



Annual Report 2021-22

 **Birchall**

Supporting people affected by rape and sexual abuse

Registered Charity No: 1109637 · Company Number: 5424196



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“I can now understand why I feel and behave the way I do. I have learned grounding techniques which are invaluable. The relationship between my counsellor and I has been priceless. Thank you for giving me my life back.”

Female, 54, Kendal

Chair's Review

The past year has been one of change and challenge as we have adjusted to a post pandemic world while at the same time looking to the future for the Birchall Trust. We have entered our 4th decade of work with those who have experienced sexual violence and it was time to review the way we work in the light of knowledge and experience. Over the thirty years of its existence those associated with Birchall have accumulated a wealth of experience and knowledge, which has been used for the benefit of its clients, but there comes a point to take stock in a changing world, where we must prove ourselves, not only to our clients, but those who fund us.

While we continue to believe small is beautiful, we have recognised there is value in working with organisations who share a common aim. We have strengthened our ties with Safety Net in north Cumbria allowing us to secure funding we would not otherwise obtain and are working with Survivors Manchester to provide counsellors in Haverigg and Lancaster Farms Prisons.

Pre pandemic there was a recognition of the need to have a coherent model of practice and over the past year we have moved to developing a Trauma based model of care. To facilitate this, we now have a mix of employed and free-lance counsellors allowing a consistent but flexible service meeting individual needs. Recognition of the secondary effects of sexual trauma and the potential to hinder the counselling process has led to the development of a Well Being service and the recruitment of specialist practitioners.

To facilitate our core work with clients we have invested in new IT services which will reduce time required for manual clerical work and have moved to a new base in Morecambe.

Despite these changes face to face work with clients has continued providing counselling services to 272 adults and 64 children and young persons. This is a small reduction on the previous year, but current evidence points to an improvement in both the quantity and quality of interventions offered during the current year.

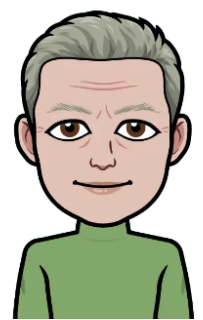
I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have worked for Birchall in the past year and wish those who have moved on all the best. Welcome to those who have joined us and contribute to our valuable work in whatever role - everyone is essential to fulfilling our aims.

Thanks to our funders and supporters who recognise the value of our work and have provided the financial backing to ensure our services are available to all in need of them.

During this year the board was joined by Teresa Jennings who has a wealth of experience in the third sector. She and her colleagues have provided sage advice and support during challenging times for which I am extremely grateful.



Dr. Elizabeth Taylor





This is us

Sexual abuse and rape inflict deep trauma - the effects of which can last a lifetime if left untreated. Birchall understand complex trauma, we have specialist training on how the body and brain responds when someone feels like they're under significant threat. We understand the impact that sexual violence has on everyone who experiences it, be that as a one-off incident or years of grooming and abuse.

We offer advice and information, practical support to deal with things such as; flashbacks, sleep patterns, improving mental wellbeing. In the longer-term we offer counselling and play therapy where we start to really help people recover from their trauma and to put their emotional and psychological safety as a key priority.

Our Vision

At The Birchall Trust, we believe that we should live in a society that is free of rape, sexual abuse, and sexualised violence.

Our Mission

The Birchall Trust empowers people affected by rape, sexual abuse, or sexualised violence to recover from their trauma so they can lead safe and fulfilling lives.

We cover issues including childhood abuse, child sexual exploitation, trafficking, sex workers and online abuse
We aim to meet the needs of anyone irrespective of gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity, culture, or religion

Trauma informed approach

Sexual abuse and rape inflict deep trauma - the effects of which can last a lifetime if left untreated. Here at Birchall, we understand complex trauma, we recognise the impact of experiences that threaten a person's sense of safety/wellbeing and we put emotional and psychological safety as a key priority. This approach chooses to not only focus on the behaviour someone is trying to change, but also on the underlying reasons for the behaviour and the relief it provides. In this way all our counselling, therapy and wellbeing sessions work at the deepest level to make long-lasting change, without causing further harm.

Our approach is based on:

Treating people as individuals - all our work is tailored to the client as an individual – we don't offer a 'one size fits all' service.

Being focused on our clients - we offer choice and work in a way that encourages the client to make decisions and be in control. We respect their choices and decisions.

Easy access - deciding to contact an organisation like ours can be a stressful and hard first step. We work to ensure that approaching us is an efficient and positive experience.

Quality practice - we have robust systems in place for managing, supervising and supporting our work. Our counsellors/therapists are all qualified and work within the nationally recognised standards for the British Association for Counsellors and Psychotherapists.

Collaboration - we recognise the value of working with agencies who may have an involvement in sexual abuse incidents. We are committed to working in partnership with agencies that share our approach/values

Our Wellbeing Programme

A key development of our services this year has been the introduction of trauma informed wellbeing service.

Our Wellbeing Programme provides support to individuals who need immediate emotional and practical support focusing on three key areas: stabilisation, information, and preparation. Active signposting also helps them with housing, finances, and medical concerns, as well as seeking specialist support for issues such as addiction.

This approach enables us to work with people who have experienced trauma at an earlier stage of their recovery. Supporting clients using psychoeducational tools and grounding and stabilisation techniques allows people to start to improve their mental health and confidence. This in turn enables them to then engage with other services safely, including counselling, which helps them to fulfil their potential. As part of the programme, we have also been developing self-help guides and online support to ensure that anyone can access information and tips to support their wellbeing.

Our Teams

It's important that we also recognise the impact of vicarious trauma, this can happen to anyone who is engaging empathetically with survivors of traumatic incidents, so we support our teams through offering clinical supervision, reflective practice, peer support and wellness days and events. We actively encourage all members of our team to practice self-care, take time out and have a good work-life balance.

“If we are drowning in our own dysregulation, our own stress, and burnout and compassion fatigue have set in, we lose our capacity to help others.” [Jen Alexander](#)

By supporting Birchall, you can help ensure no one has to deal with rape or sexual abuse alone.



Transforming Lives

Rachel's Journey

Rachel, presented with nightmares, flashbacks, struggles with relationships, poor personal hygiene, bullying and a difficulty in expressing her feelings. She was referred to The Birchall Trust by her head of year who was concerned that Rachel hadn't had the opportunity to explore sustained early childhood sexual abuse at the hands of an uncle and noticed that she was struggling at school with personal hygiene, bullying, friendships and sleep related issues.

It was clear from the outset that Rachel felt extremely uncomfortable with expressing herself emotionally. She struggled to identify feelings, make decisions, express her personal needs and engage with intimacy. Her therapist spent a great deal of time building trust within the counselling relationship and began by working creatively, helping Rachel to identify and create a safe space for herself.

Although she was 15 years old, she presented at times as a much younger child and told her therapist that she had imaginary friends who they invited into her safe space. They also explored her interests and discovered that she loved music but had unrealistic expectations of herself. Sadly, this often led to her being bullied at school.

Rachel lived with her Mum and three siblings and had a number of older siblings, who no longer lived at home. She had little contact with her dad. She didn't have a close relationship with her mum and often arrived at therapy sessions feeling upset after arguments at home and mum's lack of interest in her achievements at school.

Over time Rachel began to open up a little more, sharing some of the difficulties she was experiencing at home and school where she was often the victim of bullying. She worked creatively with her therapist and played cards and chess, helping Rachel to make decisions for herself. Rachel was able to work on managing triggers and particularly her issues regarding silence which would often bring on feelings of panic.

Rachel was able to manage these episodes and began to sleep better and engage in meaningful relationships with her peers. By the time she ended her therapy sessions Rachel's personal hygiene had improved, she had a boyfriend and felt able to create appropriate boundaries within the relationship.

Feedback from Rachel:

I enjoyed coming so I could talk to my therapist, it's been helpful, and we have built a nice relationship. It's been nice having time for myself. I really liked playing cards and chess it was relaxing.

Peter's Journey

Peter was referred to the Birchall Trust for 12 sessions of Pre-trial therapy, therefore he was unable to explore the details of his trauma but could explore its impact on his sense of self and emotional well-being. He had been signed off work because he was experiencing PTSD type symptoms which included flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, nightmares, difficulty sleeping, anxiety and low mood.

His initial therapy sessions focused on stabilisation, identifying triggers and ways to help ground and anchor himself in the 'here and now.' Peter described himself as feeling 'empty,' explaining that for the past few years he had experienced suicidal thoughts but had no intention of ending his life because his children were a protective factor. As he explored this, he reflected that the risk-taking behaviour he used to engage in may have been a combination of impulse driven behaviour related to ADHD but also a cover for a suicidal plan at the 'back of his mind.'

Having recently separated from his wife, Peter explored feelings of regret, loneliness and uncertainty about his future. He explained that he had been unfaithful on several occasions throughout their marriage even though he loved her. As he reflected on this, he began to demonstrate an awareness that this had been a self-sabotaging pattern of behaviour. He explored how it appeared he attempted to mask feelings of low self-worth, emotional distress and feelings of vulnerability by overly compensating in the way he presented himself to the outside world. He began to consider whether he used this behaviour as a measure of his self-worth, proof of his masculinity and a means to take back some of the control which was taken from him at the time of the trauma. This assisted him to tentatively explore the possibility of rebuilding his life and discover what he wanted and who he really was.

As his counselling sessions came to an end Peter began a phased return to work. He was managing his PTSD symptoms, his depression had reduced from moderately severe to moderate, his anxiety from severe to moderate and there was a meaningful reduction in his PTSD symptoms. However, it was clear that Peter very much needed to talk about the trauma in order to begin to process his experience. As he was an 'out of area' client it was suggested to him that he referred himself to a specialised counselling service in his area once he was able to so he could access trauma focused therapy to enable him to explore his experience without the restrictions and limitations of Pre-trial therapy.



Imani's Journey

Imani aged 21 came to Birchall because she was experiencing flashbacks, nightmares, depression low self-worth, lack of self-confidence and tendency to isolate.

A few years ago, she had been in an emotionally and sexually abusive relationship which had shattered her self-confidence, self-worth, and ability to trust.

Initially, in conjunction with working on stabilisation, grounding techniques and identifying triggers, it was important to build up an accepting and empathetic space where she felt secure enough to explore her feelings. Imani felt confused as to how her 'boyfriend' could treat her in such a way, and she blamed her own inexperience.

Imani felt stuck, she was only just starting to process the trauma she had been through, she was unable to move forward which was impacting on her sense of self and ability to trust enough to enter future relationships.

The way her family had responded when she disclosed the trauma had added to her emotional distress. Her experience was that her mother and sisters implied it was her fault, whilst her father did not seem to want to discuss it. She explored cultural and gendered conditions of worth, reflecting that her parents' upbringing had been in a country patriarchal in nature, with gender inequality. Consequently, the status of females was considered lower than males, who could dominate them. She explored the expectations she perceived her family placed on her and described craving their approval as she never felt 'good enough', which reinforced feelings of low self-worth, shame, and self-blame. This also created a lack of a cohesive sense of self.

As she explored the dynamics of her family, she began to rely less on their judgement, instead learning to trust her own and seek to validate herself rather than look to them for validation. As such she began to practise self-compassion and self-care and develop a more authentic sense of self, which in turn had the effect of reducing her anxiety and low mood. When speaking of the sexual assaults she worked with her counsellor to explore issues related to sexual intimacy, including the issue of consent, establishing personal boundaries and the right to say 'no'.

As Imani's counselling came to an end, she described having gained insight into her difficulties and why she had felt the way she did. She was using the grounding strategies her counsellor had taught her and her PTSD symptoms were decreasing.

Additionally, she was more willing to consider her own needs, be less self-critical and offer herself compassion. As such feelings of shame lifted and she was able to assign the blame to the perpetrator rather than herself.

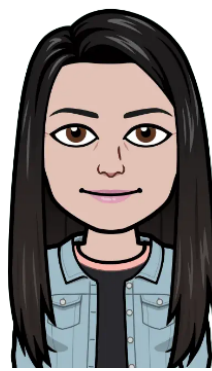
Our Services

I joined Birchall as Head of Services in February 2022 having worked as a counsellor for several years. One of the key focus areas has been aligning our service delivery model and theory of change to create a Birchall client journey. Working with the team and involving people with lived experience and researching best practice we have now developed our 3-stage model of Stabilisation & Understanding, Processing & Acceptance and finally Integration & Engagement.

The first stage supports people to develop ways to manage their thoughts and feelings, manage the symptoms around anxiety and depression to prepare for more in-depth work in stage 2. Our second stage is trauma informed counselling where people are able to develop a greater understanding of themselves and awareness of their behaviours. They learn to express their own needs and wishes and improve their self-care and compassion. Our counselling balances carefully a solution focused approach alongside a person-centred approach and we work with each individual, measuring progress as they move through the stages.

The final stage focuses on strengthening relationships with others, developing confidence and resilience. We can offer opportunities for people to get involved in peer support groups or become a Birchall Ambassador. This new approach has been welcomed by our teams who feel supported to utilize their skills and practices within a clear framework. It has also enabled us to manage our waiting lists more proactively and start to see more clients, whilst ensuring a quality service.

I would just like to thank all Team Birchall for making me feel welcome and I'm looking forward to delivering our strategy over the coming years.



Nicola Lord
Head of Services

Working with Male Survivors

At Birchall we are very proud to be a member of the Male Survivors Partnership and have been independently accredited by Lime Culture to deliver services for men ensuring that we recognise the gender-based needs of men accessing our services

We understand that men and boys who have been sexually assaulted/abused have many of the same feelings and reactions as other survivors of sexual assault, but they also face some additional challenges because of social attitudes and stereotypes about men and masculinity. We endeavour to empower men to selfheal, set goals, move forwards, and develop a sense of safety. Our relationship with men who use our services is centred around congruence, empathy, and a positive regard.

Over the last year we ran a pilot Male Peer support group, meeting regularly in a safe space for men to come together and start to develop friendships and a support network.

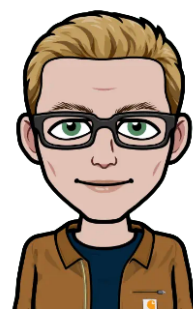
We recognise for some men talking to a counsellor or wellbeing practitioner can be intimidating as there may be a perception of a power imbalance – in a peer support group, all members are equal, enabling men to feel less anxious, more comfortable and more able to open up and can develop healthy relationships with other men, become role models for each other, learn from each other.

The pilot ran for several months and had initially been open to anyone to attend at any point in their recovery. We learnt a lot from this pilot and as it came to an end, we were able to incorporate ideas and feedback into our wider client journey development work so that now those who wish to attend do so as part of our three-stage journey.

Prison Work

The past year has seen us really settle into providing our work within the prison service. In collaboration with Survivors Manchester, we have established our Birchall counsellors both within HMP Lancaster Farms prison in Lancashire, and HMP Haverigg prison in Cumbria, providing a trauma-informed therapy service to prisoners of all ages and with a multitude of differing needs, but with one very common denominator: they have all suffered trauma in their past, and they are all ready to work through this.

Matt Metcalf Counsellor



Children and Young People

This year we have continued to provide the valuable one to one counselling and therapy sessions to children and young people aged from 4yrs to 17yrs. Returning to our buildings following the pandemic, clients and their parents/carers valued the smooth transitions offered to them, which the dedicated staff and freelance counselling team were determined to deliver. CYP therapy sessions have been offered face to face, as well as maintaining the option of a blended approach including online Zoom and telephone sessions for teenage clients, depending on their needs. This allows for client autonomy and has enabled flexibility around exam pressures and school/college lessons. Younger, primary school aged clients have engaged well and benefited once again, in play therapy, sand tray therapy and creative arts therapeutic approaches. For younger children the uniqueness of one to one, face to face therapy in the play therapy room with their therapist, is what has made being back in the buildings so rewarding and special.

To work successfully with our CYP clients it is important for Birchall Trust to be able to offer a holistic and systemic approach within their therapeutic journey, by at times working with the family. We have therefore, been able to successfully move forward with the provision of family support by offering parent/carer consultation sessions and collaborative therapeutic sessions with children and their parents. For parents/carers it has been important that they are offered a space to understand and learn about the impact of the abuse their child has experienced and how this affects their child's emotional, social and physical wellbeing.

We have continued to offer the benefits of our trauma informed service to support other professionals, including schools and social workers, who are working with the young clients in our service, offering advice, coping strategies, supervision/education/reflective practice on understanding the impact of trauma on a child or young person. Feedback from this element of our service offer, is always received with much appreciation from those requesting it.

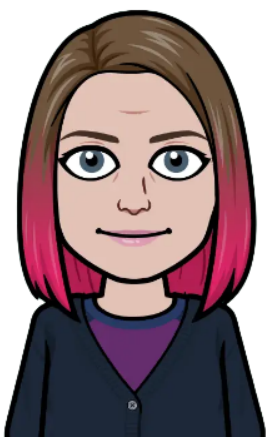
The end of 2021 saw us focusing on providing a much-needed service of support for the parents and carers of the children and young people who use our services. A parent/carer workshop programme was developed in-house to meet this need and aimed to bring together a group of parents and carers to supply them with the skills to understand what their children might be going through and give them the tools to support them through their most difficult moments at home.

This programme consisted of six workshops which began in March 2022 and was well attended with all the parents remaining with us throughout, and the feedback being very positive, with each parent saying they found the programme useful and would be taking away knowledge and understanding to use with their children to support them through their distressing experiences, both past and in the future.

“

“If my son hadn't had counselling things would have been so much worse. He was really struggling with anger, self-harm, having suicidal thoughts and struggling at school. It's been a safety net for him. The whole family feel that he has matured, his relationships have improved, and he says he is much happier.”

”



Monica Jaklin-
Taylor

Counsellor

Birchall in Numbers

Our Impact

During the first year of our new strategy, we delivered our services to **622** adults and **165** CYP in the FY 2021-22.



CYP

111 Female (67%) 35 Male (21%) 2 Transgender (1.5%) 2 Gender fluid (1.5%) 2 non-binary (1.5%) 13 Not specified (7.5%)



Adults

497 Female (80%), 94 Male (15%)
6 Transgender (1%) 6 non-binary (1%)
19 Not declared (3%)

As a service, we are proud to hold **male accreditation**; we encourage males to come forward and engage as research shows **males are less likely to report sexual violence**.

“

“The counsellor made me feel I had worth. Both counsellors I had were very professional. I was scared of being judged but both counsellors were amazing and a real credit to Birchall.”

Male, 41, Barrow

”



6383

Counselling sessions were completed

90%

Of CYP reported a reduction in PTSD symptoms

85%

Of adults reported a reduction in depression

74%

Of CYP reported a reduction in mental health issues

Key findings at the end of counselling:

General Health & Wellbeing

- **54%** reported that they felt their health and wellbeing had improved
- **64%** reported an improvement in feeling OK about themselves
- **62%** reported an improvement in feeling irritable and having angry outbursts

Resilience

- **63%** an improvement in their ability to manage their problems
- **48%** an improvement in their relationship with others

Confidence & Self Worth

- **50%** reported an improvement in their confidence
- **57%** an improvement in feeling positive about the future
- **59%** an improvement in their ability to go out/about



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.

We are extremely lucky to have been awarded new grants in the year from Henry Smith Charitable Trust, Frieda Scott, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Francis C Scott, Garfield Weston and The Pilgrim Trust.

We have also continued funding through Children in Need, Cumbria and Lancashire PCC and Cumbria County Council.

Our two Big Give Campaigns at Christmas and the Women's & Girls Fund raised over £8,000 from individuals and organisations and was our first attempt at an online campaign.

We would like to say a huge thankyou to each and every supporter who makes our work possible – we genuinely couldn't do it without you.



CEO Review

This is my second year as CEO and my first full year in post. It has been a time of change and some uncertainty as we came out of the pandemic and started to re-deliver our services.

The first year of a new strategy has brought new opportunities but also challenges as we tried to embark on some of our key deliverables. We have hit many bumps along the way, we have said goodbye to some members of the team and welcomed new people in.

We have tried new ways of working and we have learned along the way, we have challenged each other, and we have involved the people who use our services to put their voices central to the work we do.

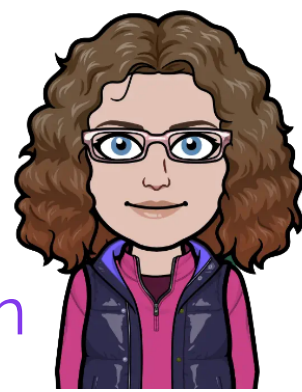
During the year, we have fully embraced technology to maximize the reach and effectiveness of our services, we have started to embed equality, diversity, and inclusion into the heart of Birchall and are continuing whole heartedly on our journey towards becoming a truly trauma informed and learning organisation.

We have also harnessed the power of partnership working, joining forces across the charity sector and with local government to deliver the best possible outcomes for the people using our services. We have used our knowledge and experience to be involved in strategic partnerships.

I am proud to have launched our development programme where we are supporting local students to gain experience of the work we do. Some have followed our learning pathway and are now fully part of the team as newly qualified counsellors. The generosity of our more experienced counsellors when working with students to share their knowledge and expertise creates a Birchall legacy we can all be proud of. No doubt we will continue to face challenges in the coming year as we continue to embed our strategy, strengthen our education programme, further develop our wellbeing programme, and become a leading trauma informed organisation.

Finally, I am very grateful for the support of the team, volunteers, Birchall Ambassadors and of the Board of Trustees and I am excited to enter the next phase of work in the spirit of collaboration and partnership working with hope and a fundamental belief in the work we do here at Birchall

Vanessa Dixon



HOWEVER I DRESS,
WHEREVER I GO,
YES MEANS YES AND

NO

MEANS

NO



Statement of Financial Activities

The Birchall Trust has ended the financial year April 2021-March 2022 with a healthy financial balance of £445,003 (2021: £316,306). The funds are made up of an unrestricted balance of £234,685 and a restricted balance of £210,318.

The restricted funds of £210,318 will be used towards delivering our services in the next financial year 2021/2022.

The unrestricted funds of £234,685 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. It also provides a small amount of funding to be spent at the discretion of the Trustees and CEO in furtherance of the charity's objectives (see annual accounts for details).

How we spent our funds

The good news is that although we have been making all these essential changes we have still been able to maintain our spend on charitable activities at the same level as last year (Fig 2 and 3 opposite).

It has been a year of great challenges and changes. However I believe that everyone in our organisation has been able to rise to the occasion and continue to deliver our service to the high standards that we have come to expect

So I would like to thank all of the Birchall Trust team

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 up 5%), Administration costs to total expenditure (ACE up 4%) and fundraising costs to total expenditure (FCE up 1%).

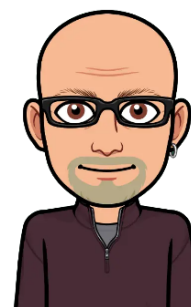
This year we have continued to implement our strategic plan, to strengthen our organisational structure with more management and support staff. As can be seen in the key ratios (Fig 1 opposite) these changes have driven increases in costs.

for all their hard work and support for our clients through these extremely challenging times.

We are extremely grateful for the support we have received from donations and grant making organisations, whose support has enabled our charity to carry on delivering this vital service in south Cumbria and north Lancashire.

Simon Hanson

Treasurer



Key Ratio History

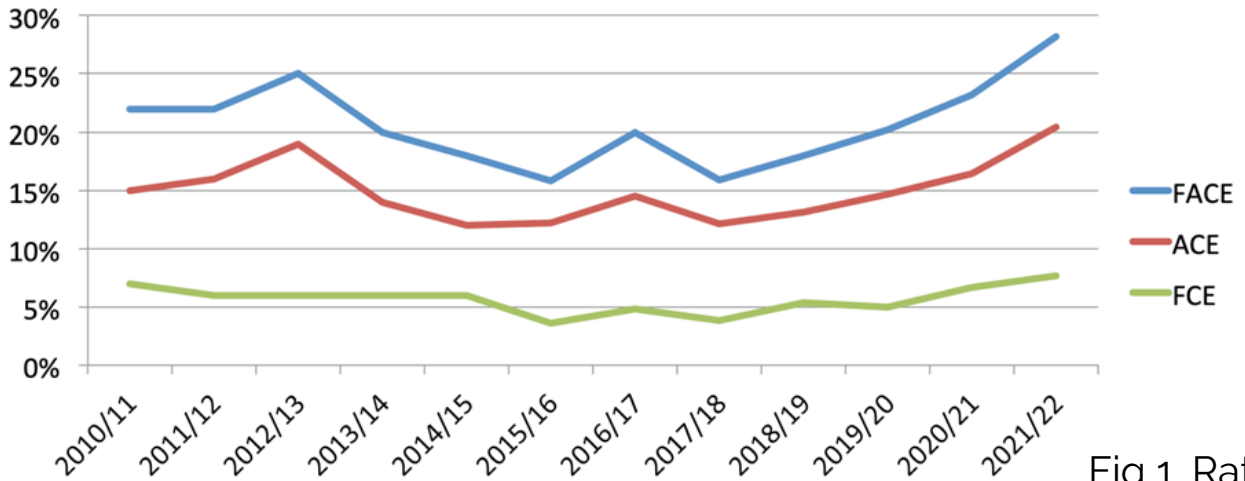


Fig 1. Ratios

How we have spent our funds

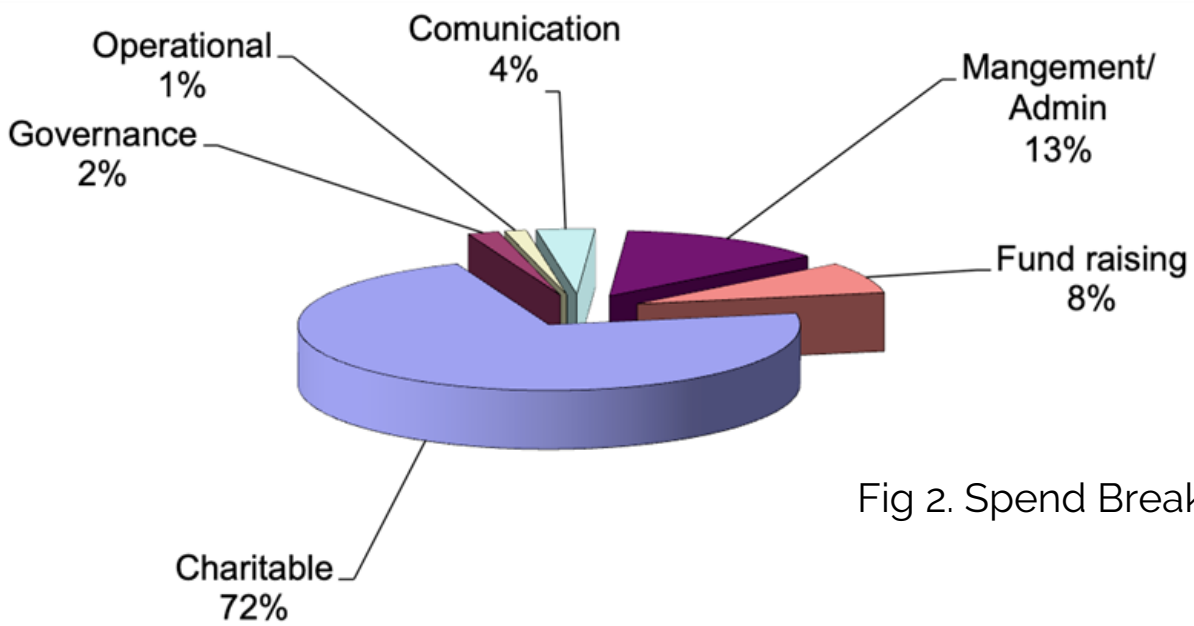


Fig 2. Spend Breakdown

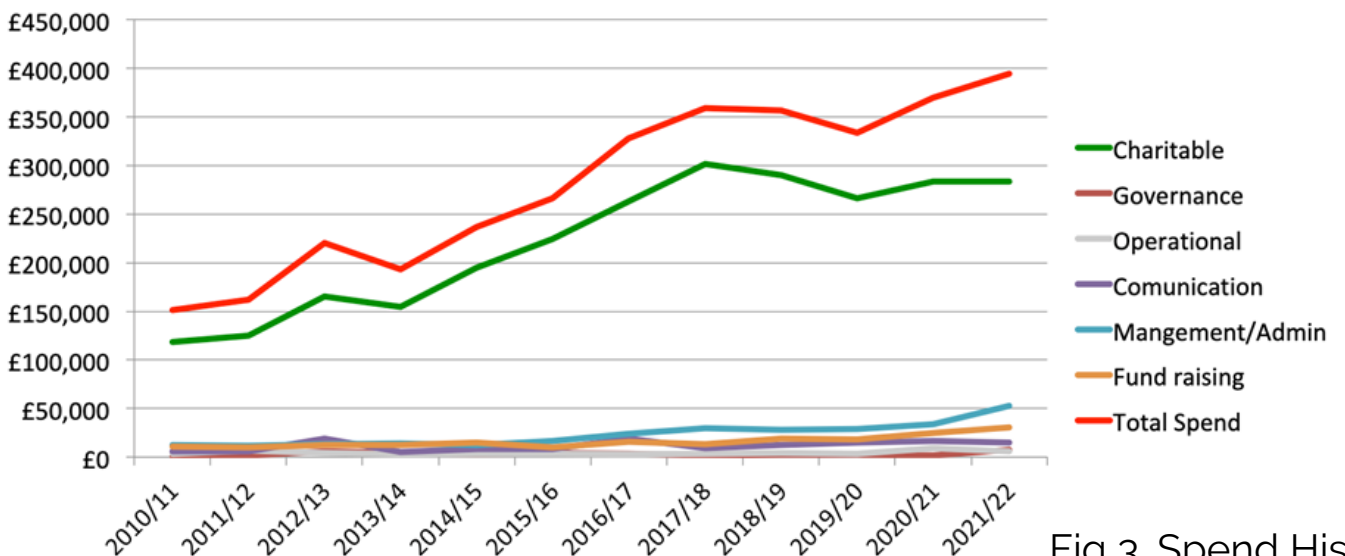


Fig 3. Spend History

Treasurers Report

For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2022 Total Funds £	2021 Total Funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM Charitable activities				
Counselling advice & support	35,057	487,759	522,816	410,608
Other trading activities	(2)	(1)	(3)	3
Investment income	235	-	235	122
Total	35,290	487,758	523,048	410,733
EXPENDITURE ON Charitable activities				
Counselling advice & support	(16,070)	410,421	394,351	369,609
NET INCOME	51,360	77,337	128,697	41,124
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	183,325	132,981	316,306	275,182
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	234,685	210,318	445,003	316,306

Balance Sheet

31 March 2022

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	2022 Total Funds £	2021 Total Funds £
CURRENT ASSETS				
Cash at bank and in hand	234,685	210,318	445,003	316,306
NET CURRENT ASSETS	234,685	210,318	445,003	316,306
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	234,685	210,318	445,003	316,306
NET ASSETS	234,685	210,318	445,003	316,306
FUNDS				
Unrestricted funds			234,685	183,325
Restricted funds			210,318	132,981
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	234,685	210,318	445,003	316,306



Birchall

Supporting people affected by rape and sexual abuse



[@TheBirchallTrust](https://www.facebook.com/TheBirchallTrust)



[@BirchallTrust](https://twitter.com/BirchallTrust)



[@thebirchalltrust](https://www.instagram.com/thebirchalltrust)



[The Birchall Trust](https://www.linkedin.com/company/TheBirchallTrust)



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