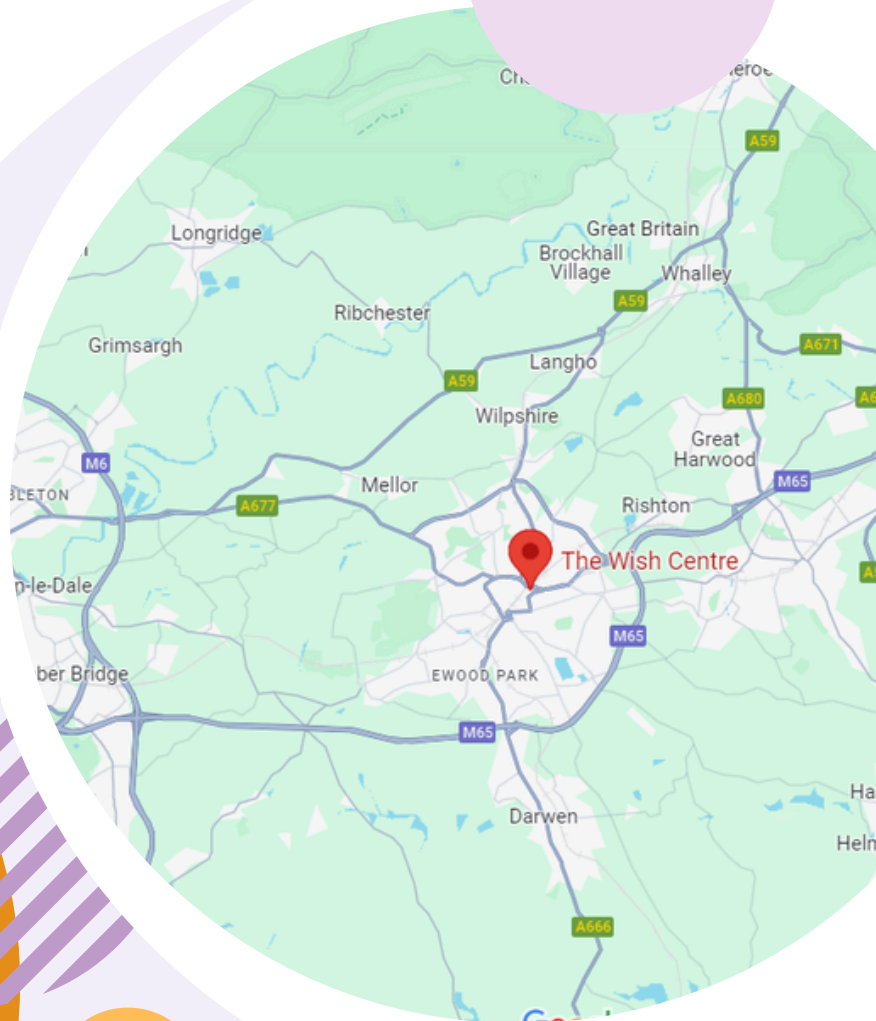
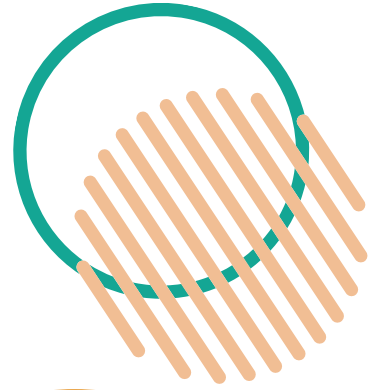




Annual REPORT

2024





**“Gave me a voice and
choice and made my
feelings important”**

Young Person’s Programme

“
I’m more than confident that
when I enter a new relationship I
will be able to keep myself and
my son safe from any kind of
abuse. I really can’t thank The
Wish Centre enough for all the
support and validation I’ve
received.
Recovery Toolkit Client
”





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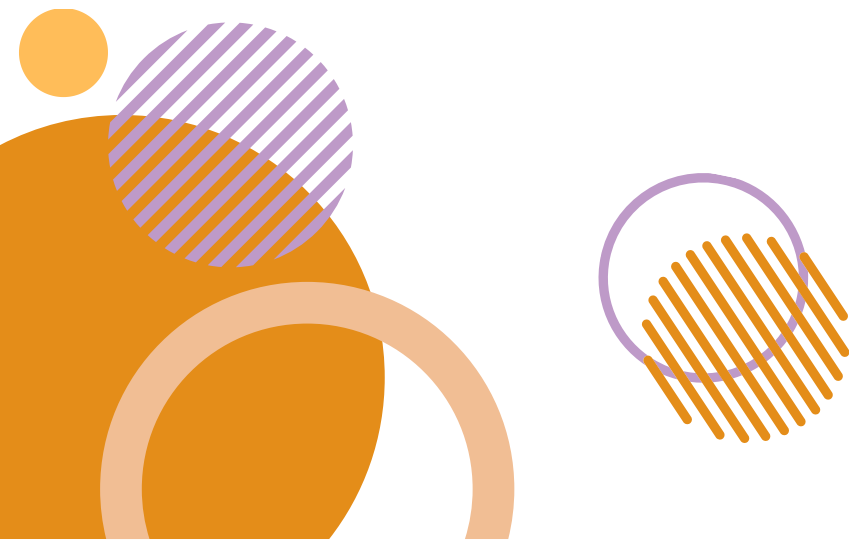
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We'd like to thank our supporters and funders. With your help we have, and will continue to, fight against domestic abuse in Lancashire.

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

The generosity of the community never ceases to amaze us. Thank you to those who spread the word, campaign, and donate. We are surrounded by wonderful people.

THANK YOU

A message from our Chair of Trustees, Pauline Geraghty MBE

On behalf of the Wish Centre trustees I am delighted to present our annual report. The past year has been incredibly busy but very rewarding. We have expanded our team and developed new work to meet the demands identified locally.

People's health and wellbeing has always been a factor in our work and we recognised that we needed to address this for those who came to us for support. We were delighted when a Lottery Reaching Community bid came to fruition and enabled us to employ an emotional health and wellbeing practitioner and a counselling coordinator. For many years we have provided a counselling service but having these new staff members means we can support people in the here and now and develop this work in the future.

We have invested in our children and young people's work and used our financial reserves to support the appointment of additional children's practitioners. We see the value of supporting children/young people who are affected by domestic abuse and changing their life outcomes.



For charities it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure funding and given this we devoted some of our reserves to employ both a fundraiser and a consultant who supported our CEO to identify new funding streams. These two appointments have been significant, enabling us to increase our grants, unrestricted funds, develop our local profile and meet the most amazing corporate and individual supporters. We know how important it is to have mixed funding streams and not solely rely on grants or commissions. This has given us the freedom to develop new work that is community led.

The charity shop we opened in the year is to help raise funds for our direct work. It also helps to raise our profile and signpost people to our diverse services.



We began the year in a strong financial position and with prudent governance and management we have successfully ended the year in a positive state. We know we can never be complacent about securing funding and the hard work will continue to sustain our services.

It is crucial to have relationships with our service users, past and present so that we can co-produce our services within the community. We are delighted again to say we have been awarded the Investing in Children charter mark which recognises the incredible work our staff undertake with young people. We have used opportunities to consult with service users to continue to develop our practice and meet individual needs.

Our core offer, in place for over 30 years, including refuge/safe accommodation, IDVA/advice support and victims programmes, is an integral part of the successful holistic services we offer and vital to community safety.

Our experienced and dedicated staff and volunteer team are the most incredible advocates for those people who are victims and survivors of domestic abuse. It was through their advocacy that we first developed our work with perpetrators.

Directly addressing the causes of domestic abuse and focusing on the people responsible for that abuse is something we are very proud of. This makes a difference, it reduces repeat victimisation and offers support to those who want to change their behaviour. The client facing team is supported by our training manager, our communication and administration teams and of course our leadership team.

We know this has been a tough year for people as the cost of living crisis continues to bite. We know these external factors affect the rates of domestic abuse. This has been reflected in the support required.

We have had a recent national policing statement that identifies the violence against women and girls (VAWG) statistics for 2022/23.



Arrests for domestic abuse related offences increased by over 22%

It is recognised as an epidemic scale of offending, 20% of all recorded crime. Acknowledging that domestic abuse is a gendered issue, the majority of victims being women, we recognise the support that is needed to all victims of domestic abuse regardless of gender. One in every six murders is related to domestic abuse with suspected victim suicides following domestic abuse rising year on year. Domestic abuse remains one of the biggest demands on policing with arrests rising by 22% in the year ending 2023.

These are significant statistics. We can't rest, we continue to be motivated to end domestic abuse. We need a world free from abuse.

We have many people to thank, our great team led by an experienced management team, our volunteers, our partners, our funders and donors. We also have to pay respect to our courageous service users for placing their trust in us. They are magnificent.

Pauline Geraghty MBE
Chair, Trustee Board

A message from our CEO, Shigufta Khan



A world without domestic abuse is our vision and we have strived towards this over the last 35 years. We cannot do this on our own and we are proud of the support we have received over the last 12 months to make people in our communities feel safer.

Support from our statutory partners in local authorities in Blackburn and Darwen and Lancashire County Council has been invaluable as has the support from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

We are grateful too of the support our local community has given us, from individuals who have donated or fundraised, to local businesses who have been so generous with their support. In current times when securing funds is becoming ever more challenging, we would not be able to deliver the services we do without the generosity of our local communities.

In the last 12 months we have provided long term interventions and support to over 3562 individuals, 488 were assessed as high risk and at greatest risk of death or serious harm.

Our IDVA service supported 2139 people with a safety plan, keeping them physically safe. 395 referrals were received for our victims' programmes, AIM and Recovery Toolkit, 178 referrals for our adult behaviour change programme and 504 young people were referred for our young people's behaviour change programme. We have received 140 requests for refuge and were able to provide safe accommodation to 36 women and 53 children. We were able to support 51 people to access our counselling service.

Our ambition is to continually enhance our services and in the last 12 months we have utilised our funds to provide holistic support in our refuge accommodation via an animal therapist as well as funding counselling for service users who have needed it. We have also provided a range of activities and days out including horse riding and picnics to make sure that families living with us build happy memories and friendships.



Our supporters have helped us to develop our services, for example, Haydock Finance funded the redesign of our refuge garden. The design was co-produced by women and children who worked on a mood board that was used



to create an amazing therapeutic space for women as well as a play area for children.

To help us to continue to deliver vital services we have used some funds from our reserves to utilise the expertise of a fundraising consultant. We were extremely proud to hold our first charity ball which was a huge success. The support from local businesses who donated raffle prizes and attended on the night to support us was amazing. We have held a series of fundraising events from a summer fair, a fashion show, sponsored walks and some of our supporters have even climbed the Big One at Blackpool Pleasure beach. We hope to continue to build our fundraising efforts which help to raise awareness of our work and provide vital funds.

"THE SISTERHOOD OF HAVING OTHER WOMEN WHO UNDERSTAND WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH NO MATTER WHICH STAGE OF THE JOURNEY THEY ARE AT PERSONALLY."

AIM client

Over the years we have seen the increase in the vulnerabilities our service users face with 36% of service users presenting with mental health

issues and 17% with substance misuse issues. We have been successful in securing a Reaching Communities bid to provide an enhanced offer of counselling services and a dedicated emotional health & wellbeing practitioner to offer longer term support to our service users.

The recent national policing statement has identified an epidemic in the scale of offending and acknowledged domestic abuse as a gendered crime. We want to make sure that people in our communities understand what domestic abuse is, recognise the signs and know how to access help and support. To do this we have developed our

communication strategy to increase our social media profile. We make sure our posts are informative and impactful and in

the last 12 months we have reached over 73.4 thousand people via our Facebook page and 5.9 thousand people via Instagram, that is a total of 79,300 people in total. We have seen 17 thousand new people access our website which is an increase of 19.3%.

4.1 thousand have accessed the page highlighting services for children and young people and the resources available have been downloaded 2,234 times. 4 thousand people have searched for our website and 12 thousand people have found us by searching for domestic abuse services in this area. Our home page has been viewed over 38 thousand times.

In addition to engaging and educating our communities we also provide training on domestic abuse related topics to frontline practitioners and their managers working in the statutory, voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise sector and the private business sector. In the last 12 months we have trained 636 people pan Lancashire.

None of the above would be possible without a team of experienced staff, volunteers, managers and trustees and I want to thank them all for their dedication in helping to make our communities a safer place to live.

Shigufta Khan
Chief Executive Officer

In the last 12 months we have trained 636 people pan Lancashire

Our Services

The Wish Centre is the commissioned provider of domestic abuse services for Blackburn with Darwen providing a range of holistic services. Offering support at the point of crisis via safe accommodation and an IDVA service that is able to provide safety advice and risk assessments via phone or in a face-to-face setting. We also provide therapeutic programmes for victims and young people, support to access housing, debt advice, substance misuse services and mental health services.

We are driven by an ethos of providing services for the whole family, so it is heartening to find that over 90% of our service users have said that they feel safer and able to access services as a result of our interventions. Our case management system links records therefore we can ensure that victim's safety is at the forefront of our work. In addition, by providing services to young people, adult victims, and perpetrators under one service we are able to ensure effective communication and information sharing.

"BEING IN REFUGE HAS TAKEN A LOT OF STRESS OUT OF THE HOLIDAYS AS WE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO ANYTHING WITHOUT REFUGE TRIPS AND PARTIES. ANIMAL THERAPY HAS REALLY HELPED MY SON AND BEEN CALMING FOR HIM".



We continue to provide services across Lancashire in addition to Blackburn with Darwen. We have 40 current staff members, as well as support from sessional staff, with a dedicated team of 6 counsellors.

The Wish Centre is also a placement provider for students as well as an organisation that supports training and development of staff across the voluntary and statutory sector so that our collective response to domestic abuse improves.



Refuge

Safe accommodation provided in Blackburn with Darwen consists of five individual houses with a staffed support block as well as 9 flats with a staffed flat. Emotional and practical support is provided to enable women to live a life free from abuse.

Programmes for victims and for children are provided on site as well as counselling services. Resettlement support is provided, aiding victims to move on into their own accommodation. In the last 12 months we have received 140 referrals and supported 36 women and 53 children.

Residents have often left family and friends to escape abuse, leaving behind their support system. The Wish Centre endeavours to create a welcoming environment, encouraging adults and children to take part in various activities, to build new relationships and share their experiences.



IDVA/Advice Service

This year we have supported 2139 people through our IDVA service. We welcome self-referrals, agency referrals and referrals from the police. Risk assessments and safety planning are offered to victims who may be impacted by physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, economic abuse including forced marriages, Honour based abuse or female genital mutilation. In April 2019 we became Blackburn with Darwen's commissioned domestic abuse service.

To best serve the communities we work in and ensure we are able to meet the needs of our service users we

employ specialist ethnic minorities IDVAs as well as a specialist 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.

Perpetrator Programmes

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. Group programmes and 1:1 sessions are being delivered in Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Preston, Lancaster and, since June 2021, in Skelmersdale.

"UPON REFLECTION OF MY PREVIOUS RELATIONSHIPS, I CAN RECOGNISE WHEN AND HOW MY THOUGHTS, BELIEFS AND ACTIONS HAVE BEEN ABUSIVE, AND I ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY ACTIONS."

Programmes for Children & Young People



RYPP

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.

Young People's Recovery Toolkit

A therapeutic programme for young people informed by Trauma Focused Cognitive Behaviour Therapy.

Expect Respect

Aimed at empowering young people to expect respect in their relationships. Through a range of engaging activities and discussions, this programme aims to enable participants to learn about domestic abuse, identify healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Helping Hands

Addresses the challenging issues of personal space, awareness of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, and safety planning. Three themes, called the Protective Behaviours, are reinforced throughout the programme

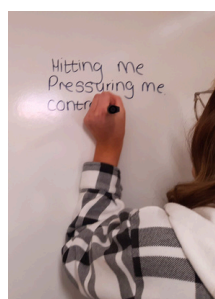
Parachute Programme

Aimed at young people who have been identified as needing help in managing conflict in their relationships. Parachute is aimed at young people who may already have a history of resorting to violence to try and solve conflict. They may have a history of frequent conflict at home, in their relationships, or at school.



Our young people's team also delivers healthy relationship work, taking place in four schools in Blackburn with Darwen via a combination of workshops and assemblies. The Wish Centre strives to listen to young people's voices, involving them in dialogue to create opportunities to become genuine participants in decision making processes.

"A BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH MY MUM"

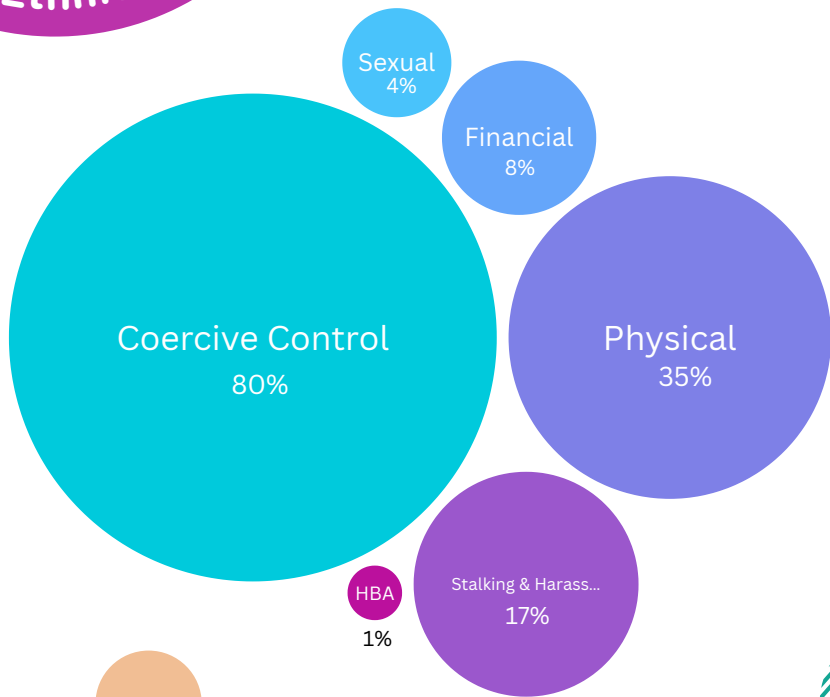
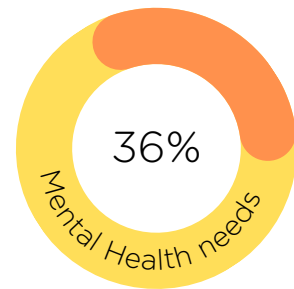
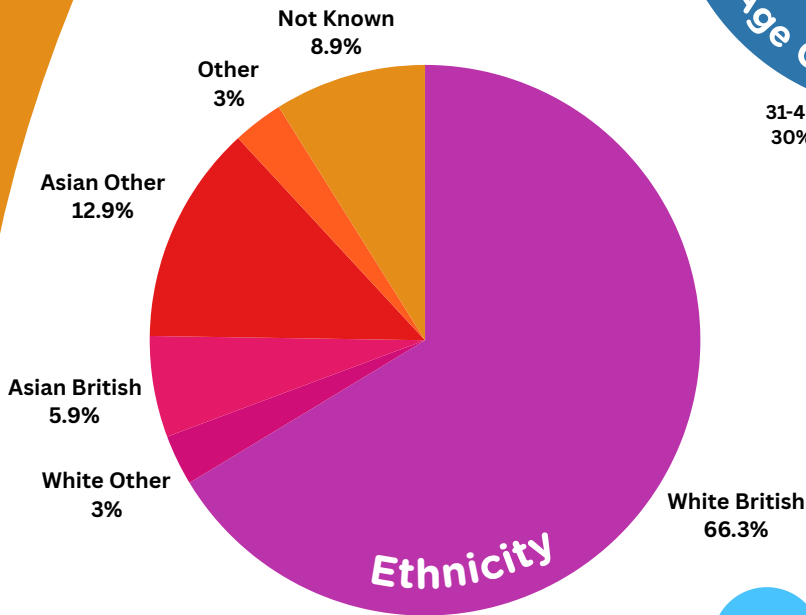
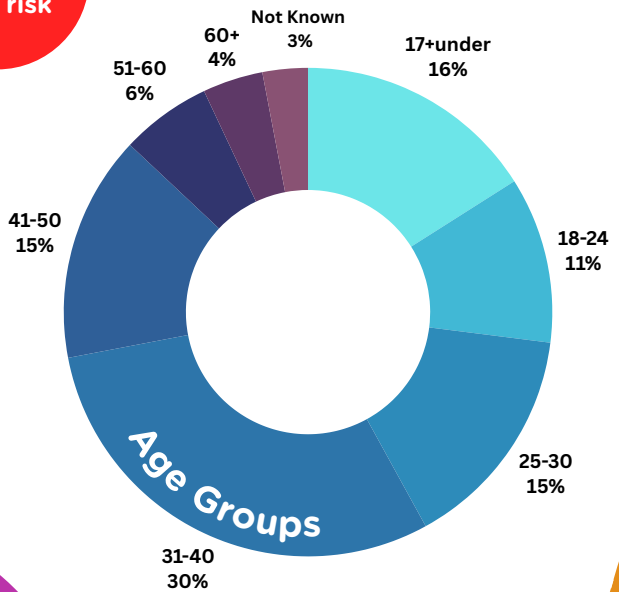


The Data

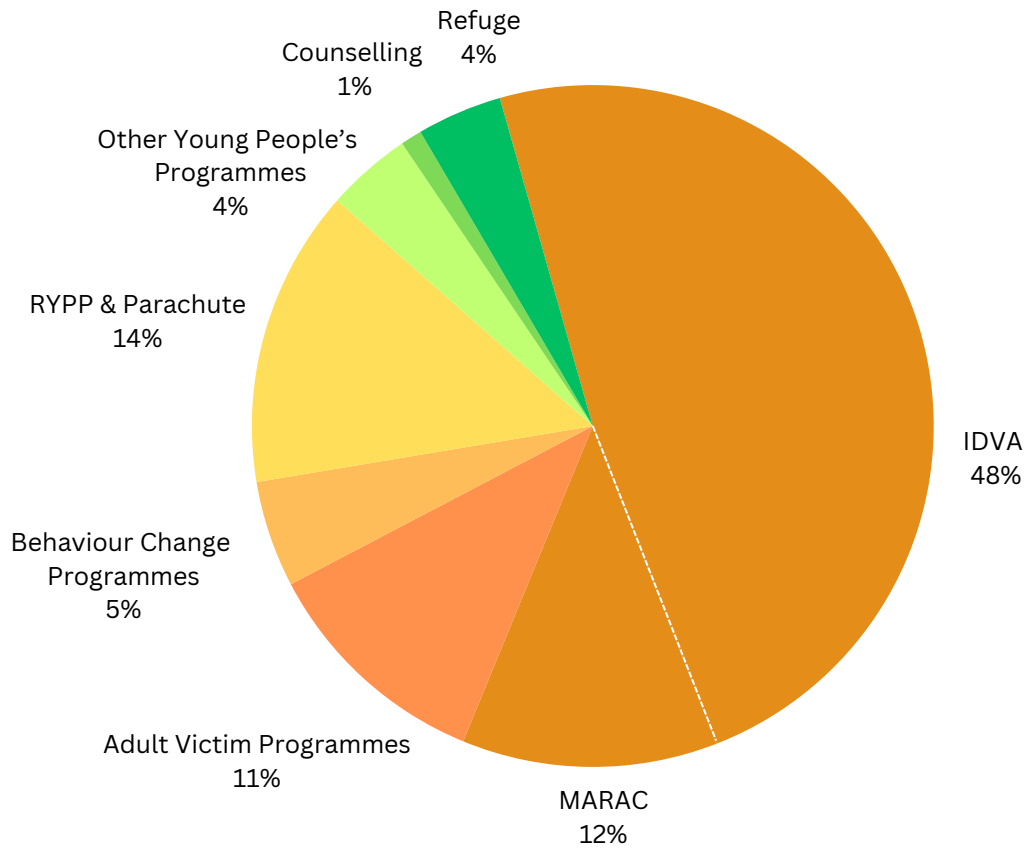
Lives we have
changed in
2023/24

488
high risk

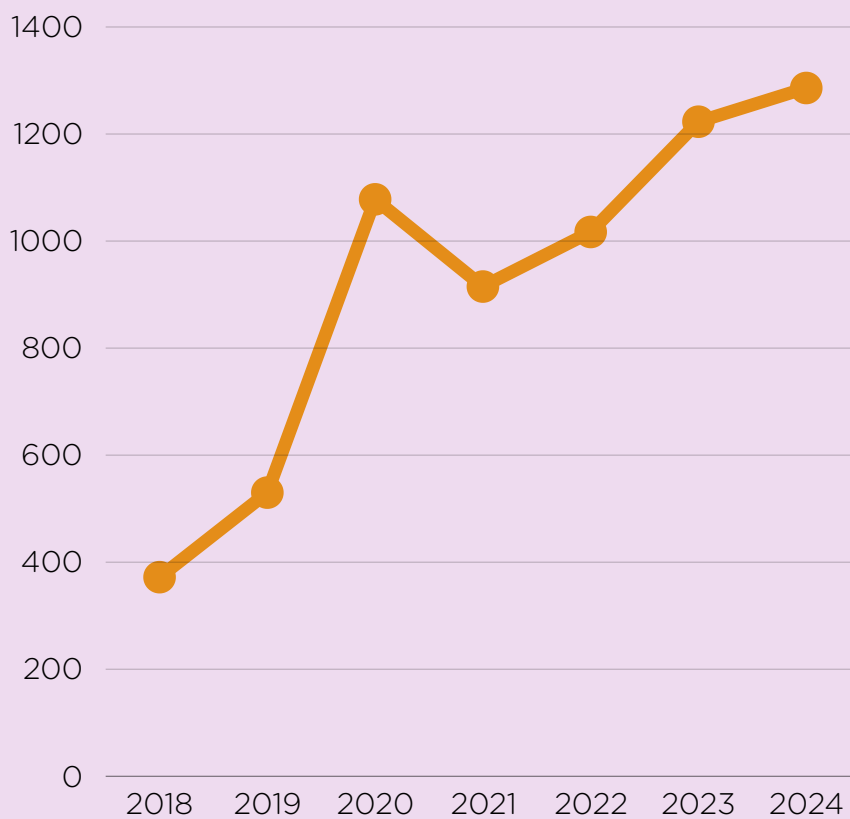
3562
total referrals



Areas of work

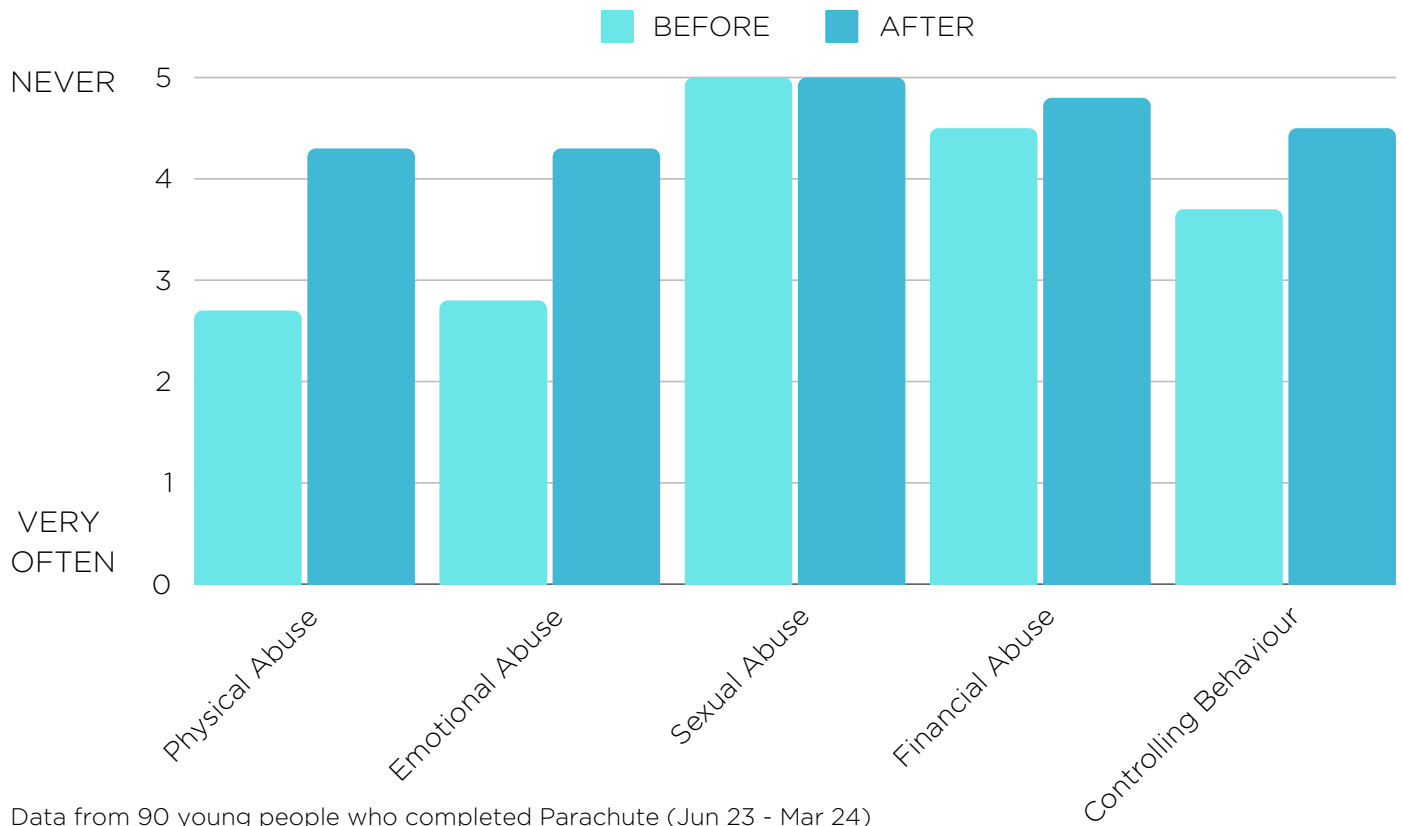


Service Users with Mental Health Needs

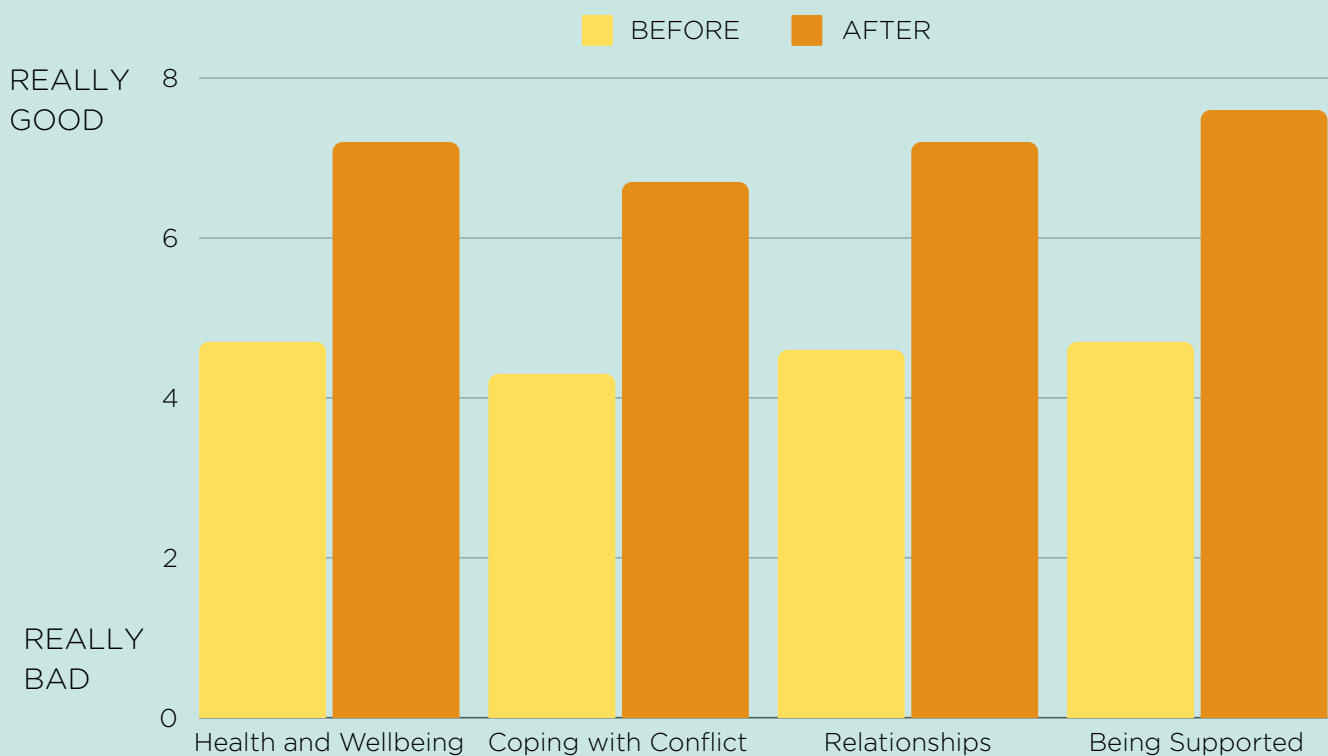


Responses from Young People

Young people's use of different forms of abuse before and after completing Parachute.



How young people felt about different areas of their life before and after completing Recovery Toolkit or Expect Respect.



What's new?

Investing In Children Silver Award

In November 2023 The Wish Centre was given the Investing in Children Silver Award as we have been an accredited member since 2016.

Achieving and maintaining the award has meant that Children & Young People's Participation has become part of our everyday lives - so it has become second nature for The Wish Centre staff to involve them in decision making. The IIC accreditation shows children, young people, their families, other professionals and potential funders that C&YP's needs and wishes are at the heart of our service.



IRISi



In June 2023, we delivered our first IRISi training session to a local GP practices and since then have provided training in 11 centres. Lancashire Victim Services, Fylde Coast Women's Aid and The Wish Centre have been working collaboratively since early 2022 to deliver IRISi, a programme working to increase awareness of Domestic Abuse within GP Practices. Working to ensure that more healthcare professionals can identify the signs of DA and have a simple referral route for their patients to reach the most adequate support.

According to an IRIS study 'Practices with IRIS were 30 times more likely to refer their patients to specialist support'.

Wish Upon A Star Ball

The Wish Centre hosted our first charity ball on the 9th of March. It was a fabulous night which, thanks to the generosity of attendees, raised over £10,000 for the charity. Haydock Finance, our long-time supporters kindly sponsored and attended the event. Tables included guests from Watson Ramsbottom, Cartwright King, Starboard Hotels, Pierce Accountants and the Mayor and Mayoress of Blackburn with Darwen.



Refuge Garden Makeover

In June/July of 2023 a major transformation took place for one of our refuge gardens. Staff and residents enjoyed creating a mood board of ideas featuring a Wendy house, BBQ area, more seating and games for the children.

The work was organised and completed by the amazing Haydock Finance team. Firstly, the mounds in the lawn were removed and re-covered, then the team got to work tidying, weeding, power-washing, building, painting and planting!

Before



After



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

Charity Shop

On the 6th October 2023 after many months of preparation, we opened our first charity shop. The ribbon was cut by the Deputy Mayor of Blackburn with Darwen, Sylvia Little, and Kate Hollern, MP. Located in Little Harwood the shop is bright and welcoming with a children's reading corner.

The shop also acts as an important resource for items and clothes needed by the families that arrive with us after fleeing abuse.



Case Studies

‘M’ - AIM & Recovery Toolkit

M has been known to our service since 2012 when she was pregnant with her first child. She has dipped in and out of IDVA support since then. She did attend freedom programme in 2013 but was very quiet in the group and struggled to engage with the session. she was offered a place on the Recovery Toolkit but did not attend.

M has been in the same abusive relationship since she was first referred to us and in December 2023 there was another medium risk incident reported to the police and M was again referred to us for IDVA support. M was reluctant to work with the IDVA but agreed to attend programmes.



M first attended AIM in March of 2024. The AIM programme, Awareness, insight, Motivation, is a 6-week programme for women to develop awareness and knowledge about domestic abuse and the types of controlling behaviours that are displayed by an abusive partner.

M attended the session over zoom and was very quiet and reluctant to show her face on camera during the session but as the weeks passed she grew in confidence and started to share her experiences with the group. On the penultimate session, M stated that attending the programme had made her realise that she deserved better than what was happening to her, but more importantly

acknowledged that the relationship was impacting on her children, and she did not want them to be affected any longer.

M made the decision to end her relationship and told her abusive partner to leave. Victims are most at risk when they leave an abusive relationship, and she was supported by IDVA and encouraged to report any incident to the police giving a clear message to her ex that the relationship was over.

M was offered a place on Recovery Toolkit after attending AIM. The Recovery Toolkit programme is for women who have experienced and are recovering from domestic abuse. The aim is to give clients the knowledge to enable them to have a better understanding and deal with their experiences. It is designed to allow a client to move forward in their lives. It is important that clients are able to commit to the course and attend every session.



M Quickly settled into the group and was keen to engage, she related to the content of the sessions and shared her experiences with the other clients. M's confidence grew over the weeks, and it was a pleasure to work with her.

She disclosed that she was keen to get a job and talked about how she might achieve this over the sessions.

Again, on the penultimate session M announced that she would not be able to attend the final session as she had been successful in finding employment and was to start next week. The group were extremely supportive of her and wished her well in her new job.

When M started the programme work she was lacking in confidence, she was in denial and minimizing the affects of the

abuse as she had become so desensitised to what was happening. She presented as Trauma bonded to her partner and struggling to end the relations.

Attending the programmes has enabled her to take control of her life, start to make the right lifestyle choices to provide a safe environment for herself and her children and in making these choices her confidence has grown so much that she felt able to seek employment.

"I LOVE ANIMAL THERAPY AT REFUGE AND GET EXCITED FOR IT EACH MONTH"

Refuge, age 10

"LEARNING HOW TO CONTROL MY ANGER HAVE MY INCIDENTS HAVE EVAPORATED AT SCHOOL"

YP, Parachute

"VERY SUPPORTIVE AND UNDERSTANDING. STAFF ARE SO AUTHENTIC AND AMAZING SO FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART I THANK YOU FOR THE HELP YOU'VE PROVIDED TO ME. MUCH APPRECIATED"

IDVA client

"My experience with the Wish Centre has been incredibly positive. I'm exceedingly happy and satisfied with the support they've provided. They've gone above and beyond to ensure my comfort and have assisted me in various aspects. I trust them wholeheartedly and freely share any issues I have, knowing they'll guide me appropriately. Their referrals to relevant courses have significantly boosted my confidence. To me, they feel like family. Thank you, WISH Centre.

(IDVA client, 2024)

'A' - Behaviour Change Programmes

A self-referred to the Gateway to Change (GTC) awareness raising session in July 2023. After completing GTC he wished to undertake the Make the Change programme. He was assessed and accepted onto the programme in August 2023 with sessions conducted on a 1-2-1 basis via Zoom. A attended all sessions, was on time and had good interaction with the facilitator, he appeared willing to learn even though at times during certain activities, he seemed to struggle to vocalise his thoughts.

A stated, his hopes were "to be able to communicate effectively with his partner and think about her needs and wants. To try to think of other solutions to situations. To have a happy family & good life".

When asked to remember an incident of domestic abuse he had been involved in, to reflect on and take responsibility for his behaviours, A described his actions as "using put downs, physical abuse, slapped to the face, spat on her, screaming and shouting, scowling, change in my body language, getting in her face - close up. Standing up. Tried to get her out of the way, so I grabbed her. Threw a box down the stairs - nearly hit the baby, but I didn't know she was there, tried to get my baby off my mum to make sure she was ok".

A appeared to take responsibility for his behaviour when he completed an empathy exercise referred to as Perceptual Positions.



The nature of the exercise allows the individual to experience the incident from the other person's perspective as

well as from a neutral observer's perspective. His insights following the exercise from the observers position of how he should have acted were "Be nice, talk to her in a nice voice, both sit down and hear each other's side of the story, agree to disagree. No tension, relaxed, change the environment i.e. have a bath, go for a walk etc".

A explained that to ensure that conflict remains safe and healthy in the future he would "use time out. Hear both sides without interrupting, sometimes biting your tongue - hold back. Think about my response before I say it. Use the stress thermometer, think about my child and my partner's feelings as I know how upset it may make her when I do scream or shout".

A showed that he can recognise his triggers and distinguish between healthy and unhealthy conflict and the gains / losses which can be experienced from each type of conflict.

A showed a great deal of remorse for how his actions could have impacted on his own child, particularly when he was able to reflect back to his own childhood and use perspective. He was able to show his understanding of how such behaviour could impact on a young child. He described this as "disobedient

"ACTIONS ARE GREATER THAN WORDS AND SO SHE NEEDED TO SEE THAT I WAS WILLING TO CHANGE"

behaviour, screaming, outbursts of anger, damaging property, hurting themselves, self-sabotaging, upset, challenging behaviour at school, difficulty making friends, in denial, class-clown, involved in drugs, alcohol, smoking, crime, police involvement, anti-social behaviour etc”.

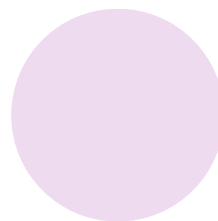
The last three sessions of the programme are considered the most challenging for candidates. Reflecting back to an incident where he used violence, A gave the following insight - “I can imagine that she was petrified, angry, hurt, and felt worthless thinking how can someone do something like this to me. Disrespected. I think her expectations were for me not to behave the way I did...”

After this when my partner eventually agreed to sit down with me to talk about what had happened. When I told her about the perpetrator programme run by the Wish Centre, she said she thought this was a great idea. Obviously, actions are greater than words and so she needed to see that I was willing to change.

We have no drama now and I think she feels reassured that I have followed through with my actions. She also had the support of someone from the Wish Centre should she need it, which I also think is good. I think my partner will in a way feel that the relationship has bounced back from something which was traumatic, and it is better than before.

I think she may feel we know each other more now, within our boundaries, we know how things will affect our relationship.”

Having analysed the domestic abuse incident, A has demonstrated his awareness of the victim’s perspective and empathy. He has also demonstrated his awareness of the impact of domestic abuse on children who, whilst being very young at the time, would have been impacted by the abuse and the change in the dynamics to the family unit as they worked their way through the aftermath of the incident.



Thank You to our funders

In the last 12 months we have received funding from:

**Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council,
Lancashire County Council,
Blackpool Council,
The Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner for Lancashire,
Ministry of Justice,
Children in Need,
Department for Levelling Up,
Housing and Communities,
Garfield Weston,
Charles Hayward Foundation,
Integrated Care Board.**

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.



Pauline after receiving her OBE

As we end our Annual Report, we must share our sadness at the death of Pauline Quinn who was our patron for many years. Pauline supported the Wish Centre from early days and eventually became a trustee. She used her experience and skills to help us develop and was a great advocate for the organisation and the women and children we support. On stepping down as a trustee it was a great honour when she agreed to become our patron.

Our thoughts are with Pauline's family.