self-harming, he feels less triggered and angry and no longer blames himself for the abuse. He says he is no longer re-inventing himself but is much happier going into the next phase of his life.





Amira's Story

Amira came to Birchall for support believing she would be judged – she said she had experienced this previously in counselling with female counsellors and so specifically wanted to speak to a man, which we were able to offer. She used both illegal drugs and prescribed medication to help her cope with her feelings. She had experienced sexual abuse from a cousin between the ages of 5 and 13 – she talked about her shame at enjoying the abuse even though she knew others didn't accept it. She was also struggling with her relationship with her wife and her parents and how her trauma affected her behaviour.

Amira needed space in her counselling sessions – she needed to be fully confident that her counsellor was in this for the right reasons, she needed to feel safe and so she was allowed the time to explore this in an open and transparent way. Doing this allowed her to take responsibility for her healing.

This included establishing firm boundaries with her brother, recognising why she felt insecure within her relationship with her wife and finding her voice to stand up for herself against sexual violence and racism.

She has learned how to keep herself safe in more social aspects, how she can be outspoken as a black woman and how she carries herself. She knows how to communicate with as few words as possible and no longer feels the need for violence.

She feels stronger and more equipped to keep herself emotionally safe. She feels she has always known how to keep herself physically safe ,but now she feels emotionally safe.

She does not engage with drug abuse as she did when she started therapy, and no longer uses prescription drugs incorrectly.

She feels more confident in her appearance and has enjoyed her journey of self-discovery. She used to despise being in her own company, but she now enjoys spending time with herself. She feels proud of herself and who she is becoming. She feels improved in her appearance and emotional wellbeing and feels she is in a better position to be a mum.

Funding Thanks

The Birchall Trust relies on the kindness and generosity of our supporters. Every single penny donated or granted to us helps us provide therapy and support to empower survivors.

Our supporters during 2022-23 have included:

- National Lottery
- Children In Need
- Cumbria Community Foundation
- Cumbria Police & Crime Commissioner
- Lancashire Police & Crime Commissioner
- Ministry of Justice
- The Pilgrim Trust
- Walney Extension fund (Grantscapes)
- Henry Smith Foundation
- Frieda Scott trust
- Francis C Scott
- Cumbria County Council
- Lloyds Foundation
- We are Survivors, Manchester

And many individual donors and organisations who generously support our Big Christmas Give campaigns including [BAE system](#) and [Glasdon Group](#).



The Pilgrim Trust



CEO Review

This second year of our current strategy has been a busy one – we have reviewed a lot of our processes and procedures internally, expanded and embedded our holistic services and diversified our funding. We have made significant progress in terms of delivering the strategy, whilst at the same time helping more people than ever before.

Our focus as an organisation has been on demonstrating and evidencing how we are a trauma-informed charity, recognising the unique experiences of survivors of sexual violence and the impact it has on their lives. This has been our driving force in all aspects of our work, from developing and delivering our specialist services to training our staff and volunteers in trauma-informed care. We took the decision towards the end of the year to embark on the One Small Thing Accreditation process and have involved the whole team and our clients in really pulling apart how we work, how we demonstrate being trauma informed.

This has also been reflected in our organisational culture, with our staff and volunteers receiving extensive training in this area. This has allowed us to create a safe and supportive environment for survivors, their families, and our team, and has helped us to provide a more empathetic and compassionate service.

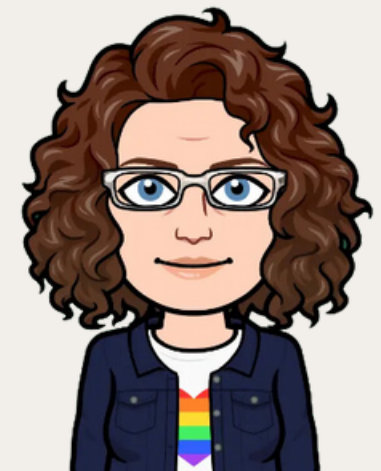
Partnership and collaborative working is important to us here at Birchall and our first Trauma Informed Cumbria conference brought together over 200 delegates from different organisations to learn more about trauma informed principles and practice. I am proud that we are being regarded as a leading centre of excellence in this field and the Birchall team delivering services are core to this.

As we head into the final year of our current strategy, I am excited about what is to come – we are about to expand our services across Lancashire and focus on working with communities to continue to shape our services.

None of this would not be possible without the amazing team at Birchall, everyone is committed to the work that we do, they quite literally save lives and give people the opportunity to write their next chapter.

Thank you for all your support, enthusiasm, knowledge and kindness. I think the next year will be our best yet!

Vanessa Dixon



The Birchall Trust has ended the financial year April 2022–March 2023 with a healthy financial balance of £444,629 (2022: £445,003). The funds are made up of an unrestricted balance of £337,108 and a restricted balance of £107,521.

The unrestricted funds of £337,108 provide the charity with the security of a 'Reserves Policy'. The reserves policy is calculated to accommodate a 6 month 'wind-down' period, should the charity fail to secure funding support in the future (see annual accounts for details).

The balance of the unrestricted funds along with the restricted funds will be used to continually develop and implement our strategy and deliver the charity's objectives.

In the same way as previous years, I have analysed the end of year accounts using the three key ratio's. Fundraising and administration costs to total expenditure (FACE no change), Administration costs to total expenditure (ACE up 3%) and fundraising costs to total expenditure (FCE down 3%).

This financial year our spending was increased as we continued to implement our strategic plan, strengthening the organisational structure with additional management and support staff.

We have also added full-time counsellors and wellbeing workers to provide flexibility in our service delivery. After the rise in fundraising costs last year, which was needed to support our strategic plan, there has been reduction this year.

Treasurers Report

However, I expect it to rise again in the next financial year as we drive to deliver long term funding stability for our service.

(Fig 1 & 3 - see next page)

How have we spent our funds?

The good news is that despite the need to increase our support costs we have also been able to significantly increase the spend on charitable activities.

(Fig 2 and 3)

This year has been another exciting challenge for the team. The restructuring and expansion into new areas has provided us with a lot of problem-solving opportunities. But as usual everyone has pulled together and delivered appropriate and robust solutions. Enabling our charity to deliver much needed support to our clients with professionalism and enthusiasm. Thank you!

We are extremely grateful to all the organisations and individuals who have provided funding to our charity. It is through your generosity that we are able to carry on delivering this vital service in Cumbria and Lancashire.

Simon Hanson



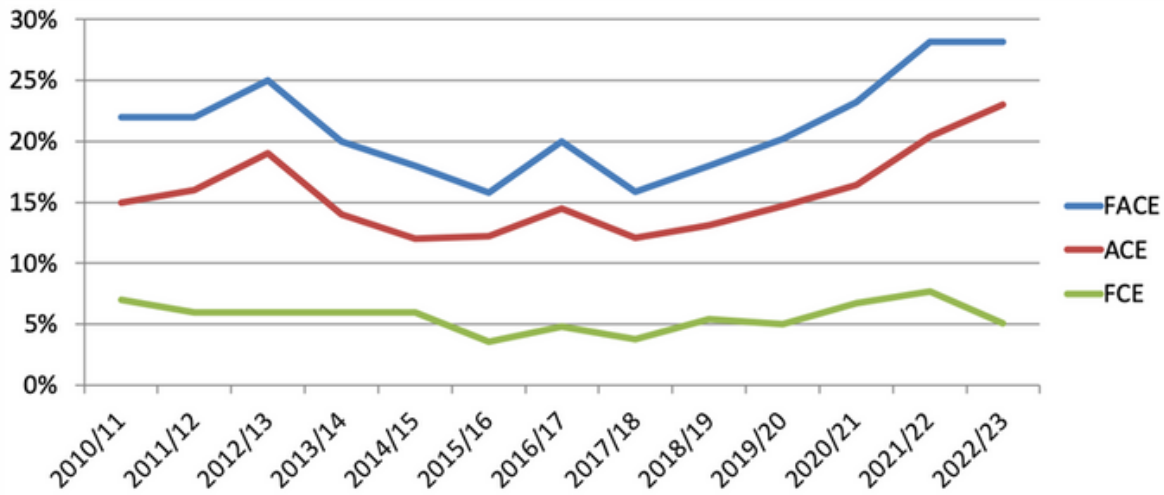


Fig 1 - Key Ratios

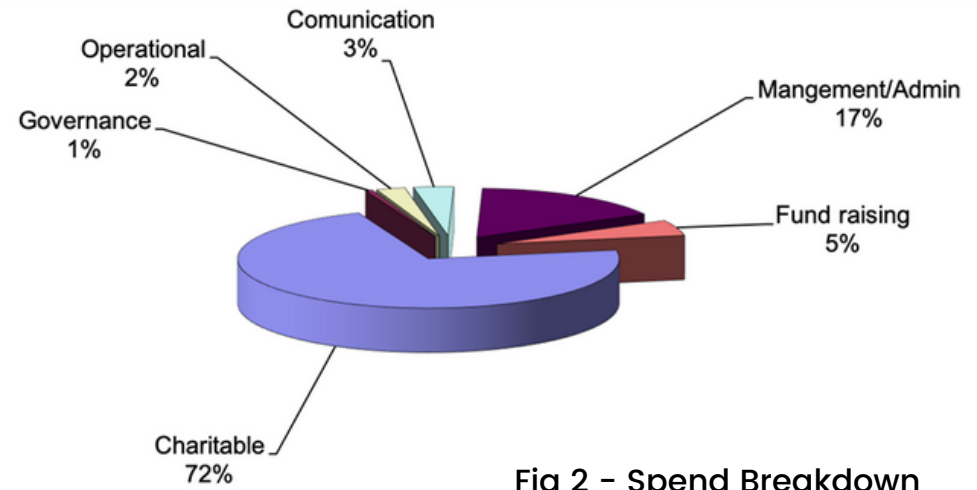


Fig 2 - Spend Breakdown

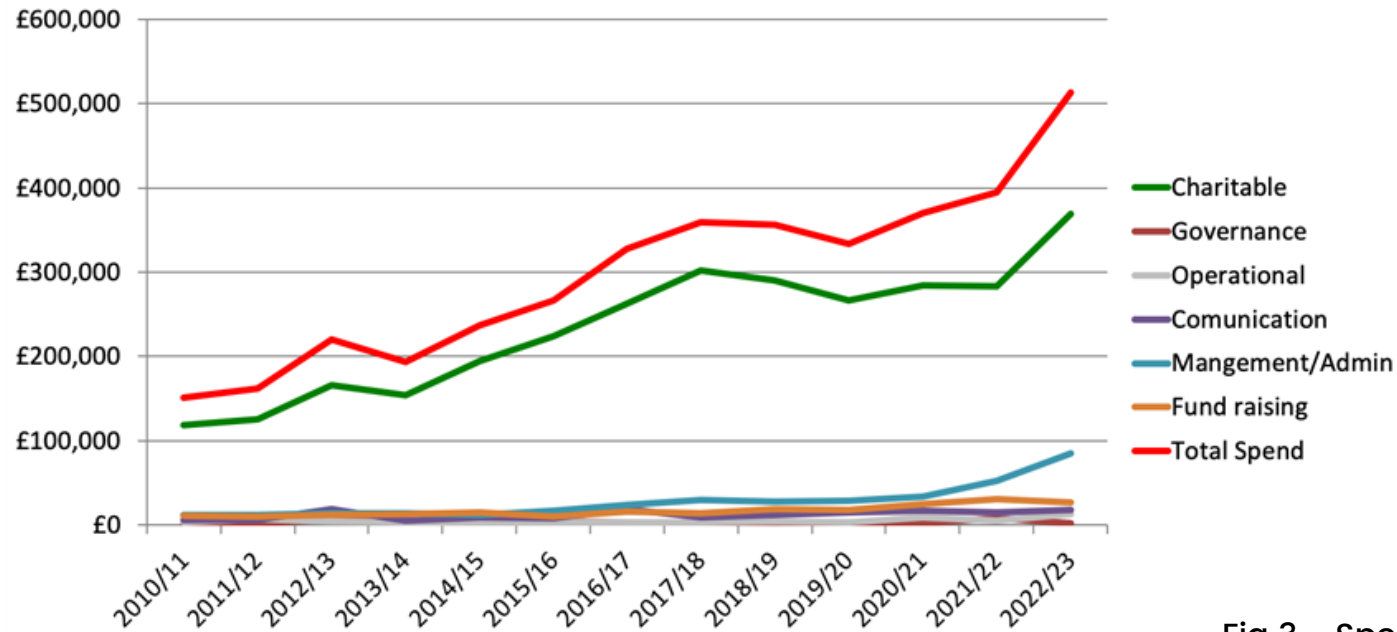


Fig 3 - Spend History

Statement of Financial Activities

For the Year Ended 31 March 2023

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2023 Total Funds £	2022 Total Funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM Charitable activities				
Counselling advice & support	42,015	466,415	508,430	522,816
Other trading activities	118	-	118	(3)
Investment income	4,375	-	4,375	235
Total	46,508	466,415	512,923	523,048
EXPENDITURE ON Charitable activities				
Counselling advice & support	(55,915)	569,212	513,297	394,351
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)	102,423	(102,797)	(374)	128,697
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	234,685	210,318	445,003	316,306
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	337,108	107,521	444,629	445,003

Balance Sheet

31 March 2023

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2023 Total Funds £	2022 Total Funds £
CURRENT ASSETS				
Cash at bank	338,769	107,521	446,290	445,003
CREDITORS Amounts falling due within one year	(1,661)	-	(1,661)	-
NET CURRENT ASSETS	337,108	107,521	444,629	445,003
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	337,108	107,521	444,629	445,003
NET ASSETS	337,108	107,521	444,629	445,003
FUNDS				
Unrestricted funds			337,108	234,685
Restricted funds			107,521	210,318
TOTAL FUNDS			444,629	445,003



Supporting people affected by rape and sexual abuse

Other than where specifically noted, all written content has been anonymised to ensure the safety of our service users. The images and names in this document do not relate to anyone mentioned.



Get In Touch!

enquiries@birchalltrust.org.uk

www.birchalltrust.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 1109637 · Company Number: 5424196