



ANNUAL REPORT 2023/2024

Registered Charity No. 276883

Company Registration No. 1338724

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PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT

Domestic Abuse is Unacceptable

Domestic abuse, in all its forms, impacts upon ordinary people and their families and experiencing it will always be traumatic. The women, men, children and young people we support, both in our Refuge and through our Outreach Services, will be offered a non-judgmental service tailored to their individual needs. We believe that those impacted by domestic abuse need assistance, support, trust and a feeling of safety delivered in an honest, transparent and trauma informed manner.

We will offer practical and emotional support to all and understand that the children who have lived in situations where there is domestic abuse, have also been affected by it and their needs may require addressing separately. The traumatic experience of living with domestic abuse is often surrounded by other complex issues that we will help our clients and residents to address. Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid believes that we need to take a holistic approach in order to empower our clients, our residents, and their children to live a life free from domestic abuse.

Vision: To live in a society where domestic abuse is unacceptable

Mission: To provide a safe, empowering and person-centred service to anyone who has experienced or is experiencing domestic abuse.

Values: To work alongside people who have experienced domestic abuse with honesty, respect, trust and fairness.

This idea of our organisation as a growing, living thing has become part of the business plan. It shows how new funding could be added at the roots to provide new branches which in time will bear fruit.



OUR AIMS

- to provide temporary accommodation at our Refuge for women* and their children who are fleeing domestic abuse also, to support these people as they settle into their new community
- to meet the needs of children and young people affected by Domestic Abuse through a dedicated Children and Young Person's Service
- to facilitate community-based education programmes that enable people to better understand the behaviours of an abuser and to empower them to take control of their own future
- to offer support and advice through our Helpline and Outreach Service to any person who asks for it
- to raise community awareness of Domestic Abuse issues and of the services we offer
- to provide therapeutic support to all survivors of domestic abuse who are using our services
- to provide practical support to people who have experienced domestic abuse.

**The refuge is a service for females only and males up to the age of 16, as is legislated for under the*

Equality Act 2010, Part 7, Paragraph 27 on single-sex spaces



DIRECTORS/TRUSTEES

Chairperson	Nicola Iannelli Popham
Vice Chair	Maureen Byrne
Secretary	Fiona Harbron
Treasurer	Elizabeth Larcombe
Trustee	Charlene Boyaram
Trustee	Jackie Burnett
Trustee	Sue Dearman
Trustee	Christina Dye
Trustee	Pat Leach
Trustee	Siobhan O'Neill
Trustee	Jean Staff
Trustee	Hannah Stammers



PATRON



Jeannie Bloomfield

I start my report this year by saying it's now 50 years since we started offering our services to vulnerable women and their families who are victims of domestic abuse.

It's been an extra busy time for our staff and volunteers as we have now moved to more suitable and accessible premises for staff and clients. There is a lift installed for women with pushchairs and to make it easier for our disabled visitors.

I have enjoyed playing a small role by fundraising and giving talks to raise awareness of the help we offer for our vulnerable families.

Being a former victim of abuse, I have enjoyed helping and attending our SODA (Survivors Of Domestic Abuse) group and coffee mornings to keep our ladies spirits up and it also gives them the opportunity to encourage each other now that they have started to have a life free from abuse.

I also let people who attend my talks know about what's on offer at our refuge and how our qualified and caring staff and volunteers help victims start to feel safe again.

I have been fortunate enough to be accompanied by two members of staff and a volunteer who are passionate about their role in looking after our families, by making them feel safe and positive not just in our refuge but when they leave to start their new lives too.

We have been planning several meetings this year to help celebrate our 50th Anniversary with a calendar of events. This will run over a 12-month period, starting from November 2024 but we have started preparations early!

I feel very proud to play a small part by being involved with such a fabulous group of dedicated people who give vulnerable women hope and encouragement to move on to a better life.



BOARD OF TRUSTEES CHAIR'S REPORT



Nicola Iannelli-Popham

It was an honour for me to be chosen as the next Chair of Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid Centre in July 2023. It was not easy to take over from our previous Chair, Maureen Byrne, whose wealth of experience and steady hand successfully directed the organisation for a good number of years. Nonetheless, I have welcomed the challenge and am committed to continuing to direct all my efforts towards the development, expansion, and improvement of the services we offer, as well as promoting the well-being and development of our staff.

This has not been a year without difficulties with the appointment not only of a new Chair and several new Trustees to the Board, but also the enrolment of a new Principal Operations Manager and some new members of staff. Despite this being a year of adaptation and change, I am certain that we are now on a more than even keel based on the collaboration, dedication, and hard work demonstrated by all the members of the Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid team –staff, volunteers, and Trustees. We continue to face a number of significant challenges, above all, in relation to funding and staffing in an increasingly difficult environment for all the charitable sector.

A significant loss was suffered by the organisation with the very sad passing of one valued member of staff, Jacqui Evans, in October 2023. She was a great member of our team and is missed by us all.

In May 2023, we left our premises at no. 24 St Andrew's Street North and moved into our new home at The Malthouse. As a result, we now have spaces that can accommodate our Outreach services, and most of our meeting room, counselling, and



office requirements while remaining in the centre of town and easily accessible by public transport, at a considerably lower cost than before. Our Refuge issues relating to communal living conditions and occupancy persist, but we are actively promoting discussions with local authorities and organisations with a view to having new more self-contained refuge accommodation in the future.

Over the past year, we have established a number of new subcommittees, containing a mixture of Trustees and staff, to look at the vital issues that affect both the running of the organisation and the services we provide. The Fundraising Subcommittee regularly explores new sources of funding to provide the foundations for greater financial resilience and stability over time, while the newly established Trustee Recruitment and Training Subcommittee aims to identify the gaps in knowledge and professionalisms on the Board and recruit new members as required.

Conscious of the lack of domestic abuse services provision in more rural and other areas in our vicinity, our Principal Operations Manager and Finance Manager have worked hard to get the grants required for setting up new Outreach services in both Newmarket and Stowmarket.

This will be a big step forward and, as a result of this, and the fact that we have started to offer drop-in services for men, we have felt the need to rebrand the organisation so that our new name better reflects the reality of what we provide. This has been a lengthy process and is still in the development stage but progressing well, aided by input and ideas provided by both staff and Trustees.

These are exciting, if challenging, times for us and, despite the ongoing concerns about funding, financial resilience, and workloads, we are looking forward to a brighter future for the organisation, our employees, our volunteers and, above all, for all the women, children, men and young people we support on a day-to-day basis.



PRINCIPAL OPERATIONS MANAGER'S REPORT



Katherine Ahluwalia

Introduction

I was delighted to join Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid in June 2023 and at the time of writing this report, I have almost completed one year of working with our amazing team. I am supported by our exceptional team of staff, Trustees and volunteers who are all dedicated to the work they undertake.

I am committed to the principles of leadership, sharing of power and collaboration because, as an organisation, we play a crucial role in supporting survivors and advocating for societal change to end domestic abuse.

In this last year we have reviewed our strategy in line with the needs of our clients and our communities and we have deepened our knowledge of the domestic abuse services that are required by many people in these difficult times. We are setting sustainability goals to carve our path forward, whilst relying on our ability to adapt and evolve during this period of transformation.

Reflecting on the past year, I am proud of everything we have accomplished and at the same time acknowledge the work we still have to do. It is important to recognise and thank every individual in our organisation that has worked so diligently to make this progress possible.

There has been a backdrop of significant challenges to the progress we have made, in particular, the funding opportunities which have become increasingly difficult in the charitable sector in this last year and the economic difficulties faced in our country. We are committed to increasing our financial stability during these challenging times.



Staffing

I am grateful to the whole team at Bury St Edmunds Women's, our board and our volunteers who give their time, wisdom, expertise, and support. We have worked together to support each other, and we now have a full team who are working to their capacity. We are creating an ethos that prioritises staff well-being, so that we can support everyone to deliver the best possible service to survivors and because we recognise that staff well-being is a fundamental pillar of success. We want all our staff to feel valued, supported, and able to perform at their best.

Working in the domestic abuse sector can be challenging for professionals so we need to ensure that staff are supported with both professional management and clinical supervision.

Services

In all our services, we facilitate peer support as we recognise the benefits of people with the lived experience of domestic abuse, learning and growing together. Accessing peer support also enhances the likelihood that people will feel safe due to the stronger sense of community and importantly it reduces their sense of isolation which is a key tactic of the abuser because it normalises their behaviour and erodes the pathways to support.

We have also adopted a trauma informed approach in all our work because we recognise the pervasiveness of trauma, and we provide an appropriate response to this complex issue.

All our work is aimed at creating an environment where domestic abuse survivors can grow, increase their resilience, and heal from trauma.

By recognising that everyone is responsible for their own journey of recovery from trauma we actively encourage survivors to use their power and voice. People who have been disempowered in the past may be understandably fearful and anxious, so we actively help them to develop skills, such as, self-advocacy and assertiveness.



We continue to provide a vital Refuge for families who have to flee domestic abuse. This safe accommodation provides an environment where the residents are fully supported by our specialist team of professionals during their stay in the Refuge and for a year after they move out.

Our Community Outreach Service delivers peer groups, therapeutic programmes and counselling which provide knowledge and support to help individuals understand the long-lasting impacts of domestic abuse and how they can become empowered to facilitate their own recovery.

We have been working on the expansion of our outreach service provision into the more rural areas of Mid and West Suffolk. Following the success of our pilot project in Haverhill, we have obtained funding to expand this project to Newmarket and Stowmarket in partnership with Anglia Care Trust, Flagship Housing and Compassion, from June 2024. We recognise the need for these services to be delivered in rural communities to reduce the burden of survivors travelling to more urban locations which incurs costs and importantly takes individuals away from their local support networks.

Premises

During the last year, we have continued to maintain and improve our Refuge building to ensure that our clients have a comfortable home where they can relax and recover.

We have settled into our new outreach premises at the Malthouse in Bury St Edmunds, which provides a secure, accessible location for our work in the community, and continues to receive positive feedback from our clients.

The Way Forward

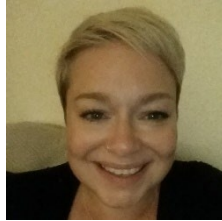
This year we will commemorate 50 years of supporting survivors of domestic abuse. As well as reflecting and celebrating our legacy, we are dedicated to moving our services forward and keeping survivors at the heart of all the work that we do. We are also committed to promoting our services and increasing our profile in all our communities and to other professionals.



We will continue to build on our legacy of providing domestic abuse support over the last 50 years, and we will develop the professional relationships we have already established. We will continue to expand our services by listening to the needs of our clients who are experts through lived experience. We will continue to have a flexible and adaptable approach in all our work as we develop our partnerships with other organisations and build on our strategic plans.



SUPPORT SERVICE MANAGER REPORT



Zoe Gordon

This April marks my first year in the post as Support Service Manager, having worked for the organisation for four years as Administrator. It was great to welcome Katherine as Principal Operations Manager in Summer 2023, along with two new Outreach Support Workers, a Play Worker and a new Administrator. Some existing staff have moved roles within the organisation, bringing a diverse knowledge base to our support team.

Refuge

Occupation over the year has been up and down in Refuge, reflecting what seems to be overall a trend locally. We have taken advantage of the new Triage Referral System being facilitated by Anglia Care Trust who can advise professionals of suitable refuge spaces in the region.

The demand for refuge spaces for ladies with complex needs has increased again this year, highlighting the need for specialist staff and services and the correlation between domestic abuse and additional vulnerabilities.

Resettlement Service

We have now merged the Refuge Support Worker and Resettlement Worker roles, meaning residents now have the same worker throughout their time with us, from day one at Refuge right through to when we discharge them from our Resettlement service, up to a year after they leave refuge. This approach provides a sense of consistency for our clients and their children.



Outreach

The biggest change over the last year has been the move of our Outreach Services from St Andrew's Street North, which we had occupied since 2017, to our new centre in The Malthouse, Elsey's Yard.

The new premises allow us to make use of a larger group room as well as smaller 1-2-1 rooms. The new location has been well received by clients and, being situated above the Steam House mental health drop-in, means we can work alongside each other to provide a multi-agency approach for those that need it.

Working in the Community

We have continued to provide a Coffee Morning and VOICE session once a week at the Clements Community Centre in Haverhill. Both sessions remain well attended and we have now become part of the community support network. The success of working within this community has inspired us to roll the service out to other communities in the coming year – watch this space!

As always, a huge thank you from me to our amazing staff, volunteers, trustees and patron. Everyone works so hard in such a challenging sector to ensure our families receive the very best support.



REFUGE SUPPORT STAFF REPORT

Alison Chambers, Victoria Pestell and Louise Mullan

Over the last year, our roles as refuge support workers have evolved. In addition to our weekly one to ones with residents, house meetings and support sessions, we now also provide resettlement support rather than having a separate member of staff for this. We feel that this promotes continuity and the continuation of relationships already formed within the refuge.

As part of this change, we have extended our knowledge to cover the procedures and processes for housing and grants.

As a team we have weekly catch-up meetings to discuss our cases and what support is required within the coming week. This enables us to understand each other's cases and provide support if a member of staff is unavailable.

We have also created a refuge support timeline to clarify what needs to be done and when, which is helping us to work towards the same goals.

Alongside the trustees, we have been working on a new resident's handbook. The aim is for it to be concise but informative and a useful tool for their time in refuge.

There is also now a short handbook that is given to residents on their first day, containing information such as the Wi-Fi password, on call details and an overview of staff in refuge.

Alison and Victoria have attended 'Power to Change' training which is a new empowerment programme from Women's Aid focussing on assertiveness, self-help and changing abusive relationship patterns.

Alison is now a full-time support worker alongside Victoria and Louise.



YOUNG PERSONS' SUPPORT REPORT

Louise Mullan

This year has been a busy one!

Training

I received funding to attend 'Escape the Trap' training, as a legacy from The Aspire Project when it ended.

I completed Youth Mental Health First Aid which I found extremely useful, particularly around having difficult conversations about self-harm, suicidal thoughts, and disordered eating.

I have attended a Safer Internet Day which increased my knowledge on how to help young people stay safe online, what to do/who to contact if someone shares intimate videos or photos online without their permission.



Events

I have attended several events this year including the freshers' fairs at West Suffolk College and Abbeygate Sixth form, which were well attended. I provided a quiz so the students could identify healthy, unhealthy, and abusive relationships. We promoted a drop-in at our new Outreach Centre and the Junction – Young person's information Padlet.

Abbeygate Sixth form ran a well-being event which I was invited to have a table at.

I also promoted our services at a local Pride Charity event, which also raised some money for Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid.

One to Ones

I have continued to receive referrals from schools for one-to-one work, working with young people who live in households where there is domestic abuse or if they are in unhealthy relationships. I work with the young people and support them in different ways. For example, looking at relationship red flags, working around boundaries and how to put boundaries in place and the importance of having boundaries in all our relationships.



Drop-ins

I started a drop-in session at Malthouse, which unfortunately no-one attended, so after a rethink I took the drop-in sessions into the schools. We now hold a lunch time drop-in at three schools in Bury St Edmunds and one school in Haverhill. I am aiming to increase the number of drop-ins throughout the year.

Group Work

I am running a small Escape the Trap group at a local school. I offer Escape the Trap and Expect Respect to schools. Going forward I am aiming to set up some more groups in the other schools around West Suffolk.

School's Drop-Down Days

I have taken part in more Multi Agency Road Shows in the local schools, working alongside Terrance Higgins Trust to promote healthy relationships and sexual health.

I have also run two bespoke sessions for King Edwards School in Bury St Edmunds. The first session was for Year 11's about sexual expectations and myths – the effects of pornography. The second was a session for Years 10's on consent. These sessions are presented four times in the school day for around 60 pupils per session.



Networking

Suffolk County Council started a Young Person's Networking event in February. Going forward I will continue to attend this event and hopefully grow this event as it is so helpful to see what support is out there for young people.



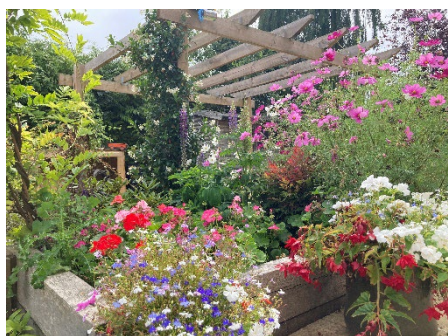
CHILD SUPPORT WORKER REPORT

Sarah Hart and Sophie Hickmott

As Child Support Workers, we support families with children and young people living within refuge. We work in a trauma informed way, with a holistic family approach, helping to identify support needs and creating individual care plans as well as helping children and young people to achieve their goals. Within our role we advocate and become the voice of children and young people, ensuring they have an increased sense of safety and wellbeing.

As always, we have had another busy year. We welcomed Sophie, our new player worker and she works with the children in Malthouse for groups and Wellbeing Wednesday and Thursday Thrive at refuge.

During the school holidays we have been on adventures to parks, farms, the seaside and a sunflower patch. We even hired out a swimming pool which all the residents loved. The families engaged in music therapy sessions for all ages in the six weeks holidays and as the sun shone, we had many happy days in our beautiful garden with the paddling pools. We must say a big thank you to our two volunteers Jean and Jo, who have been volunteering their time to help in the garden. The children love to see Jean and Jo after school and help with planting vegetables or weeding.



October came and we had a traditional pumpkin patch trip, a Halloween party and in November went to see the Fireworks at the Bury St Edmunds Rugby Club. Over the Christmas period we were invited to Ickworth House Georgian Christmas Experience and the 'Where's Santa hat?' performance at the Theatre Royal. Also not forgetting our very own Father Christmas and Mrs Christmas visit!



A big thank you to Julie at Tesco's who arranged the Giving Tree. All presents came to the families in refuge, and we were even able to make Christmas Eve boxes for all residents.

The New Year was very busy with lots of new training:

- Youth Mental Health First Aid.
- Henry Programme- Healthy start, Healthy families to support families with healthy eating.
- You, Me, Mum - supporting children who have lived with domestic abuse. 10-week programme for mothers.
- Helping Hands - updated version.
- Talking and drawing - updated version.

Now that we are running more groups, childcare is available for the clients attending. The groups running include VOICE, Coffee Morning, SODA and Freedom in Bury St Edmunds and Coffee Morning and VOICE in Haverhill.

Sarah has also been out and about working with children in resettlement in Haverhill and Cambridge and working in schools with Talking and Drawing. A new Helping Hands programme has also been running at the Malthouse on a Tuesday afternoon.

We are looking forward to what exciting things that next year will bring for us!



OUTREACH SUPPORT WORKER REPORT

Tracy Harvey, Lee-Ann Lummis and Ellie Phipps

Our Outreach Team has seen a few staff changes over the last year. We are now a team of three (Tracy Harvey, Lee-Ann Lummis and Ellie Phipps) working successfully together across West Suffolk, with face-to-face access to our services currently available in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill. The next stage will be our new locations in Newmarket and Stowmarket with Lee-Ann and Ellie working on a location each. They have been looking at venue's, which should lead to imminent start dates!! The projects will be shared with Anglian Care Trust, Flagship Housing & Compassion which is very exciting. We know there is a need in the chosen locations for us to be accessible and hope next year's annual reports confirms their success.

As a team, we work hard to make sure each incoming referral is allocated to an outreach worker, ensuring the client is contacted to discuss the services we provide and how we can make sure the client's needs are met. This may be via our coffee mornings, Freedom programme, SODA (survivors of domestic abuse) V.O.I.C.E (Victims of Intimate Coercive Experience) or the outreach service.

Coffee Mornings

Coffee mornings currently run in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill, offering women who have experienced domestic abuse a safe space to come and meet other women who may have had similar experiences.

These mornings are a vital part of many of our client's weekly routine and offer them some self-care by relaxing, getting advice, joining in with crafts and building a support network. We often tell our clients it's not always about what happens during the sessions but empowering them to do something for themselves and getting through the doors. This is a huge task for many and not as easy as it sounds.

Numbers have continued to grow, despite staff and day changes, and has led to many successful outreach cases and the delivery of this vital service.

May we take this opportunity to thank our volunteers over the last year who have made our coffee mornings possible – our volunteer Judy and Trustee Tina and their amazing



baking skills, Leanne with her crafty ideas, Pauline's super tea making and ninja cleaning up skills and Maureen whose wealth of knowledge and insight within the local area is priceless.

Freedom Programme

Our Freedom programme continues to be in demand and due to this, has now become a rolling programme. This allows clients to access the programme within a week to learn about domestic abuse and make sense of and understand what has happened to them. The programme helps survivors to recognise potential future abusers and also helps women to gain self-esteem and build the confidence to improve their lives. We get such amazing feedback from clients who have attended, often not realising that what they have experienced is abuse. Tracy has the ability to adapt the programme to her audience and make sure each session is also filled with laughter. Due to the nature of the topics this really helps to put our clients at ease and often results in them wanting to do the programme again. A huge thank you to our volunteer Donna who has been a great second to Tracy for the last few months, helping the group to support each other and continue to support beyond the programme.

SODA

Our SODA group continues to thrive and increase in numbers, offering focused support and guest speakers which empowers our clients even further. We recently ran a slow cooker recipe course, and each client was given a slow cooker at the end of the course to help support them in using the skills they had learnt. A huge thank you to Realise Futures for making this possible.

V.O.I.C.E

Our V.O.I.C.E programme is a 12-week programme that has run successfully in both Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill. This programme is interactive and focuses on a variety of learning styles using discussion, self-reflective exercises, visual media and active participation to generate learning for all participants in a supportive, regulated and trauma informed session. Louise (Young Person Outreach Support Worker) has been doing an amazing job, continuing to help clients by delivering the programme and supporting them often with other needs as and when they arise.



All our team members are now trained to facilitate the group, with Tracy rolling out to our male clients this year and Ellie to our refuge residents. We are excited at the prospect of offering the service at our new locations in Newmarket and Stowmarket - the waiting list is already filling up!

Outreach

Our Outreach clients continue to grow, and as a team we are able to continue offering a one-to-one service. This gives clients that extra support to gain knowledge, understanding and access to other services to help them depending on which stage they are at in their journey. We have continued to signpost, safety plan, boundary set, help obtain non molestation orders, issue legal aid support letters, support with housing, gain funding, validate, reassure and be that non-judgmental listening ear, to our ever-increasing client list.

We have continued to use our empowerment stars method to focus on where our clients' challenges are, which then enables outreach to be structured and tailored to each individual client and will help them where they need it most.

We continue to monitor our client's safety by carrying out our DASH checklist regularly. This has proven successful and ensured that every client gets the correct support put in place and at the correct level.

We have worked closely with other professionals, attending core group meetings, child protection meetings and court to name a few. This has helped build our relationships with other professionals and has ultimately led to better results for our clients. As a team our focus is to enable our clients to be able to live safely, which everyone deserves.

Male Support

Tracy has set up groups to support our male clients, including a dedicated drop-in and a V.O.I.C.E programme that she has adapted for male survivors. It's early days but we cannot wait to see this area continue to grow as we know that there is a real need.



We are fortunate enough to be able to offer childcare for clients using our services, enabling them to fully embrace groups without childcare being a barrier. Thank you to the wonderful Sarah and Sophie!!

A huge highlight for us this year was bringing our clients together for a Christmas party. A first for Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid! This was wonderful to see, and the clients really enjoyed coming together. It gave them a real insight to the volume of clients we work with, especially those who only see us at one service and we got great feedback from the event.

There have been many changes over the last year, we are a small but mighty team and resilience helps us adapt and change for the better. We want to put our service on the map and continue to help support survivors in their time of need and beyond! As a team may we say a special thank you to all that have given up their time to help support our outreach services, it never goes unnoticed.



FINANCE MANAGER REPORT

Derek Gadd

As largely expected, the year to 31 March 2024 has proved to be exceptionally challenging; the Charity has sustained an overall deficit of £100,190. Of that some £41,548 is exceptional expenditure incurred upon the move to new outreach premises and termination of the lease on the Charity's previous premises, including associated professional fees and writing off tenant improvements.

In addition, as noted in my report last year, £33,000 grants received towards the end of 2022/23 in fact related to service provision in 2023/24 and that acceleration of grant receipts was not repeated prior to 31 March 2024.

Against a tough economic backdrop and significant inflationary pressures which have become ever more apparent across our cost base, the operating deficit (excluding exceptional expenditure and grant timing) is close to £26,000. The grant funding environment is increasingly competitive, and that element of the funding mix is well down on that of the previous year, however the largest element of the operating deficit is due to low refuge occupancy during the second half of the year resulting in an annual occupancy rate of just 77% against 89.7% achieved in the previous year. Structural works to the fabric of the refuge building over many weeks played a part in depressing occupancy, however that situation and refuge occupancy has significantly improved in the current year.

Medium term core funding both for the refuge support and outreach services in Bury St Edmunds is secure. Suffolk County Council Public Health Directorate fund refuge support services under a contract which commenced in April 2023 for a minimum term of 3 years. In addition, core funding for outreach services from Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner has been granted until March 2025. The Charity has also greatly benefitted from on-going backing from Lloyds Bank Foundation as well as support from Suffolk Community Foundation, West Suffolk Council and Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill Town Councils, and the generosity of many members of the public and some local companies.

Due to that support, careful cost management against a challenging economic and operational environment, and considerable work to secure additional funding, much of which has come to fruition after the balance sheet date, the Charity remains sufficiently robust to finance services going forward. In addition, and again due to some wonderful support and the hard work of our staff, service provision has continued unaffected in Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill and indeed planning is advanced to extend that provision.



We thank all who support our work, helping us deliver and enhance support to our clients. This year has been no exception with generous cash donations, Christmas gifts, toys, toiletries, clothes, and Easter eggs. Every year we are overwhelmed by people's generosity.

Income and expenditure

Income and expenditure for the 12 months to 31st March 2024 amounted to:

Income	£354,145 (2023: £458,986)
Expenditure	£454,335 (2023: £466,786)

In the main refuge accommodation is funded from Housing Benefit which for 2023/24 amounted to £130,033 (2023: £141,188) on an occupancy rate for the year of 77% (2023: 89.7%), well below that budgeted. In addition, the Charity continues to receive financial support from Suffolk County Council Public Health Directorate for our Refuge services by way of a support grant of £94,816 (2023: £89,504).

Our outreach services and project work are mostly funded by grants and donations. Grant income amounted to £67,025 and comprised:

Suffolk Police & Crime Commissioner - Resource centre outreach funding		£ 50,000
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Funding for outreach, children and young people and other projects:

West Suffolk Council - Community Chest Grant	Children & young people	4,200
Newmarket Town Council	Newmarket outreach	1,000
Bury St Edmunds Town Council - Councillors' Locality Training Budgets		4,000
Bury St Edmunds Town Council - Councillors' Locality Book printing Budgets		550
Bury St Edmunds Town Council	Counselling	6,000
Suffolk Community Foundation - the Household Support Fund	Unrestricted	375
Suffolk Community Foundation - Core costs grant	Unrestricted	900

£67,025



Donations received throughout the year amounted to £47,481 including Gift Aid. These are broken down as follows;

	£
Restricted Donations	11,234
Unrestricted Donations	33,939
Gift Aid	2,308
	£47,481

Gift in kind

During the year the Charity received a generous gift in kind which has been valued and included in the financial statements as part of grant income as follows:

	£
Lloyds Bank Foundation Four laptop computers	1,096

The Charity is very fortunate to receive many gifts in kind each year mostly for our service users and most of modest monetary value. Individual gifts valued at under £200 are not included in these financial statements.

Intangible Income - Voluntary Staff

The charity remains dependent on services provided by volunteers. Without these volunteers, wage costs would be much higher, and we are very thankful for the time volunteers give to the Charity.

The value provided by volunteers is not costed for the purposes of these financial statements.

Reserves Policy

The Charity's reserve policy is to hold unrestricted net current asset reserves equivalent to 3.5 to 5.5 months of projected operating costs to cover any temporary shortfall in cash flow that may occur due to the timing of receipts. The policy has been reviewed and slightly amended during the year to reflect the current level of financial risk to which the charity is
Unrestricted net current assets at the end of the financial year were £145,374 (2023: £197,796).



As of 31 March 2024, reserves cover was 3.2 months. This is, as was expected, significantly down from that of March 2023 (5 months) and slightly below the policy range. As discussed above, the major underlying reasons for the reduction comprise; exceptional expenditure incurred upon termination of the lease on outreach premises, timing of grant receipts and sustained low occupancy of the refuge during the second half of the year, which post year end has been addressed.

Auditor

Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid's accounts are audited by Knights Lowe of Bury St Edmunds, and it is proposed that the Charity continues to use their services as auditor.

Future Plans

Primarily the organisation aims to ensure that current services are fully funded in the medium term, and we can increase our capacity to deliver those services.

Whilst the current economic outlook continues to present funding challenges, the ever-increasing demand for domestic abuse support services compels us to continue to look for opportunities to extend the geographical reach of our adult outreach and develop our work with children and young people, subject to sufficient resources being available.

Recently we have secured project funding to commence adult outreach services to both Newmarket and Stowmarket and that provision is due to commence mid-2024.

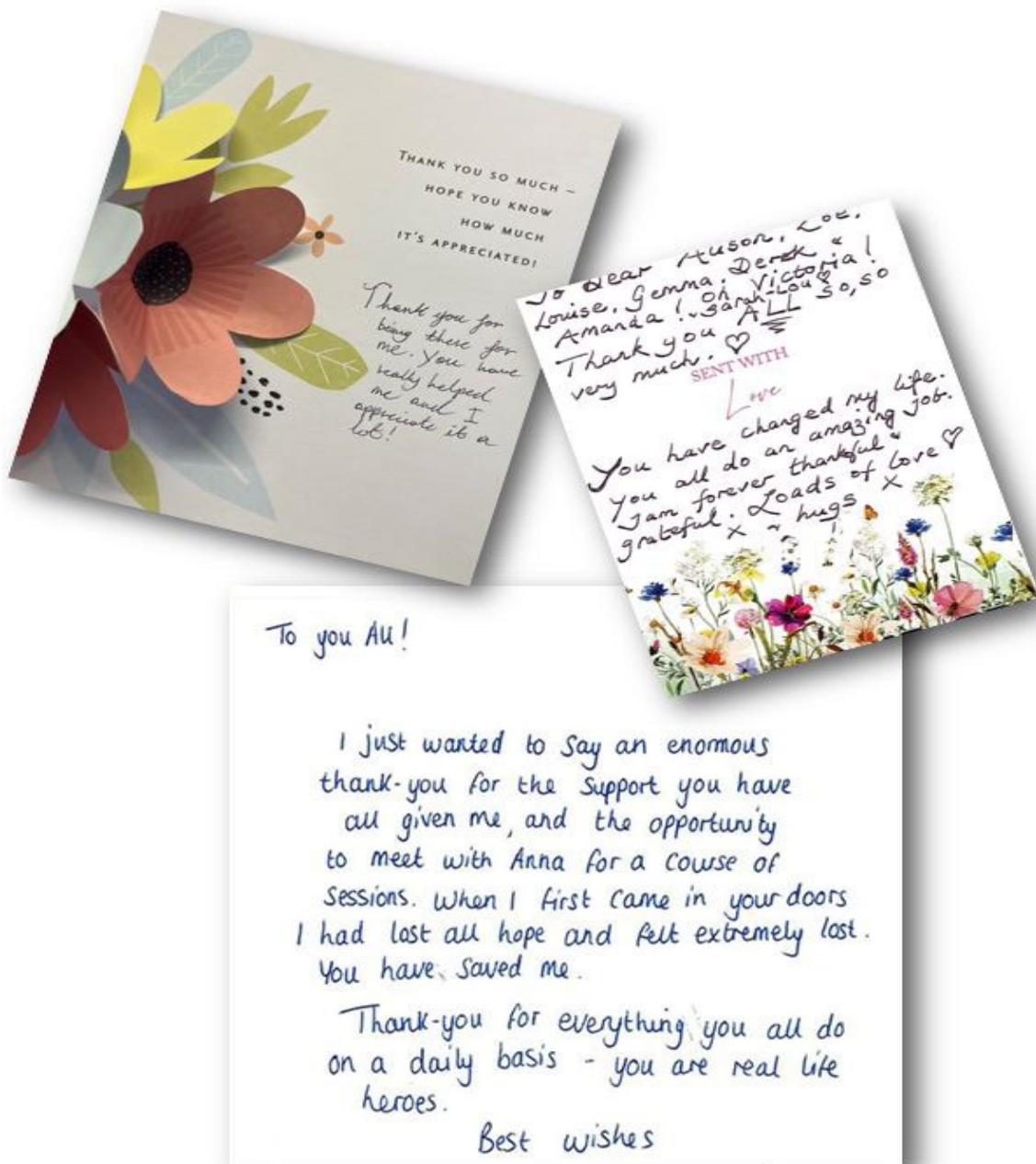
As always, I thank my colleagues and our trustees who have supported me in my role this year.



FEEDBACK

"I am not sure if she mentioned, but I bumped into one of your clients a few weeks ago and I was so pleased to hear how well she has been getting on in the Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid refuge. She is so grateful for the support of staff and residents, and she physically presented like a different person to who I first met. It was such a pleasure hearing how indebted she feels to the refuge and how valuable you have been for her. I wanted to thank you for making this process easier for her, and for making it such a smooth, quick transition."

Email message from an IDVA.





VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



**Bury St Edmunds Women's Aid
require volunteers in**

**Bury St Edmunds
Haverhill**

**Stowmarket
Newmarket**

**to assist in childcare, group support
and many other areas**

to find out more information and application email :
admin@burystedmundswomensaid.org.uk



If you would like to volunteer with our organisation, please take a look at our Padlet:

<https://padlet.com/BSEWomensAid/Volunteers>



AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A huge thank you to all of our supporters, big and small, local and further afield, who have donated money, time and many lovely items:

Our Volunteers	Newmarket Town Council
Asda	Realise Futures
Aquarius Singers	Rickshaw Riders
Bridge Church	Round Table
Bury St Edmunds Lions	Stuart and Christine Samuels (Father and Mrs Christmas!)
Bury St Edmunds Rotary	Suffolk Community Foundation
Bury St Edmunds Town Council & Councillors'	Suffolk County Council Public Health Directorate
Children In Need	Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner
Gatehouse	Tesco
Gee Gee's Ranch	The Buckingham Emergency Food Appeal (BEFA) www.befafoodappeal.co.uk
Gordon McMeechan	Theatre Royal
Green Light Trust	Toolbox
HC3	Tostock Animal Park
Ickworth House	Tys 2024
Jim Byrne	Unite the Union
Kids Out	Vineyard Church
Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales	Waitrose
Love Grace www.lovegrace.co.uk	West Suffolk Council
Marks and Spencer	Women's Institute
Margaret Healey and the Sisters of St Louis	Wooster's Bakery
Mothers Union	





We would also like to thank our donors who choose to remain anonymous. Without the continued support of our donors, we would not be able to offer the high level of services and support to the people that need them.

If you would like to donate in any way, please visit our website:

www.burystedmundswomensaid.org.uk <https://www.justgiving.com/bse-womensaid/>

or call us on 0330 551 9495

Stay up to date with our news and events at:

www.burystedmundswomensaid.org.uk

Twitter



Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BSEwomensaid>



SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Interested in hearing more about our work? We are happy to provide a speaker for your organisation or group, please email at admin@burystedmundswomensaid.org.uk

CURRENT SERVICES

We provide many services which are accessed by women from the local community and from outside Suffolk:

23-bed Refuge

Male Victim Support

Telephone Advice Helpline

Resettlement Support

Outreach Service

Child Centred Groups

Freedom Programme

Adult Counselling Service

VOICE

Young People Service

Survivors of Domestic Abuse (SODA)

Coffee Morning (Bury St Edmunds and Haverhill)

Advice Helpline:

0330 551 9495

E-mail: admin@burystedmundswomensaid.org.uk

Website: www.burystedmundswomensaid.org.uk

Post: PO Box 715, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 9HQ