

REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER: 02791788 (England and Wales)
REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 1032298

Report of the Trustees and
Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 March 2024
for
Black Country Women's Aid

**Contents of the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

	Page
Reference and Administrative Details	1
Report of the Trustees	2 to 14
Report of the Independent Auditors	15 to 16
Statement of Financial Activities	17
Balance Sheet	18
Cash Flow Statement	19
Notes to the Cash Flow Statement	20
Notes to the Financial Statements	21 to 29

Black Country Women's Aid

Reference and Administrative Details for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

TRUSTEES	Salma Parween Ali Bozena Benton Karen Elizabeth Dowman Victoria Rebecca Harris Melvena Morton
COMPANY SECRETARY	Sara Ward
REGISTERED OFFICE	Landchard House Victoria Street West Bromich B70 8HY
REGISTERED COMPANY NUMBER	02791788 (England and Wales)
REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER	1032298
AUDITORS	TAG Assurance Services Limited Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors 8 Pendeford Place Pendeford Business Park Wolverhampton West Midlands WV9 5HD

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

The trustees who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2024. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives and aims

Black Country Women's Aid's (BCWA) objectives are:

- i) to relieve the physical and mental distress of women who are homeless and/or have been gravely or persistently mistreated by their husbands, the men with whom they are living, the fathers of their children or any other members of their family; and
- ii) to relieve the physical and mental distress of children affected by the disruption in the home.

Significant activities

The main objectives and activities of the year have continued to focus on the development of quality support services for victims of violence, abuse and exploitation both in and out of refuge. The strategies employed to assist the charity in meeting these objectives included the following:

- Delivery of high quality services that include emergency accommodation as well as community- based support for both adult and child victims of violence and abuse including victims of modern slavery
- Sustaining and further development of services to meet victims' needs across the Black Country area and where necessary further afield.
- Identifying and applying for additional funds to sustain existing services and develop new responses to meet victims' needs.
- Developing systems that capture, cope and recover outcomes for victims. This information is used to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of support services and evidence the need for additional services via commissioning/tendering.
- Responding to the changing and complex needs of victims. BCWA will achieve this by ensuring that it creates opportunities to engage through increased partnership work and better coordination.

Public benefit

These essential services provide a valuable public benefit to the citizens of the Black Country, West Midlands and throughout the UK.

The trustees have complied with their duty to have due regard to the commission's public benefit guidance when exercising any powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

ACHIEVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE

Development, Activities and Achievements for 2023/4

In February 2023 a raft of new measures were announced to deal with domestic abuse. There will be a legal duty placed upon a 'range of agencies' so that there is a joined up approach to identify and tackle domestic abuse. Violence against women is to be treated as a national threat - on a par with terrorism.

Rishi Sunak:

"No woman or girl should ever have to feel unsafe in her home or community and I am determined to stamp out these appalling crimes. As well as extra support for victims, we're making it a priority for the police to tackle violence against women and girls and toughening up the way offenders are managed - preventing more of these crimes from happening in the first place, and bringing more perpetrators to justice. Government will also require police forces to treat violence against women and girls as a national threat, as set out in a new strategic policing requirement published today. This means tackling these crimes will be as important as tackling threats like terrorism, serious and organised crime and child sexual abuse."

Greater emphasis is to be placed on the 'ask for ANI' (Action Needed Immediately) - the code word scheme that enables victims of abuse to ask for immediate help in participating Pharmacies and Job Centres. Over 5,000 pharmacies including Boots, Lloyds and community pharmacies are enrolled on the scheme.

Home Secretary, Suella Braverman:

".....police forces in England and Wales will now have to treat violence against women and girls as a national threat and more victims will be protected from harm."

While we are seeing some of the impact of the Domestic Abuse Act becoming law, it is also clear that more needs to be done to keep women and children safe from domestic abuse. During the year BCWA contributed to the national audit conducted by the Women's Aid Federation for England. The key findings were as follows:

- o Many women struggled to access services equipped to meet their needs: Almost a quarter of survivors (22.3%) reported having a physical health disability, however, only 1.1% of refuge vacancies listed on Routes to Support in 2021-22 were suitable for a woman with limited mobility and just 0.9% of vacancies could accommodate a woman requiring a wheelchair accessible space. Whilst 4,611 (12.1%) service users were not British nationals and, of these, 30% did not have recourse to public funds (NRPF), only 9.1% of all vacancies could consider women with NRPF. Most women (62.0%) had children, with an average of 1.3 children per service user, and yet, less than half of refuge vacancies could accommodate a woman with two children.
- o Shortfalls persist in refuge bedspaces and vacancies: The increase we saw in the number of bedspaces during 2020-21 (largely as a result of emergency Covid-19 funding) appears to have been sustained over 2021-22 and bedspaces have increased (1st May 2022) by a further 55. There is, however, still a 23.2% shortfall. Meanwhile, despite this increase in the number of spaces, 229 fewer vacancies were made available during 2021-22 overall compared to 2020-21, when vacancies were already at significantly lower levels due to the impact of the pandemic.
- o Experiences of service providers around the implementation of the duty were mixed: Some reported feeling optimism for service expansion from the increase in dedicated funding (49.2% of respondents running refuge services had received funding as a result of the statutory duty), however, there were also significant concerns around the commercialisation of commissioning and variation in the way that local authorities were interpreting the regulations and guidance. Services were concerned about decommissioning of specialist services, particularly those run 'by and for' Black and minoritised women, in favour of competitive tenders, more generic housing-focused providers and taking services 'in-house'.

It was vital that BCWA remained highly visible and responsive to victims.

Overall referral numbers 2023/24

12,096 cases were opened during 2023/24. These included:

- Domestic abuse community services: **7,986** (of these, 290 referrals were into Ask MARC DA male specialist support services)
- Rape and sexual violence services: **1,346** (of these, 70 referrals were into Ask MARC SV male specialist support services)
- Children's services: **178**
- Stalking services: **930**
- Therapeutic services: **413**
- Modern slavery services: **528**

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

- DA accommodation services: **288** (requests for refuge, of which **86** new clients were accommodated)
- Women's justice services: **427**

A year in our service 2023-2024

- **258,978** entries recorded into our case management system
- **52,661** calls made to agencies and clients
- **33,594** emails and texts to clients
- **25,125** calls and texts from clients and agencies
- **13** calls or texts per hour to our helpline

Trustees, senior management and all staff worked together to devise operational plans. These plans included:

Being where victims can reach us - BCWA ensures that the general public know how to make contact for help, advice and support. Each BCWA centre is located in areas with good transport links, discreet locations and which are accessible for victims needing help and support. We respond when they are ready to talk. Key messaging to victims is vital to let them know that they are not alone even though they are often made to feel that they are. BCWA knows that a victim making the choice to pick up the phone or make the decision to leave is at significant risk of serious hurt and harm. We respond swiftly and confidently. BCWA works with local councils, strategic partnerships and the business community to promote the services offered. Social media and investment in quality communications ensures that we reach people living in our communities who may be living with abuse. BCWA regularly features on local radio and maintains a high social media presence for greater reach. Unfortunately due to funding BCWA were forced to close the office in Walsall. To mitigate the loss of office space BCWA worked with local partners to identify alternative spaces to connect with victims/survivors so that the quality of service was not affected.

BCWA listens and hears the voices of those that we provide services to. This is done in ways that enable a dialogue, feedback and impact; their voice is vital to the future direction of services. Where gaps in service are identified BCWA aim to respond. The integrated abuse support vision aims to offer help and support to anyone who has experienced abuse and for that service to be under one roof and easily accessible.

Secure and Quality information - BCWA continue to develop its technological systems and resources for accurate record keeping and data capture. Much of this informs strategic partnerships, influences strategy and identifies trends and changes to enable responses to be appropriate and proportionate. We have been able to analyse information to ensure that services reflect the needs of the communities we serve, ensure efficient use of precious staff resources and manage the increasing volumes. Achieving Cyber Security standards remains a high priority as victims in services need to be confident that BCWA is able to store and keep safe information about their abuse. BCWA has achieved the Cyber Essential standards both self-assessment and Cyber Essentials Plus for the 3rd year running. During the year BCWA also prepared submissions for the IASME Cyber Assurance standard level 1. This provides assurance that BCWA has put into place a range of important cyber security, and data protection measures.

Quality information has been vital to share information at Domestic homicide reviews. It is essential that accurate information about the support BCWA and partners have provided (or not) is analysed to enable improvements to systems, procedures and partner working. Trustees agreed that in 2024/25 BCWA would invest into a new data system. BCWA will be working with IT providers to develop a more up to date system of case management and data capture.

Making every contact count - BCWA continue to invest time and resources to ensure that there are effective and connected operational systems to identify and support victims of abuse where ever they living within the West Midlands. The use of social media, promotional campaigns, weekly updates and messaging as well as joint work with partners, ensures that we reach as many people as possible. Communicating with victims has changed over the years and we need to make sure that we change and respond to in a way victims can engage and access services. Since COVID, there has been a slow recovery from online communication to face to face. However, BCWA is pleased to be able to offer a range of options for people who need us. Making every contact count means that from the 1st call or conversation victims are given resources and support to enable them to make informed decisions. Feedback from victims/survivors was extremely positive and many commented on the positive engagement they maintain with their support worker.

Being there at court - The post COVID pandemic continues to have an impact on the operation of the criminal justice system and the support available to victims. A hard-hitting report by domestic abuse charity, Advance, reveals that women are failed at every stage of the criminal justice system and is calling for drastic change. Her Story, Her Justice shines a spotlight on each juncture where survivors of domestic abuse are let down - from the minute they report abuse to the police, through to a traumatising and often unsuccessful prosecution process as they seek justice and protection through the courts. The shameful fact is that 96% of domestic abuse crimes do NOT result in a prosecution. Even in cases where prosecution is successful, Advance has found that survivors often receive inadequate information and protection following their abuser's conviction.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

These failures are a key reason why prosecutions and convictions have been on the downslide since 2015, says Advance. In 2023, there were nearly 300,000 more reports of domestic abuse-related crimes to the police than in 2018. Yet, in that same period there were nearly 40,000 fewer prosecutions by the CPS - and less than 5% of reported crimes lead to a prosecution.

Advance's CEO, Liz Mack, explains:

"We must shine a light on the shockingly low rate of prosecutions and convictions for domestic abuse, and the re-traumatisation of women during the fractured and protracted criminal justice process, in order to campaign for urgent change. With this national campaign we will highlight the systemic failures which are preventing women from seeing justice."

The Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Nicole Jacobs, says:

"Domestic abuse is a devastating and widespread crime, making up one in six reports to the police. Yet as Her Story, Her Justice makes clear, victims and survivors are still being failed at every stage of the criminal justice system.

We're constantly asking ourselves how criminal justice system can improve. In this report you have the insight of frontline staff that have been working on the ground for years to do just that: improve criminal justice outcomes for victims and survivors.

This is exactly the kind of information that should be in front of every criminal justice leader as they work to bring our system up to a standard that victims and survivors can believe in.

It's time government and policing leaders to get to grips with this very serious problem. This report gives vital insights from the front line and a blueprint to make that a reality."

Delays in court hearings and postponed cases have meant that there is a significant backlog of court hearings. Many victims in BC'S services are supported by Independent Domestic Advisers (IDVA's) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVA's). For BCWA support staff, this has meant that victims are within the service longer than previously recorded, trauma levels are higher and there is an increasing volume of new referrals into the service to support, creating genuine pressure points in the service. There is no doubt that this will have a lasting impact on victims and will challenge resources into the next financial year. BCWA will continue to support victims at court and voice victims concerns in strategic and policy spaces.

Maintaining positive partnerships - BCWA is a valued partner with both statutory and non-statutory partners. BCWA has made significant contributions to local strategic plans and play an active role in providing information, data, and access to victims to enable strategies and commissions to be developed. BCWA also takes its responsibility seriously to seek additional funds to support local funding strengthening service offers. BCWA acknowledges that it is vital to receive funding from a variety of funders to avoid reliance on statutory funding but also to lever additional funding to support local strategies.

BCWA continues to makes a significant contribution to the partnerships across the 4 Black Country authorities (Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton), influencing strategic and operational development. These include vital partnerships such as the Sandwell Crime Reduction Partnership/Safer Sandwell, Sandwell Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (DASP) Dudley Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership and Forum (DDAF) and Dudley Safe and Sound, Walsall Domestic Abuse Strategic Group (DASG) and Violent Leads Group as well as operational groups focusing on young people at risk of exploitation, Local Safeguarding Children's and Adults Board, West Midlands Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) Board, Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) Board and local Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing (MARAC) and Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) as well as taking thematic leads on domestic abuse, modern slavery and stalking at the Office of the Police Crime Commissioner's Victim's Commission. The Victims Commission is the PCC's advisory body on the provision of specialist services. The role of the Victim's Commission is to ensure that services have a positive impact on victims, improving the circumstances of individuals affected by crime, to cope with the effects of their experiences and recover from the harm they have experienced.

In addition to the above multi agency partnerships, BCWA works with specialist services nationally and across the region to ensure that services are coordinated and meet the highest standards. The organisation has continued its partnerships work with the following: National Stalking Consortium, Specialist Domestic Violence and Abuse Consortium, Rape and Sexual Violence Consortium and the Women's Justice Partnership supporting vulnerable people. This approach continues to demonstrate that agencies cannot work in isolation, but are always stronger together.

During 2023/24 the BCWA Chief Executive worked hard to ensure that services across the Black Country were represented and funding secured. This approach remains integral to the future of specialist services as we continue to face challenges. The Office of the Police Crime Commissioners Victim's Commission has succeeded in building a culture of collaboration and ownership for victim care through the voluntary and community sector, so that they experience quality support from the first point of contact.

BCWA continues to work with The Salvation Army and the England and Wales delivery partners on challenging local responses, improving systems and services for victims of modern slavery within the National Referral Mechanism.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

Cost of living crisis continues - Sadly, women continue to be disproportionately affected by the cost-of-living crisis, particularly those who find themselves living in an abusive household or in an abusive relationship. This is even more acute for Black women and women of other ethnic minorities, who experience significantly higher rates of poverty. Women's Aid surveyed women who have experienced domestic abuse in the past year and the majority (96%) said the crisis has had a negative impact on their financial situation. Some women face the impossible choice between staying in an abusive relationship, or leaving and experiencing further financial hardship or destitution. Several charities have expressed concern that the situation is making it difficult for women to escape from their abusers. In some cases, women have been required to return to live with their abusers because they cannot afford to live alone. Almost three quarters of women (73%) living with, or having financial links with, their abuser said that the cost-of-living crisis had either prevented them from leaving or made it harder for them to leave. This has left them at risk in an unsafe home. The situation is often compounded by the fact that abusers sometimes cut off their victims from any financial resources (for more information, see our article on economic control). Abusers are relying on the cost-of-living crisis to further justify restricting access to money, leaving victims cut off.

BCWA is committed to ensuring that victims have access to food, clothing and shelter and has established positive and committed links with local people, communities and businesses. BCWA supporter's generosity comes in both financial support as well as essential items such as clothing, toiletries, start-up kits for new mothers and any call outs for help when someone we support has very little on arrival into refuge. Our links with local foodbanks, other charities and the community voluntary organisations enabled food, clothing and essentials for distribution, as families told us how they continue to struggle with meeting the basic needs of their children/family.

Sustaining Quality Services - BCWA have worked hard to identify new areas of funding to support commissioned and contracted services. Funding was secured for a longer period (2yrs) resulting in a reduction in the pressures to seek funding by mid-year. We have maximised the opportunity by reviewing and remodelling services to ensure maximum efficiency and front line work. We know that this may not be the pattern of funding in the future, as in 2024/25, we face a number of commissions ending. The political landscape is likely to change and there will be uncertainty towards the end of 2024/25.

Quality is essential to the organisation. BCWA is assessed externally by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) for quality of service and safeguarding. BCWA works within the framework of International Standards Organisation (ISO) related to health & safety environmental, business continuity, information security and quality standards. Whilst these are conditions of the modern day slavery support contract, BCWA continues to adopt the standards across all services. Regular internal strategic and operational review enables all services to remain relevant, victim focused and of high quality.

Funders/commissioners continue to express satisfaction with the standards of service delivery, performance as well as BCWA's ability to be responsive, innovative and dynamic in its solutions for victims. At all times BCWA maintain a meaningful dialogue with clients across all services, ensuring that they remain central to the core values and influence the response.

Service details

Community Services - Domestic Abuse

BCWA continues to provide commissioned services for Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall local strategic partnerships and continues to provide domestic abuse support services. High risk victims continue to be supported by an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) who provide immediate support and minimise risk, linking with local Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). BCWA is integral to the Walsall Strengthening Families model and the Black Country Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC), where highly vulnerable children are identified and support around the family is provided. Both specialist areas will be independently evaluated.

High risk victims continue to be supported by an independent domestic abuse adviser (IDVA). Volumes are increasing and further support has been made available by the West Midlands Office of the Police Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to support this increase and strengthen the regional Multiagency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) that take place across the Black Country.

BCWA is now embedded in local operational spaces. This has enabled victims to access services easily and works with partners to advise on identification and referral to our services. BCWA continue to operate within the following structures:

- o Multi agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) - many referrals are received through this route as partners share information, jointly risk assess and provide a multi-agency response.
- o GP Practices - delivering the national Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) programme; a GP practice based model that provides training and education, clinical enquiry, care pathways and an enhanced referral pathway to specialist domestic violence services.
- o Accident and Emergency Departments - Based within Russell's Hall Hospital Trust, specialist advocates identify victims presenting with multiple injuries as a result of abuse. BCWA continue to triangulate support for victims in both primary and acute services to reduce risk and increase safety.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

- o Substance misuse commissioned services. Working particularly within the Sandwell Blue Light Project BCWA is part of the multi-agency operational group to ensure a joint identification and ownership of the highest impact clients, both as victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- o Early help hubs. Working at a local level with a range of professionals supporting victims and working to keep them safe.
- o Schools where children have been identified through police notifications. BCWA has worked with West Midlands Police, Walsall MBC and the Home Office to secure funds to support children and young people.

Stalking Services

BCWA continues to develop its Stalking service. The team uses a number of specialist tools, including the SRP (Stalking Risk Profile), SASH (Screening Assessment for Stalking and Harassment) and Dr Jane Monckton-Smith's Homicide Timeline to profile perpetrators. This expertise is invaluable in our advocacy with agencies such as police and probation, to help them manage offenders, address stalking behaviour directly and safeguard victims. This service continues to be supported by the Office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner.

The OPCC was successful in obtaining Home Office funding for supporting perpetrators of abuse; BCWA provides continued and ongoing support to the victim. The Early Awareness Stalking Intervention ("EASI") pilot is in partnership with HMPPS Psychology Services Group and West Midlands Police and focuses on improving how they identify and address stalking. The vision for Psychology Services Group and West Midlands Police is to trial a cost- and time-efficient, targeted, and evidence-informed intervention for those who are known to have engaged in stalking, delivered at the earliest stage possible. Police training is being supported by the Alice Ruggles Trust. The project is being evaluated by the University of Derby in their Faculties of Criminology and Forensics.

The service remains a member of the National Stalking Consortium chaired by Suzy Lamplugh's Trust. BCWA provide updates of the positive work they continue to achieve locally and together plan for National Stalking Week Conference.

During the year the service was instrumental in setting up the first stalking clinic for the region, strengthening the partnerships response valuing all contributions. This is an ambition realised since the start of the stalking service developed by BCWA.

The stalking clinic:

- holds bespoke multi-agency meetings where high risk referrals are assessed and where the team look at stalking behaviours, the motivations behind them and the history and mental health of the offender
- identifies and shares organisational learning and feeding back into the partnership for future training and development for partners
- discusses the profiles and risk of stalkers with all parties sharing intelligence and information
- provides feedback and advice to officers to ensure robust management of stalking
- provides referrals to the independent stalking advocacy caseworker (ISAC) and partner agencies for high risk stalking
- facilitates case discussions with the ISAC, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and force stalking tactical lead, ensuring victim support and safeguarding dedicated legal advisor to support the application of SPOs and advocating for their use
- co-ordinates cross-border support to stalking cases, as required.

Rape, Sexual Violence and Abuse Services

Every victim and survivor of sexual violence should be able to access a high-quality, well managed ISVA service, wherever they are in the country, regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality or beliefs; and whether or not they have chosen to engage with the criminal justice process.

Ensuring that all victims get access to the valuable services of an ISVA remains constant. BCWA's team of ISVAs (independent sexual violence advisers) who support both male and female survivors of rape and sexual abuse across the Black Country (Sandwell, Dudley, Wolverhampton and Walsall). The service includes specialist advocates who support child and adult victims of childhood sexual abuse. BCWA continue to provide links from the regional Sexual Assault Referrals Centres (SARC) into local services and provides specialist therapeutic interventions. The Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVA) continue to play a key role in helping survivors to access and engage with the criminal justice system, both through support in court and with applications for Criminal Injuries Compensation administration.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

BCWA continues to play an active role in the following partnerships:

- Regional Rape and Sexual Assault strategic group. The vision of this strategy is to reduce and prevent all forms of sexual assault and abuse. The Sexual Assault and Abuse (SAA) Board will work to ensure the West Midlands offers a multi-agency, holistic and seamless service to victims of sexual assault and abuse; to enhance the services provided to those affected through the criminal justice pathway, to provide therapeutic support to victims to help them rebuild their lives and to hold offenders to account for their behaviour.
- Voice of the Victim Forum - this focuses discussions with agencies to discuss how to best ensure that victims remain engaged and their voices heard through the police investigation. It advocates for the consistent use of the victims code and improved communication between victim and officer via the ISVA.
- VAWG Local Scrutiny and Involvement Panel (West Midlands) - This meeting provides the opportunity for BCWA to provide an insight into the landscape of support for victims of SV. This particular quarter focused on the impact of DHR's and what we can learn from them from a CPS perspective.

BCWA is proud to have achieved Lime Culture Quality standards for its Adult ISVA service, Ask Marc and children's service. The Quality Standards set out the standards for ISVA services across four domains: Leadership and Governance, Access and Engagement, Service Delivery, and Outcomes and Evaluation.

Specialist Children's independent Sexual violence advisors (CHISVA) continue to support children and young people who have experienced rape and sexual violence. Our specialist children and young people's services support young victims of rape, sexual assault, child sexual exploitation (CSE) and domestic violence. This area of work continues to work as partnerships gain a greater understanding of the impact of abuse on children. Working with both adult and child will strengthen relationships and develop resilience and confidence in young people as they progress into adulthood.

Women's Justice

BCWA continues to provide a specialist early-intervention project, commissioned by the Office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner via New Chance, where BCWA is a subcontractor of the main contract held by Changing Lives. These services both provides diversion from custody or from conviction for women in Sandwell, Dudley and Birmingham. Women access this service following arrest or conviction and they are referred by police or via probation to the service. Probation officers are co-located within the Women's Justice Centres providing a trauma informed space for women who have offended. The service offers practical and emotional support aimed at helping them to move forward in their lives and avoid future offending. BCWA women's justice workers facilitate relationships with other agencies and rebuild confidence in women that service are there to help. Reductions in other services has meant that there is an increased pressure on this service. Women presenting with mental health challenges and PTSD are increasing. BCWA continues to encourage the co-location of professionals and, during the year, worked with probation and sexual health professionals to develop a Women's trauma Informed Health Care Pilot. The sexual health screening and general women's health services were brought into the centre to break down barriers of accessing healthcare services. All women in BCWA service can access the service. During the year, the partnership had been nominated and awarded the Kathy Biggar trophy with the Butler Trust.

During the year BCWA worked with the OPCC and partners to develop the Intensive Supervision Court (ISC) in Birmingham (previously named the Problem Solving Court). The ISC will be for women serving community orders, for low level offences in Birmingham, will be closely monitored by judges, as part of a new pilot scheme. It forms part of a new community sentencing approach, to tackle the root causes of offenders' behaviour, help them change their ways and cut reoffending. Through the pilot launched in Birmingham Magistrates' Court, when a woman is sentenced, the judge will order them to attend regular review meetings in BCWA women's justice centres, to check they are abiding by the requirements of their community sentence. Women will also have access to specialist drug and alcohol treatment, to help them tackle any substance misuse, which could be driving their behaviour. At the same time, they will receive intensive supervision from the Probation Service, which could include frequent and random drug testing.

The pilot, which forms part of the Government's 10-Year Drug Strategy, and was made possible following the Government's Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act 2022, with a statutory instrument laid in Parliament to launch the 18-month pilot.

Phil Bowen, Director for the Centre of Justice Innovation, said: "The evidence suggests that, by combining wraparound supervision with regular judicial oversight which holds people and services to account, we can make a material difference to offending. These pilots allow us to test the effectiveness of these approaches in order to inform decisions on any potential wider roll-out."

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

Accommodation and Outreach Service (domestic abuse and modern day slavery victims care contract)

BCWA continue to provide a safe accommodation for victims of violence and abuse following the success of the commission the previous year. New systems and procedures were put in place against the new commission. Demand for services remain high, with demand always outstripping need. Families continue to experience financial hardship. The refuge team has built good relationships with the Local Welfare Provision, and a range of charities e.g. The Buttle Trust, to apply for individual grants for families who need help including when they leave and establish their own home. BCWA also raise funds for its appeal, "Make a house a home", helping families with basics and essentials when they move out such as household goods, flooring, school supplies and toys for individual children. This has been particularly supportive of our clients. Parents have expressed their thanks and gratitude for this additional support.

BCWA also aim to make the stay in refuge as supportive, but also, as fun as possible. Supported by many corporate and individual donors, they support positive activities for the women and children, such as fun days out to the seaside and cultural events such as Diwali, Eid and Christmas.

BCWA is committed to identifying additional units of accommodation to meet needs and demand. Supporting children living within the safe accommodation provision is crucial. Counselling and support for children and young people has been vital. BCWA continue to receive generous gifts and donations to support women and children living in safe accommodation, with one donor covering the cost of all school uniforms, their Christmas dinner and funds to contribute to rent costs.

BCWA continue to provide units of accommodation and outreach services spanning the West Midlands for victims of Modern Day Slavery (MDS) in partnership with the Salvation Army, who hold the national contract with the Home Office. Each year sees an increase in victims accessing the service, demonstrating greater awareness and understanding of modern slavery and the extent of it within our communities. Risks are very high for the victims, as often the traffickers will make significant attempts to find them. Therefore, security needs to be high for both victims and staff providing this vital service.

The service works with a range of stakeholders to gather intelligence on locations and vulnerabilities where exploitation operates and takes an active part in the media, highlighting the plight of victims. BCWA also contributes to national discussions, legislative changes and acts as expert consultants to the West Midlands Modern Slavery Strategy and West Midlands Police Multi Agency Policy and Procedures. We represent survivors on the West Midlands Anti-Slavery Network, Human Trafficking Advisory Foundation Forum, and PAN West Midlands Multi-Agency Group.

BCWA continues to work within local strategic partnerships as they increase their awareness of modern slavery and acknowledge the vital role that they play in identifying and coordinating rescue.

Legal restrictions on economic activity may be increasing risks of exploitation in other contexts. Concerns have been raised for sex workers as nightclubs close, and sex work is pushed underground, making workers increasingly vulnerable to trafficking.

Counselling and Therapeutic Services

Counselling and specialist therapeutic interventions underpin the support services and are an essential component of a holistic approach to addressing trauma. The service offer continues to combine both face to face and the use of technology to counsel victims.

Business development and finance

Strategic and partnership working remains a vital part of our work. The corporate centre continues to strengthen following investment into key positions in finance, human resources, business and operational development and communications. BCWA produce regular newsletters, use social media, and publish articles in the national press on related issues to highlight the plight of victims of abuse and the impact of national policy on victims' lives.

Quality, Learning and Enterprise

BCWA have robust internal audit functions auditing the standards and quality of service against national standards. Reports, analysis and trends for strategic partnerships, funders and commissioners are available on a regular basis, outlining the performance of the service against specification/commission. Training and development of employees, all increased in the last 12 months and employees recognise the impact of training on their practice.

BCWA has continued with many of the online learning opportunities established during COVID and has since developed a Workforce development team to focus on the continual professional development of all its workforce, matching national standards against practice.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

Employees are developed through an organisational training plan and encouraged to pursue external qualifications as part of their Professional Development Plan (PDP). This will be further strengthened as we move towards Employment Competency Frameworks to further develop our employee skills and talents. The organisation continues to support the Home Office standards for Independent domestic violence and sexual violence advocacy services, as defined by SafeLives, Lime Culture, Women's Aid Federation of England and Wales, Respect and the Care Quality Commission.

BCWA remains an organisation recognised for its expertise in both policy and practice. The senior management team have been involved in the development of national policy, national accredited training courses and the continuing professional development of health and other professionals. During 2023/24 BCWA remained lead trainers within local strategic partners providing expertise on interpersonal violence, abuse and exploitation.

The organisation continues to receive gifts in kind, including toys, food and toiletries from a variety of women's organisations, religious groups, and individuals and other organisations, as well as hours of volunteer time amounting to over 300 hrs.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Our income increased to £10,016,725 from £8,600,515, an increase of 16%, whilst expenditure rose from £7,065,286 to £8,223,119. The increased income is a reflection of the increase in funds to support the direct service delivery. The organisation continues to realise its longer term plan to diversify funds away from the statutory funding and has been able to attract new funding streams to support existing services and take on new projects.

Expenses and overheads have been tightly controlled and new contracts reflect the savings shown. The increase in expenditure is due to a response to service increase, where operational and staff costs increased in line with our provision of extra services.

The Statement of Financial activities shows an increase in funds of £1,793,606. Our reserves now stand at £8,518,663 of which £1,722,813 is restricted and £6,795,850 is unrestricted. The balance of unrestricted reserves includes £3,686,059 which is designated to meet future commitments. Therefore the balance of free reserves is £3,109,791 of which £1,799,746 relates to fixed assets.

Reserves Policy

The Board of Trustees has examined the charity's requirements for reserves in light of the main risks to the organisation.

The Board of Trustees has agreed to support a 3-year strategy that includes:

- Strategic Development Fund - where the organisation undertakes research and development to inform future service provision and secure additional funds for longer term service delivery costs of £383,160.
- Service Continuity Fund - where the organisation maintains costs for closure as well as 6 months' running costs of £1,135,414.
- Property Contingency Fund - where the organisation has to ensure sufficient funds to maintain the properties to a high standard, ensure routine repairs and maintenance and be prepared in the event of major structural damage - £265,000.
- Redundancy Reserve - where the organisation will pay the redundancy over the capped limit to long term employees - £155,500.
- Capital Reserve - where the organisation will invest in property to meet the demand of the services - £1,746,985.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

FUTURE PLANS

Future plans include:

1. Development of regional working opportunities for joint working.
2. Implementation of new policies ensuring that the systems are fit for purpose, are high quality and meet nationally recognised quality standards.
3. Development and implementation of a new case management system.
4. Development of a strategic investment plan for increasing BCWA assets.
5. Seeking opportunities for funding new opportunities.
6. Preparing services for future tendering.
7. Contribute to strategic and operational plans with a range of partners to create a "whole systems approach" to supporting victims wherever they present ensuring that victims remain supported, risks identified and protected.
8. Continue to influence strategy at a local, regional and national level.
9. Reviewing services; evaluating cost effectiveness, efficiency and operational delivery. Reviewing governance arrangements and strengthening corporate services meeting the needs of a growing organisation.
10. Further development of the training and educational programmes and developments, working within local educational partnerships and academic institutions.
11. Establishing improved solutions to victims of violence and abuse that have little or no access to public funds and ensure that this issue remains high on the strategic agenda.
12. Developing a "Women's Centre" approach, widening the opportunities for women.
13. Exploring the implementation of gendered spaces in line with national standards.

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

This is a company limited by guarantee and its operations include:

- The provision of supported accommodation for individuals leaving violence, abuse and exploitation.
- Outreach and resettlement support services for children, young people and women moving back into the community after leaving refuge and/or within a safe home.
- The provision of a community-based support and advocacy service for victims of abuse in and out of the criminal justice system.
- Community engagement/involvement and peer support for victims of violence and abuse.
- Delivery of training and awareness raising to both statutory and non-statutory agencies, work with schools, colleges and other educational establishments outlining the effects/impact of abuse, explaining models of interventions.
- Working in partnership both at a strategic and operational level with the statutory and voluntary sector to develop a co-ordinated response to tackling domestic abuse.

Governing Document

The organisation is a charitable company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales, incorporated in 1993 and registered as a charity in 1994. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objectives and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.00.

Recruitment and Appointment of Management Committee

The Directors of the Company are also Charity Trustees for the purpose of charity law and under the Articles are known as the members of the Management Committee. Under the requirements of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, the members of the management committee must be re-elected each year.

The Management Committee, where possible, seeks to ensure that the needs of victims of abuse whether adults, children or young people are appropriately reflected through the diversity of the Trustee body. To enhance the potential pool of Trustees, promotions take place to attract skilled individuals from all sectors to contribute their skill, knowledge and commitment. This is regularly discussed at Board meetings to ensure good representation.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

Trustee Induction and training

Trustees are familiar with the operational work of the charity and are supported by the CEO through a Trustee information pack and the opportunity to visit the various services, as part of an optional induction.

Risk management

The Board of Trustees has conducted a review of the major risks to which the charity is exposed and this is outlined in its Strategic Plan. A risk management policy has been developed with supporting documents of risk appetite and risk register and are updated annually to assess the risks to services and funds and any other changes that the charity faces. The internal governance framework enables risk to be identified at all levels and provides an open, transparent and inclusive culture of information exchange throughout the organisation. All employees have the opportunity to share and express their thoughts and views regarding risk. Risk assessments are maintained and updated regularly across all service areas and summarised within the Executive team discussions who hold and share risk on a day to day basis. Risk is shared within the subcommittee reporting structures with trustees.

BCWA consider the organisation faces the following risks:

- Political uncertainty - The recent general election may cause some uncertainty for future funding. Whilst the Violence against Women and Girls agenda remains highly political, it is difficult to assess the direction each political party will take.
- Financial and economic factors - Rising or stagnating inflation and the ongoing risk of potential recession could see charitable donations reduce. BCWA will need to closely monitor funding sources as there will be greater competition for donations.
- Reduction in statutory sector funding - Local government continue to experience financial pressures. With many taking services "in-house", this may result in a reduction in future commissions. BCWA are actively involved in local strategic needs assessments that will influence and shape future commissions.
- Increasing costs - inflation is likely to increase and continue to drive up operating costs. BCWA will continue to analyse costs to ensure that all equipment, resources and expenses are good value for money.
- Public health issues - COVID, influenza and other public health concerns could further impact charity operations by sickness absence, client access to onsite services, and may spread quickly affecting both staff and clients and/or events planned e.g. in refuge. BCWA will continue to monitor sickness absence, site health issues and client contact/DNA's. BCWA will aim to reduce risk in events held by considering the time of year and locations and build in some flexibility in the planning stages.
- Natural disasters - Climate change is having a global effect on seasons, property and agencies response. As a result, charitable funds may be diverted for disaster relief. In addition BCWA will monitor the Property Management Plan to assess whether damage is being caused to BCWA property and bring planned maintenance brought forward.
- Cybersecurity threats - BCWA are aware that these are increasing and have put measures in place to increase the security of the IT infrastructure. In addition BCWA maintain the Cyber essentials accreditation and works with Hubtel ,the IT provider, to minimise risk. Regular training and IT reports inform strategy and action.
- Recruitment and retention - There have been many challenges to recruit competent employees and subsequently retain competent skilled employees. The market is fast changing and highly competitive. BCWA regularly reviews and benchmarks against its industry comparators and aims to be an employer of choice, not exclusively for its salaries, but for welfare, social responsibility and opportunity. Succession planning and employee development is crucial.
- Compliance and standards - BCWA provide services linked to national contracting that requires more stringent regulatory requirements. BCWA is working to maintain high level standards such as ISO's, professional standards and accreditations whilst remaining compliant and up to date with charity and company law. Financial procedures are adhered to and regularly reviewed with regard to authorisation of transactions for all project expenditure.
- Reputational risks - BCWA have maintained an excellent track record of service provision and high quality staff. However, it acknowledges that any controversy or scandal could damage its reputation and impact supporter trust. This in turn may affect future contracting, funding, partnerships and donations. BCWA emphasise across the organisation the responsibility each and every employee has in maintaining and upholding the reputation and values.

All contracted services work within relevant contractual timescales, quality standards and are monitored externally on a quarterly basis and internally on a monthly basis, in accordance with the organisation's performance framework. This ensures a consistent quality of service for all operational aspects of services.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

All Service Level Agreements (SLAs) have agreed targets and outcomes and are performance monitored on a quarterly basis. Services aim to work within nationally recognised standards of practice and seek external accreditation, e.g. Women's Aid Federation of England and Wales, Safe Lives, The Survivors Trust, Rape Crisis England and Wales and the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP).

All grants/funds/contracts awarded are for specific time periods and have project plans and milestones to ensure work is monitored and meeting required standards. Regular contact with commissioners ensures that the work is on target and achieving its expected outcomes.

Board meetings take place every 8 weeks as part of an annual plan supported by a sub-committee structure that enables ongoing reporting and risk management across the organisation.

Organisational Structure

Black Country Women's Aid has a Management Committee/Board of 5 members who meet as a full Board every 8 weeks. The meeting dates are set as part of an annual calendar and the Annual General Meeting is scheduled in advance.

In addition there are sub committees that feed into the main Board. These include;

- Finance Sub Committee
- Quality Sub Committee
- Workforce Development Sub Committee
- Facilities Management Sub Committee

Each Committee has its own Terms of Reference and all work to achieve the main objectives of the organisation. Each meeting is organised to discuss new policies, procedures, issues identified and quality standards. Each subcommittee feeds into the main board for final discussion and ratification. During the year, many of the meetings have been held via the Microsoft Teams platform. This has proven an effective way to hold business meetings and as the organisation works toward new models of working such as hybrid working, will look towards this being included in its planning. All minutes and decision making is circulated and presented to the full board for recommendation, further discussion and final approval.

Where necessary, E-reports are provided and extraordinary meetings are called. Papers are reported to the next Board meeting for full ratification.

Members come from a variety of related professional backgrounds and are responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the Charity. A skills audit takes place of Board members to ensure that the organisation is equipped with the right skills to reach its full potential. Where practicable, the Trustees undertake an annual business planning event to discuss organisational progress, strategic direction and agree future projections. Co-opted members have no voting rights but are considered an important part of the discussion and debate.

The Trustees delegate responsibility to the Chief Executive who also acts as Company Secretary. In addition, the Chief Executive holds the lead responsibility for policy and performance, financial management, employee recruitment and management, as well as operational service delivery. The Chief Executive delegates tasks to the senior management team who report back on a regular basis.

The Chief Executive,, working with her team of Directors, managers and corporate colleagues, takes the lead for developing employees, apprentices and volunteers, ensuring that their learning experience is translated into operational practice in line with good practice.

Senior Management Structure

BCWA is led by a senior management structure comprising of the Chief Executive Officer, Deputy Chief Executive/ Director of Finance, Director of Community Services, Interim Director of Accommodation Services and Executive Officer.

They are supported by specialist managers assigned to each directorate.

The total salaries of the Management team were £346,314. This represents 7% of the total salary cost to the organisation.

The senior management remuneration approach is contained within Pay Policy located within the Financial Regulations - this applies to all positions within the organisation.

**Report of the Trustees
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

Related Parties

The work of the organisation sits within a number of strategic frameworks both locally, regionally and nationally. The Chief Executive, Directors and managers play a significant role across all areas of business including developing and influencing strategy, continuous improvement of services and developing new opportunities to support victims, ensuring financial plans are sustainable and guaranteeing that the victim's voice remains at the centre of all decision making.

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees (who are also the directors of Black Country Women's Aid for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditors are unaware; and
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

AUDITORS

The auditors, TAG Assurance Services Limited, will be proposed for re-appointment at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 20 December 2024 and signed on its behalf by:

Karen Elizabeth Dowman - Trustee

Report of the Independent Auditors to the Members of Black Country Women's Aid

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Black Country Women's Aid (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the Statement of Financial Activities, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The trustees are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Annual Report, other than the financial statements and our Report of the Independent Auditors thereon.

Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Report of the Trustees for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Report of the Trustees has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Report of the Trustees.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to take advantage of the small companies exemption from the requirement to prepare a Strategic Report or in preparing the Report of the Trustees.

Report of the Independent Auditors to the Members of Black Country Women's Aid

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue a Report of the Independent Auditors that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

- We gained an understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks within which the charitable company is required to operate and focussed on those that have a direct effect on the determination of material amounts and disclosures within the financial statements - primarily these were the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Act 2011 and the Charities SORP (FRS 102). We assessed compliance with these laws and regulations as part of our audit procedures in respect of related items within the financial statements. Our audit procedures in this regard were limited to enquiry of Trustees and other management and inspection of any regulatory and legal correspondence, if any.
- We identified items within the financial statements at greatest risk of a material impact from irregularities, including fraud, which were considered to be the recognition of grant income and overriding of controls by management. We undertook audit procedures to respond to these risks, including enquiries of management, sample testing on the posting of journals, review of the basis of accounting estimates and a review of the timing of recognition of grant income.
- Due to the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we may not have detected some material misstatements within the financial statements despite properly planning and performing our audit in line with auditing standards. This could be due to a number of factors such as collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations or the over-ride of controls. We point out that we are not responsible for preventing non-compliance and cannot be expected to detect non-compliance with all laws and regulations.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our Report of the Independent Auditors.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditors' report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Shaun Philpott (Senior Statutory Auditor)
for and on behalf of TAG Assurance Services Limited
Chartered Accountants and
Registered Auditors
8 Pendeford Place
Pendeford Business Park
Wolverhampton
West Midlands
WV9 5HD

20 December 2024

Black Country Women's Aid

Statement of Financial Activities (Incorporating an Income and Expenditure Account) for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31.3.24 Total funds £	31.3.23 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM					
Donations and legacies	2	203,008	169,297	372,305	155,357
Charitable activities	4				
Refuge based support		1,014,017	10,000	1,024,017	993,750
Community based support		2,267,576	2,347,376	4,614,952	3,870,432
Modern day slavery		3,940,124	-	3,940,124	3,464,517
Other trading activities	3	65,326	1	65,327	116,459
Total		<u>7,490,051</u>	<u>2,526,674</u>	<u>10,016,725</u>	<u>8,600,515</u>
EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities	5				
Refuge based support		1,240,338	24,336	1,264,674	1,202,657
Community based support		2,571,787	2,000,055	4,571,842	3,823,652
Modern day slavery		2,369,482	17,121	2,386,603	2,038,977
Total		<u>6,181,607</u>	<u>2,041,512</u>	<u>8,223,119</u>	<u>7,065,286</u>
NET INCOME		1,308,444	485,162	1,793,606	1,535,229
Transfers between funds	17	(41,744)	41,744	-	-
Net movement in funds		<u>1,266,700</u>	<u>526,906</u>	<u>1,793,606</u>	<u>1,535,229</u>
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		5,529,150	1,195,907	6,725,057	5,189,828
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u>6,795,850</u>	<u>1,722,813</u>	<u>8,518,663</u>	<u>6,725,057</u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

Black Country Women's Aid (Registered number: 02791788)**Balance Sheet
31 March 2024**

	Notes	31.3.24 £	31.3.23 £
FIXED ASSETS			
Tangible assets	12	2,779,653	2,411,207
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	13	2,311,407	1,838,406
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>3,809,834</u>	<u>2,962,867</u>
		6,121,241	4,801,273
CREDITORS			
Amounts falling due within one year	14	(382,231)	(487,423)
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>5,739,010</u>	<u>4,313,850</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		8,518,663	6,725,057
NET ASSETS		<u>8,518,663</u>	<u>6,725,057</u>
FUNDS	17		
Unrestricted funds		6,795,850	5,529,150
Restricted funds		<u>1,722,813</u>	<u>1,195,907</u>
TOTAL FUNDS		<u>8,518,663</u>	<u>6,725,057</u>

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to charitable companies subject to the small companies regime.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 20 December 2024 and were signed on its behalf by:

Karen Elizabeth Dowman - Trustee

Black Country Women's Aid**Cash Flow Statement
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

	Notes	31.3.24 £	31.3.23 £
Cash flows from operating activities			
Cash generated from operations	1	<u>1,282,492</u>	<u>2,115,487</u>
Net cash provided by operating activities		<u>1,282,492</u>	<u>2,115,487</u>
Cash flows from investing activities			
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		<u>(435,525)</u>	<u>(1,246,692)</u>
Net cash used in investing activities		<u>(435,525)</u>	<u>(1,246,692)</u>
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the reporting period		<u>846,967</u>	<u>868,795</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period		<u>2,962,867</u>	<u>2,094,072</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period		<u>3,809,834</u>	<u>2,962,867</u>

The notes form part of these financial statements

Notes to the Cash Flow Statement
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

1. RECONCILIATION OF NET INCOME TO NET CASH FLOW FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES

	31.3.24 £	31.3.23 £
Net income for the reporting period (as per the Statement of Financial Activities)	1,793,606	1,535,229
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation charges	67,079	39,508
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(473,001)	249,670
(Decrease)/increase in creditors	(105,192)	291,080
Net cash provided by operations	<u>1,282,492</u>	<u>2,115,487</u>

2. ANALYSIS OF CHANGES IN NET FUNDS

	At 1.4.23 £	Cash flow £	At 31.3.24 £
Net cash			
Cash at bank and in hand	<u>2,962,867</u>	<u>846,967</u>	<u>3,809,834</u>
	<u>2,962,867</u>	<u>846,967</u>	<u>3,809,834</u>
Total	<u>2,962,867</u>	<u>846,967</u>	<u>3,809,834</u>

**Notes to the Financial Statements
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charitable company, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Companies Act 2006. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Charitable activities

Charitable activities are as follows:

Refuge based support
Community based support
Modern slavery
Equipment grants

Resources expended

Staff costs and overhead expenses are allocated to activities on the basis of staff time spent on those activities.

Value added tax is not recoverable by the charity and as such is included in the relevant costs in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Charitable activities comprises of those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

Governance costs include those costs associated with meeting the constitutional and statutory requirements of the charity and include the audit fees and costs linked to the strategic management of the charity.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Freehold property	- 4% on cost
Fixtures and fittings	- 33% on cost

Taxation

As a charity, Black Country Women's Aid is exempt from tax on income and gains falling within section 466 to 493 of the Corporation Tax Act 2010 to the extent that these are applicable to its charitable objects. No tax charges have arisen in the charity.

Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds are donations and other income received or generated for the objects of the charity without specified purposes and are available as general funds.

Restricted funds can only be used for particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Expenditure which meets these criteria is identified to the fund, together with a fair allocation of management and support costs.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds earmarked by the Trustees for particular purposes.

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

Donated goods and services

Donated goods and services are included at the value to the charity where this can be quantified. The value of services provided by general volunteers has not been included in these accounts.

Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

The charitable company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. Contributions payable to the charitable company's pension scheme are charged to the Statement of Financial Activities in the period to which they relate.

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES - continued

Pension costs and other post-retirement benefits

Hire purchase and leasing commitments

Assets obtained under hire purchase contracts or finance leases are capitalised in the balance sheet. Those held under hire purchase contracts are depreciated over their estimated useful lives. Those held under finance leases are depreciated over their estimated useful lives or the lease term whichever is shorter.

Rentals paid under operating leases are charged to the statement of financial activity on a straight line basis over the period of the lease.

2. DONATIONS AND LEGACIES

	31.3.24	31.3.23
	£	£
Donations	<u>372,305</u>	<u>155,357</u>

3. OTHER TRADING ACTIVITIES

	31.3.24	31.3.23
	£	£
Management and training fees	<u>65,327</u>	<u>116,459</u>

4. INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	Activity	31.3.24	31.3.23
		£	£
Grants and contracts	Refuge based support	468,331	468,960
Accommodation charges	Refuge based support	555,686	524,790
Grants and contracts	Community based support	4,614,952	3,870,432
Grants and contracts	Modern day slavery	<u>3,940,124</u>	<u>3,464,517</u>
		<u>9,579,093</u>	<u>8,328,699</u>

Grants received, included in the above, are as follows:

	31.3.24	31.3.23
	£	£
Refuge: Sandwell MBC - Supporting People	458,331	331,399
Refuge: Sandwell MBC - DCLG	10,000	50,000
Community: Sandwell MBC - Specialist DV and SV Support	681,928	601,767
Community: Sandwell MBC - Safer Sandwell Partnership	40,000	40,000
Community: Dudley MBC - DA Support Service	349,021	283,878
Community: Walsall MBC - DV/ Children	602,000	621,750
Community: West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner	1,365,291	1,268,206
Community: West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner - DVPP	266,525	-
Community: West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner - New Chance	45,304	44,574
Community: West Midlands Police	15,000	-
Community: Changing Lives - Female Service Users	326,050	209,926
Community: Wolverhampton City Council - Our Future	75,000	149,718
Community: Ministry of Justice - Rape and SA Support Fund	331,957	413,432
Community: Ministry of Justice - Female Offenders	98,208	-
Community: Home Office Ceanex	35,483	-
Community: NHS IRIS Combined Authority	223,274	189,810
Community: SCVO	64,542	131,583
Community: RSVP	8,043	3,349
Community : Big Lottery Community Fund	87,326	-
Modern Day Slavery: Salvation Army	<u>3,940,124</u>	<u>3,464,517</u>
	<u>9,023,407</u>	<u>7,803,909</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

5. CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES COSTS

	Direct Costs (see note 6) £	Support costs (see note 7) £	Totals £
Refuge based support	1,112,091	152,583	1,264,674
Community based support	3,580,049	991,793	4,571,842
Modern day slavery	1,988,023	398,580	2,386,603
	<u>6,680,163</u>	<u>1,542,956</u>	<u>8,223,119</u>

6. DIRECT COSTS OF CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

	31.3.24 £	31.3.23 £
Staff costs	5,296,334	4,664,755
Activity costs	334,080	272,950
Office costs	265,647	157,515
Property costs	784,102	875,695
	<u>6,680,163</u>	<u>5,970,915</u>

7. SUPPORT COSTS

	Depreciation £	Office costs £	Property costs £
Refuge based support	-	78,328	18,704
Community based support	-	509,135	121,574
Modern day slavery	17,121	195,821	46,759
	<u>17,121</u>	<u>783,284</u>	<u>187,037</u>

	Staff costs, travel etc £	Governance costs £	Totals £
Refuge based support	54,471	1,080	152,583
Community based support	354,064	7,020	991,793
Modern day slavery	136,179	2,700	398,580
	<u>544,714</u>	<u>10,800</u>	<u>1,542,956</u>

Activity	Basis of allocation
Depreciation	Usage
Office costs	Usage
Property costs	Usage
Staff costs, travel etc	Usage
Governance costs	Usage

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

7. **SUPPORT COSTS - continued**

Support costs, included in the above, are as follows:

				31.3.24	31.3.23
	Refuge based support £	Community based support £	Modern day slavery £	Total activities £	Total activities £
Depreciation of tangible fixed assets	-	-	17,121	17,121	17,121
Office costs	78,328	509,135	195,821	783,284	523,588
Property costs	18,704	121,574	46,759	187,037	170,459
Staff costs & travel etc	54,471	354,064	136,179	544,714	372,823
Auditors' remuneration	1,080	7,020	2,700	10,800	10,380
	<u>152,583</u>	<u>991,793</u>	<u>398,580</u>	<u>1,542,956</u>	<u>1,094,371</u>

8. **NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)**

Net income/(expenditure) is stated after charging/(crediting):

	31.3.24	31.3.23
	£	£
Auditors' remuneration	10,800	10,380
Depreciation - owned assets	<u>67,079</u>	<u>39,508</u>

9. **TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS**

There were no trustees' remuneration or other benefits for the year ended 31 March 2024 nor for the year ended 31 March 2023.

Trustees' expenses

There were no trustees' expenses paid for the year ended 31 March 2024 nor for the year ended 31 March 2023.

10. **STAFF COSTS**

	2024	2023
	£	£
Wages and salaries	4,748,027	4,158,342
Social security	423,419	385,708
Pension	191,177	166,749
	<u>5,362,623</u>	<u>4,710,799</u>

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:

	31.3.24	31.3.23
Direct charitable work	174	149
Administration	23	23
	<u>197</u>	<u>172</u>

The number of employees whose employee benefits (excluding employer pension costs) exceeded £60,000 was:

	31.3.24	31.3.23
£70,001 - £80,000	1	1
£90,001 - £100,000	1	1
	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

10. STAFF COSTS - continued

Black Country Women's Aid considers its key management personnel to be the Chief Executive Officer . The total employment benefits of the key management personnel were £95,997 (2023: £91,672).

The company operates a Group Personal Pension Plan to which the charitable company contributes 5% and employees contribute 3%.

11. COMPARATIVES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM			
Donations and legacies	155,357	-	155,357
Charitable activities			
Refuge based support	943,750	50,000	993,750
Community based support	1,692,512	2,177,920	3,870,432
Modern day slavery	3,464,517	-	3,464,517
Other trading activities	67,419	49,040	116,459
Total	<u>6,323,555</u>	<u>2,276,960</u>	<u>8,600,515</u>
EXPENDITURE ON			
Charitable activities			
Refuge based support	1,149,645	53,012	1,202,657
Community based support	1,492,963	2,330,689	3,823,652
Modern day slavery	2,021,788	17,189	2,038,977
Total	<u>4,664,396</u>	<u>2,400,890</u>	<u>7,065,286</u>
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)	1,659,159	(123,930)	1,535,229
Transfers between funds	(1,599)	1,599	-
Net movement in funds	<u>1,657,560</u>	<u>(122,331)</u>	<u>1,535,229</u>
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS			
Total funds brought forward	3,871,590	1,318,238	5,189,828
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	<u>5,529,150</u>	<u>1,195,907</u>	<u>6,725,057</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

12. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Freehold property £	Fixtures and fittings £	Totals £
COST			
At 1 April 2023	2,491,466	123,204	2,614,670
Additions	435,525	-	435,525
At 31 March 2024	<u>2,926,991</u>	<u>123,204</u>	<u>3,050,195</u>
DEPRECIATION			
At 1 April 2023	132,009	71,454	203,463
Charge for year	49,829	17,250	67,079
At 31 March 2024	<u>181,838</u>	<u>88,704</u>	<u>270,542</u>
NET BOOK VALUE			
At 31 March 2024	<u>2,745,153</u>	<u>34,500</u>	<u>2,779,653</u>
At 31 March 2023	<u>2,359,457</u>	<u>51,750</u>	<u>2,411,207</u>

13. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	31.3.24 £	31.3.23 £
Trade debtors	1,625,717	1,168,560
Rent Receivable	24,533	66,802
Other debtors	572,153	505,866
Prepayments	89,004	97,178
	<u>2,311,407</u>	<u>1,838,406</u>

14. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	31.3.24 £	31.3.23 £
Trade creditors	121,054	169,926
Social security and other taxes	167,838	186,448
Other creditors	52,504	47,734
Deferred income	1	43,881
Accrued expenses	40,834	39,434
	<u>382,231</u>	<u>487,423</u>

15. SECURED DEBTS

A charge has been secured on the freehold property known as Karen House on 16 March 2020, in favour of the Heart of England Community Foundation, by way of a legal mortgage.

16. ANALYSIS OF NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	31.3.24 Total funds £	31.3.23 Total funds £
Fixed assets	1,799,746	979,907	2,779,653	2,411,207
Current assets	5,378,335	742,906	6,121,241	4,801,273
Current liabilities	<u>(382,231)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(382,231)</u>	<u>(487,423)</u>
	<u>6,795,850</u>	<u>1,722,813</u>	<u>8,518,663</u>	<u>6,725,057</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

17. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 1.4.23 £	Net movement in funds £	Transfers between funds £	At 31.3.24 £
Unrestricted funds				
General fund	2,475,388	1,308,444	(674,041)	3,109,791
Service Continuity Fund	1,081,347	-	54,067	1,135,414
Strategic Development Fund	364,915	-	18,245	383,160
Property Contingency Fund	235,000	-	30,000	265,000
Redundancy reserve	122,500	-	33,000	155,500
Capital reserve	1,250,000	-	496,985	1,746,985
	<u>5,529,150</u>	<u>1,308,444</u>	<u>(41,744)</u>	<u>6,795,850</u>
Restricted funds				
Refuge Based Support	15,148	10,000	(25,148)	-
Community Based Support	378,028	347,322	17,556	742,906
Heart of England Capital Grant	802,731	(17,121)	-	785,610
Bungalows Development	-	144,961	49,336	194,297
	<u>1,195,907</u>	<u>485,162</u>	<u>41,744</u>	<u>1,722,813</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>6,725,057</u>	<u>1,793,606</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>8,518,663</u>

Net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	7,490,051	(6,181,607)	1,308,444
Restricted funds			
Refuge Based Support	10,000	-	10,000
Community Based Support	2,347,377	(2,000,055)	347,322
Heart of England Capital Grant	-	(17,121)	(17,121)
Bungalows Development	169,297	(24,336)	144,961
	<u>2,526,674</u>	<u>(2,041,512)</u>	<u>485,162</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>10,016,725</u>	<u>(8,223,119)</u>	<u>1,793,606</u>

Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024

17. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Comparatives for movement in funds

	At 1.4.22 £	Net movement in funds £	Transfers between funds £	At 31.3.23 £
Unrestricted funds				
General fund	2,000,568	1,659,159	(1,184,339)	2,475,388
Service Continuity Fund	496,022	-	585,325	1,081,347
Strategic Development Fund	175,000	-	189,915	364,915
Property Contingency Fund	100,000	-	135,000	235,000
Redundancy reserve	100,000	-	22,500	122,500
Capital reserve	1,000,000	-	250,000	1,250,000
	<u>3,871,590</u>	<u>1,659,159</u>	<u>(1,599)</u>	<u>5,529,150</u>
Restricted funds				
Refuge Based Support	18,160	(3,012)	-	15,148
Community Based Support	481,757	(103,729)	-	378,028
Heart of England Capital Grant	818,321	(17,189)	1,599	802,731
	<u>1,318,238</u>	<u>(123,930)</u>	<u>1,599</u>	<u>1,195,907</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>5,189,828</u>	<u>1,535,229</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>6,725,057</u>

Comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	6,323,555	(4,664,396)	1,659,159
Restricted funds			
Refuge Based Support	50,000	(53,012)	(3,012)
Community Based Support	2,226,960	(2,330,689)	(103,729)
Heart of England Capital Grant	-	(17,189)	(17,189)
	<u>2,276,960</u>	<u>(2,400,890)</u>	<u>(123,930)</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>8,600,515</u>	<u>(7,065,286)</u>	<u>1,535,229</u>

The General Fund is to meet the day to day cash flow requirements of the charity.

The Service Continuity Fund provides for the costs of closure as well as 6 months running costs in the event of withdrawal of funding.

The Strategic Development Fund provides for the organisation to undertake research and development to inform future service provision and secure additional funds for long term service delivery.

The Property Contingency Fund provides sufficient funds to maintain the Charity's properties to a high standard and to ensure routine repairs and maintenance are carried out.

The Redundancy Reserve is to cover the potential costs of redundancy over the capped limit to long term employees.

The Capital Reserve comprises funds set aside for the organisation to invest in property in order to meet future demand for its services.

The Refuge Based Support Fund provides welfare and activities for women and children residing in our refuges.

**Notes to the Financial Statements - continued
for the Year Ended 31 March 2024**

17. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Community Based Support provides home based support, including support and counselling to women and children who are victims of sexual violence and a helpline for Asian women. Part of this service was previously treated separately as 'Rape Support Service' but as services have changed over the years, it is now more appropriate to encompass these services under one umbrella.

Heart of England Capital Grant is a restricted fund for a capital project, the balance represents the net book value of the assets relating to that fund.

Bungalows Development is a restricted fund for a capital project where the balance represents funds specifically donated to the project by third parties such as HSBC, Garfield Weston, The Clothworkers' Foundation and the Eveson Charitable Trust.

18. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

There were no related party transactions for the year ended 31 March 2024.

This document was delivered using electronic communications and authenticated in accordance with the registrar's rules relating to electronic form, authentication and manner of delivery under section 1072 of the Companies Act 2006.