



The Birchall Trust

*Counselling Survivors of Rape and Sexual Abuse
in South Cumbria and North Lancashire*

The Birchall Trust Strategic plan

***The Birchall Trust
60 Hartington Street
Barrow in Furness
Cumbria
LA14 5SR***

Registered Charity No: 1109637

Company No: 5424196

Adopted by The Board of Trustees: May 2019

Next review April 2020

Introduction

This document sets out a review of how our charity has developed to date, highlights the key internal and external issues facing it, outlines our future strategic direction, and describes how our organisation will need to develop and change to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

We would like to highlight that when we refer to 'our clients' we are strongly aware that counselling individuals of different genders, ages, sexualities, religions, and cultures require additional specialist training, knowledge and ways of working therapeutically. Through individual and group feedback from our clients, other specialist therapeutic organisations, and research we are committed to providing the most effective Trauma Informed counselling for all our clients regardless of their gender, age, sexuality, religion, socio-economic status, culture or any other factors and vulnerabilities which may be present.

In order to create a safe space for survivors of rape, sexual assault and sexual abuse we are unable to offer counselling to anyone who are under investigation or have been convicted of any sexual offence.

About the Birchall Trust



The charity originally called South Cumbria Rape and Abuse Service (SCRAS), was established by Christine Birchall in 1991 as a community response to the lack of support for rape and sexual abuse victims in the local area. It originally operated as an entirely volunteer based organisation supported by community fundraising. The organisation has successfully developed into an established service provider, whilst still retaining its original ethos and local identity.

We are a registered charity (number: 1109637), and a company limited by guarantee (number: 5424196)

Our registered objects are:

To relieve the mental and physical distress of persons who are victims of rape, sexual abuse and incest by the promotion of a service which offers support, information and counselling. To work towards the advancement of education about sexual crimes and the effect on the victims of such crimes. To offer the service to persons and their families friends and partners, who may also need support, counselling or education in the council districts of South Lakeland, Barrow-in-Furness and North Lancashire.

Outcomes

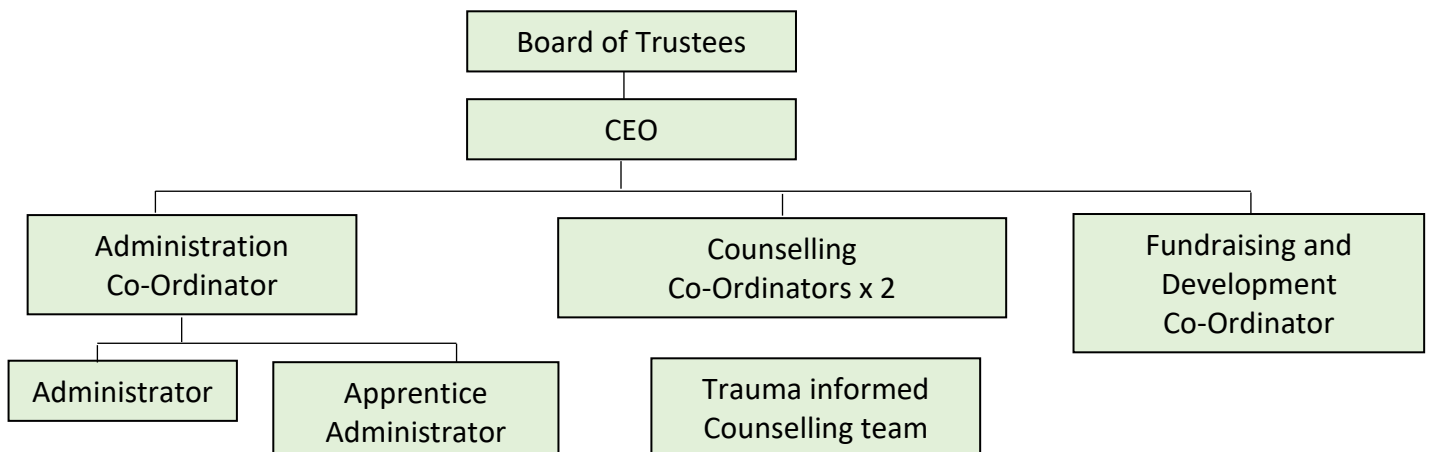
-  Enabling male, female and LGBT individuals, aged 4 and up affected by rape and/or sexual abuse, to recover and start leading the lives they want and deserve.
-  Building confidence, resilience and life skills in people affected by rape and/or sexual abuse.

- 🍃 Creating public awareness of rape and sexual abuse.
- 🍃 Improving how other agencies and services support people affected by rape and/or sexual abuse.

Our Head Office is based in Barrow with 5 counselling rooms. We also have a North Lancashire hub in Morecambe, which has an office and 6 counselling rooms, as well as counselling rooms in Kendal and Lancaster

We currently have 326 clients in our service.

Our organisational structure is:



We are currently funded by

- Lottery.
- Ministry of Justice.
- Lloyds Foundation.
- Charles Hayward.
- Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner.
- Children In Need.
- Walney Extension.
- Comic Relief.
- Frieda Scott.
- Sir John Fisher.
- Dorcas Grey
- Community Foundation for Lancashire
- Hedley Foundation
- Thomas Cook
- Garfield Weston
- Hadfield Trust
- Cumbria Victims Fund
- Clothworkers

- Bank Lyons
- Groundwork
- Francis S Scott.

What we do

We offer trauma led counselling to male, female and LGBT individuals aged 4 and up affected by rape and/or sexual abuse in South Cumbria and North Lancashire.

The service is available for male, female, and LGBT adults and children/young people, as well as their, families and friends. They are supported through one-to-one trauma informed counselling and, psychoeducational guidance on how best to support their loved ones, where appropriate.

The Birchall Trust as an organisation is a member of the British Association for Counsellors and Psychotherapists. Our Counsellors and Child Therapists are all qualified and work within the nationally recognised standards of the British Association for Counsellors and Psychotherapists along with their own registered body ie BAPT. The organisation helps to raise awareness and delivers psychoeducation and preventative work about the effects of sexual abuse within the local communities so helping to reduce the occurrence and impact of this crime within the community.

The Birchall Trust is also a member of The Survivors Trust, Male Survivors Partnership, Cumbria CVS, Lancashire CVS and the ICO.

Our main services are:

- Weekly one-to-one trauma led counselling sessions and creative therapy sessions lasting up to 60 minutes; which provide conditions to work through the trauma of rape and sexual abuse. Within counselling the person is accepted without judgements, enabling them to overcome the effects of the rape, sexual abuse or exploitation they have experienced.
- Counselling sessions and information provision for families/partners of survivors, where appropriate. This work aids the process of individuals supporting their loved one, who is a survivor of rape and sexual abuse/exploitation.
- Pre-Trial Therapy counselling for those individuals going through a criminal justice process.
- An education and awareness raising programme in the community.

Our approach

We have built up an approach that is based on listening to our clients over the years and also by learning from other agencies throughout the UK as to what is best practice. Our approach is based on:

- Treating people as individuals. Each person has a different set of experiences, needs and expectations. All our work is tailored to the client as an individual – we don't offer a 'one size fits all' service.
- Being focused on the client. 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.
- Supporting access. Deciding to contact an agency 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 are committed to ensuring that we work to consistent professional practice throughout. We have robust and tested systems and standards in place for managing, supervising and supporting our work.
- 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 and values.

Analysis of our current position

As part of this review the board and staff analysed our current position. This can be summarised as:

- The organisation has a strong sense of vision and values and a positive working culture.
- There is a need to clarify strategy and focus on our future direction.
- Our structure and Trustee board needs reviewing.
- Internal communication across four sites and with a range of part time and sessional workers can be difficult.
- The organisation is coping with being busy all the time.
- There is strong commitment to our clients and willingness to develop and adapt.
- We need to review our office space and potential to use technology better.
- We are increasingly working on tough issues

Future trends

We operate in an uncertain and fast changing environment. We have identified the following trends and developments that could shape our direction:

- More people with complex mental health issues
- People not accessing or getting support as many statutory services decline in a climate of austerity and cuts to public services.
- Engrained issues – people often live with an issue for many years without getting support.
- People in crisis
- Urgent issues
- An issue for all ages
- More men using our services
- Danger of generalist services claiming that they can do what we do
- Danger of diluting the service
- Issues for young people
- Children's experience
- GPs having greater role
- More regulation and accountability
- Increase in social media as a way to access and deliver services
- Uncertainty in government and policy.
- Austerity and a continuation of cuts to public service funding.

Our Future strategy

Our strategy is based on the following three assumptions:

- Demand. All indications are that demand for our work will at best stay at current levels, but may well increase as a result of greater public awareness. We also note that many of our clients are presenting with more complex and demanding needs.

- Support for our role. The need for a specialist, dedicated and independent agency working on this issue is greater than ever.
- Hard funding climate. We operate in a competitive and demanding funding climate. Many of our funders are under growing pressure and we believe this will continue.

Conclusion

Creating an organisation that is flexible to allow for changes and pressures around funding, client needs and the changing statutory and voluntary sectors.

Our commitment:

To our clients. We are committed to putting the needs of our clients first. We intend to continue to run a quality and responsive service that delivers positive outcomes and enables people to move on. We will resist pressure to dilute our approach or cut corners.

To our staff. Our staff and counselling team deal with highly demanding and often stressful situations on a regular basis. We aim to demonstrate best practice in our employment and management practice and ensure that staff receive quality supervision, training and development to enable them to support our clients.

To our funders and commissioners. We want to develop a collaborative approach with the agencies that support and invest in our work. We undertake to engage with our funders and commissioners by regularly reporting back on trends and developments and working with them to shape future strategy.

Our future role

The organisation has changed and developed considerably since our original launch. Our commitment to our clients will remain the same, but we intend to develop in the following ways:

- Lead expert body – To use our day to day experience of working with our clients to be a resource to partners and other professionals that may be contacted in relation to sexual violence and abuse issues.
- A learning and innovative organisation – We want to learn from our client's experiences, spot new trends and changing needs and find effective ways of meeting them.
- Using our influence. We want to be a positive influence on public policy and raising awareness.
- A local community initiative. We want to build up support and recognition for our work by providing opportunities for local people to be involved in our work, to volunteer and support our services.

Strategic direction

Our future strategy is based around four goals:

1. To maintain our core purpose and role of providing quality support to all of our clients as and when they choose.
2. To develop and enhance our services to meet new and emerging needs.
3. To build a strong profile and to use our experience and expertise to be a positive influence to reduce sexual abuse violence and build better services for those affected by it.
4. To be a strong, sustainable and effective independent organisation.

Making it happen

Strategic goal 1.

To maintain our core purpose of providing quality trauma informed counselling and support to our clients (survivors/victims) as and when they choose.

Short term action:

- To develop our systems for obtaining client feedback about our services to ensure that our services are relevant and that all of our future development is informed by client experience.
- To continue to invest in practice supervision and staff development to ensure our services meet best practice standards.
- To review the 'client journey' to ensure that our services are accessible and reflect our core values.
- To regularly review all cases to identify new and emerging trends.
- To ensure that we have in place robust systems to monitor and manage increases in demand for our services.

Medium to longer term action:

- To review our internal structure to establish the most cost effective and efficient way of operating a service across four locations using a range of full time and sessional staff.
- To review our policies and practices to ensure that they are relevant and meet best practice.

Strategic goal 2.

To develop and enhance our services to meet new and emerging needs.

Short term action:

- To explore the ways in which social media might open up new ways of communicating, accessing our services and supporting clients.
- To review the number of counsellors in our counselling team.
- To get a balance between paid and volunteer counsellors if appropriate.
- To develop support groups for our clients including Pre and Post counselling.
- To monitor changing needs and trends on a regular basis and develop plans to adapt our services to meet that change.
- To explore the potential for The Birchall Trust developing a training role for other professionals who may have some involvement in sexual abuse cases.

Medium to longer term action:

- To develop services for carers and family members of people affected by sexual abuse.
- To review and develop services for men.
- To produce a case for a specialist therapeutic service for survivors of rape and/or sexual assault/abuse.
- To use technology and media to provide support for people affected by the impact of rape and/or sexual abuse.

Strategic goal 3.

To build a strong profile and use our experience and expertise to be a positive influence to reduce sexual abuse and violence and build better services for those affected by it.

Short term action:

- To build our profile as a leading organisation on sexual abuse/sexual violence.
- To define our role in shaping policy and influencing other organisations.
- To define what sort of role The Birchall Trust should have in prevention and public campaigning work.
- To review The Birchall Trust's external relationships and partnerships to ensure that they are relevant and effective.
- To review and develop The Birchall Trust's education work.
- To develop a plan for work with local universities.

Medium to longer term action:

- To be a constructive influence on policy
- To identify areas for future collaboration and partnership working.

Strategic goal 4.

To be a strong, sustainable and effective independent organisation:

Short term action:

- To recruit additional board members who support our vision and values and can bring relevant skills and expertise to the organisation.
- To implement the action plan from our recent governance review to ensure that the board can continue to meet its legal requirements and play a role in shaping The Birchall Trust's strategic direction.
- To review our organisational structure to ensure that its able to support our future strategy.
- To build strong links with our current funders and commissioners so that they understand the nature of our work and receive regular reports on trends and developments in our work.
- To develop an income plan to support our strategy.
- To build our relationship with local NHS commissioners.

Medium to longer term action:

- To develop a broader income base made up of
- Public sector commissioned work
- Trust and foundation work
- Opportunities for local companies and others to sponsor our work
- Potential for earned income from professional and agencies (e.g.training).
- Developing a local supporter base of people and groups who support our work.
- To provide support and development opportunities for our trustees to develop their role.
- To review our office space and potential to use technology better.

Making it happen

We have in place a strong and robust system and procedures for the governance and management of the charity and for the effective delivery of our services including:

- An experienced and skilled board made up of people with significant experience of business management, service management, public policy, and the context in which we work.
- We have established and sound management systems for employing and managing staff and planning our work. Our board receives regular reports on our work and financial performance.
- Our staff team is highly experienced, has a wide range of skills and expertise and is committed to developing and adapting to meet new needs and opportunities.
- We have systems, policies and procedures in place to ensure that our clients interests are protected and that our services operate to consistent quality standards.
- We have strong connections with the communities where we operate. We have good connections with the relevant health, social care and crime agencies that our clients may deal with.
- We have built up strong collaborative relationships with our funders and commissioners.

The work we do has never been an easy or popular cause – indeed until recently the scale and extent of sexual abuse was often denied or under estimated. The case for a dedicated and independent local agency is stronger than ever. Our future strategy is based on consolidating the progress we have made to date, and building on the foundations that we have to continue to support some of the most vulnerable and isolated people in our community.