CHOICE IN HACKNEY

England & Wales · Charity number 1077287

Details

Status	Registered
Legal form	Charitable company
Company number	03423122
Registered	1999-09-06
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	Ground Floor Marie Lloyd Centre 329 Queensbridge Road London E8 3LA
Phone	02076133206
Email	admin@choiceinhackney.org
Website	www.choiceinhackney.org

Activities

Objects: (A) TO RELIEVE DISABLED PERSONS (HEREINAFTER CALLED THE BENEFICIARIES) IN GREATER LONDON WHO REQUIRE ASSISTANCE TO REALIZE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL AND LEAD FULFILLING LIVES WITH SUCH ASSISTANCE, IN PARTICULAR BY THE PROVISION OF A SERVICE WHICH ASSISTS SUCH PERSONS TO OBTAIN THEIR FULL RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES AS CITIZENS.(B) TO ADVANCE THE EDUCATION OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC AS TO THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF DISABLED PEOPLE.

Activities: Provides Independent Living services to disabled Londoners aged 16+. ADVOCACY-supporting disabled person to obtain his/her rights. VOLUNTEERING-supports disabled people with befriending, escorting etc. TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT-train disabled people as advocates. Production of e-news to aid employability of disabled people. ACTIVE LIFESTYLE-volunteers support disabled people with sport activities.

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Classification

- **How:** Provides Advocacy/advice/information, Other Charitable Activities
- **What:** Disability, The Prevention Or Relief Of Poverty
- **Who:** People With Disabilities

Geography

- **Area of benefit:** GREATER LONDON
- Throughout London

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£168,781	£284,062	-	-
2024-03-31	£319,482	£287,292	-	-
2023-03-31	£341,417	£229,753	-	-
2022-03-31	£271,871	£220,111	-	-
2021-03-31	£301,958	£255,255	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Andrew Price		2020-10-15
Bharat Siyani		2020-07-07
Charles Palmer		2025-06-18
Debra Schiman		2013-11-25
Kay McMahon		2025-03-18
MARY HELEN JULIAN		
Matthew Baxter		2023-09-18
Thomas Brayford		2022-04-01

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY

England & Wales - Charity number 1077287

Accounts

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY

(Company Limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES REPORT

AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

COMPANY NO: 03423122
CHARITY NO : 1077287

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY

TRUSTEES REPORT

AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2025

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

The Trustees present their report and the financial statement for the year ended 31st March 2025.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Trustees

Malcolm Aickin	Chair (Deceased, Dec 2024)
Andrew Price	Vice-Chair
Matthew Baxter	Treasurer
Thomas Brayford	
Mary Julian	
Debra Schiman	
Bharat Siyani	
Kay McMahon	(appointed 27th Mar 2025)

Company Secretary and Executive Director	Caroline Nelson
Company reg. no.	03423122
Charity reg. no.	1077287
Registered Office	CHOICE IN HACKNEY Ground Floor Marie Lloyd Centre 329 Queensbridge Road London E8 3LA
Independent Examiner	Richard Billinghurst Knox Cropper LLP 65 Leadenhall Street London EC3A 2AD
Bankers	Barclays Bank PLC Leicester LE87 2BB

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

The Trustees, who are also the Directors of the charitable company for the purposes of the Companies Act present their combined directors' report and trustees' report, as required by company law, together with the financial statements of CHOICE IN HACKNEY ("CHOICE" or "the Charity") for the year ended 31st March 2025. The Trustees confirm that the trustees report and the financial statements of the Charity comply with current statutory requirements, the requirements of the Charity's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland ("FRS 102").

Administration Details of the Charity, its Trustees and Advisors
Administration details relating to CHOICE are set out under Legal and Administrative Information, on page 1.

Structure, Governance and Management
The Charity is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Trustees are recruited from members of the Charity, ex-employees and from the wider community. They are elected and co-opted under the terms of the company's Articles of Association. Users are represented on the Board of Trustees. At the Annual General Meeting, the Board of Trustees is elected by the members of the Charity and serve from the close of that meeting until the close of the succeeding Annual General Meeting. The Board of Trustees consists of not less than 3 members and until otherwise determined by a General Meeting, not more than 12 members.

Trustees were given an induction to the work of CHOICE by the Executive Director and introduced to all staff members. The formal policies and procedures are reviewed annually.

The Management of the Charity is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees. Operational decisions are taken by the Executive Director and staff. Strategic decisions are made by the Board of Trustees in consultation with the Executive Director. The Board of Trustees meets at least 4 times a year and the Executive Director attends all meetings.

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and in particular, to those related to its operations and finances of the Charity, and are satisfied that systems and procedures are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks. A review of the risk assessment was carried out by members of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Director during the year.

Public Benefit
In reviewing the Charity's aims and objectives and in planning future activities, the Trustees refer to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit.

Objectives and Activities
CHOICE has the charitable objectives of working with disabled, Greater London residents by providing Independent Living Services including, but not limited to: Active Lifestyle, Advocacy, Befriending Plus / Volunteering, Disability Hate Crime and Training & Employment.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

The objectives of the Charity are:

(A) To relieve disabled persons in Greater London who require assistance to realise their full potential and lead fulfilling lives. In particular, by the provision of services that assists such persons to obtain their full rights and privileges as citizens.

(B) To advance the education of the general public as to the needs and interests of disabled people.

The Charity Commission granted CHOICE permission to operate across Greater London, which is reflected in CHOICE's Memorandum.

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance:
In the period under review, CHOICE promoted the following services to disabled Greater London residents aged 16 plus and their networks:

a) Advocacy;
b) Disability Hate Crime;
c) Information & Guidance;
d) Community Care & Housing;
e) Training & Employment (which includes Choices into Work training, specialist Disability Hate Crime and/or Disability & Domestic Violence training, supplementary coaching, Job Club plus a Mentoring scheme);
f) Befriending Plus / Volunteering; and
g) Active Lifestyle.

a) **ADVOCACY:**
CHOICE Advocates support our disabled service users to obtain the services needed to live an independent and dignified lifestyle in the community. The Advocate works in partnership with the disabled user to obtain his/her rights.

Community advocacy service:
CHOICE's community advocacy service is in two parts:

- Non-statutory advocacy - CHOICE supports disabled people with issue-based matters that fall outside of statutory advocacy. This includes support to obtain accessible housing, making complaints, carrying out assessments, meeting educational needs and child protection matters for disabled parents.

- Statutory advocacy – provided when a disabled person is legally entitled to access the support of an advocate under a particular area of legislation for example the Independent Care Act 2014. This includes undertaking Care Act assessments, Care & Support planning, Reviews and Safeguarding issues.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

a) **ADVOCACY continued:**

Community advocacy service continued:
CHOICE has been sub-contracted by Rethink Advocacy - a separate operating part of the national organisation: Rethink Mental Illness (Rethink) to provide community-based Advocacy since July 2023. This service is part of a consortium, which is funded by Hackney Council and led by Rethink. The initial one-year contract was extended for a further year with potential for a further extension should the Council extend the term of the Head Contract.

The organisation considers advocacy a much-needed, valuable resource for the disabled Hackney residents it supports. This has been clearly demonstrated through the Charity's monitoring reports, which have consistently met or exceeded contracted targets since Jul 2023 thanks to the many service users who benefit from it. This area of CHOICE's work is going well and there is regular feedback and engagement between CHOICE and Rethink.

Statutory advocacy:
CHOICE's two Disability Rights Advocates are in the process of undertaking a National Advocacy Qualification to enable them to commence statutory advocacy casework.

This is a Level 4 award in Independent Advocacy Practice (IAP) Qualification with the accredited provider, Handa. As part of the package, Rethink will provide access to development, coordination, and leadership to deliver both statutory and non-statutory advocacy to members of the disabled community CHOICE supports. The aim is to ensure disabled Hackney residents are provided with advocacy support from a service they trust and that understands their needs and cultural heritage. This in turn will ensure service users have equitable access to more of the support they need. This is of particular importance to people with mental health issues; those with learning disabilities; anyone who is subject to specific health or social care legislation.

Both advocates will undertake core modules of:
- Principles and practice of independent advocacy;
- The legislative framework which impacts upon the independent advocacy role; and
- Entitlements to independent advocacy.

After which, they will undertake their specialist modules of either:
- Independent complaints advocacy (IHCA); or
- Independent advocacy within adult social care (ICAA).

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

a) **ADVOCACY continued:**

Statutory advocacy continued:
This is a step in the right direction for both the organisation and its staff as it diversifies its workload, allowing advocates to reach more disabled people particularly those with complex or mental health needs – empowering them to make informed choices about their care and treatment and ensuring each individual's unique needs and preferences are considered.

Health Advocacy:
Health Advocacy has formed a vital part of CHOICE's service provision for over a decade firstly under Service Level Agreements, which were renewed annually until Nov 2021 when we were moved to a three-year contract. The final year of that three-year contract with Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust), expired in Oct 2024 but was extended for a further year with a small increase from Nov 2024.

The Trust's funding is very valuable as it allows CHOICE to continue to support local disabled people in the City of London and Hackney who have physical and/or sensory impairments with their health advocacy needs. The fundamental emphasis and focus of health advocacy is seeing things from the user's perspective, aiming to empower users to access and use health services on an informed and equitable basis. Thus shifting the unbalanced relationship between service users (particularly those from different impairment, ethnic and cultural backgrounds), service providers and health care professionals.

CHOICE's health advocacy role is to elicit the views, needs, expectations and concerns of its service users and to actively pursue and act in their best interests. This involves Advocates working with the disabled person to:

- be more involved in important decisions about their health care needs;
- know and use their rights;
- Access the health care services they need;
- Voice their wishes and feelings;
- Receive support to raise concerns or complaints;
- Access and use health services on an equal basis.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

a) **ADVOCACY continued:**

Health Advocacy continued:
The year under review witnessed more disruption for many people who needed to access the National Health Service (NHS): especially disabled people who required additional support to do so, due to industrial action during the summer of 2024.

According to NHS England:
"Junior doctors took industrial action from 7am on Thurs 27th Jun to 7am on Tues 2nd Jul 2024. Since strikes began, the cumulative total of acute inpatient and outpatient appointments rescheduled is now nearly 1.5 million (1,486,258).

The action saw 61,989 inpatient and outpatient appointments rescheduled, and 23,001 staff were absent from work due to strikes at the peak of the action".

NHS National Medical Director, Professor Sir Stephen Powis said:
"These figures bring into sharp focus the impact that this latest round of industrial action has had on patients, with nearly 62,000 appointments postponed in recent days – but we know in reality this is likely to be even higher… Colleagues across the NHS will now be doing everything they can to ensure patients who were due to receive consultations, tests or treatment get appointments rebooked as quickly as possible.[1]"

Of the c.62,000 appointments postponed during the industrial action, about a third (20,455) were based in London and the largest majority of them (19,772) were for acute in- and out-patient appointments[2]. These figures demonstrate that CHOICE's health advocacy service is needed now more than ever as disabled people will need support to reschedule their vital appointments particularly as they hold the key to improving their health and wellbeing.

During the year, CHOICE supported service users using a variety of methods including: telephone, email, face-to-face and online engagements both within the community (i.e. hospitals, local authority offices, community centres, home visits) and from the CHOICE office.

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1 Source: https://www.england.nhs.uk/2024/07/nhs-publishes-data-following-junior-doctors-strike-4/

2 Source: https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/workforce-and-reschedule-sitrep-20250801.xlsx

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

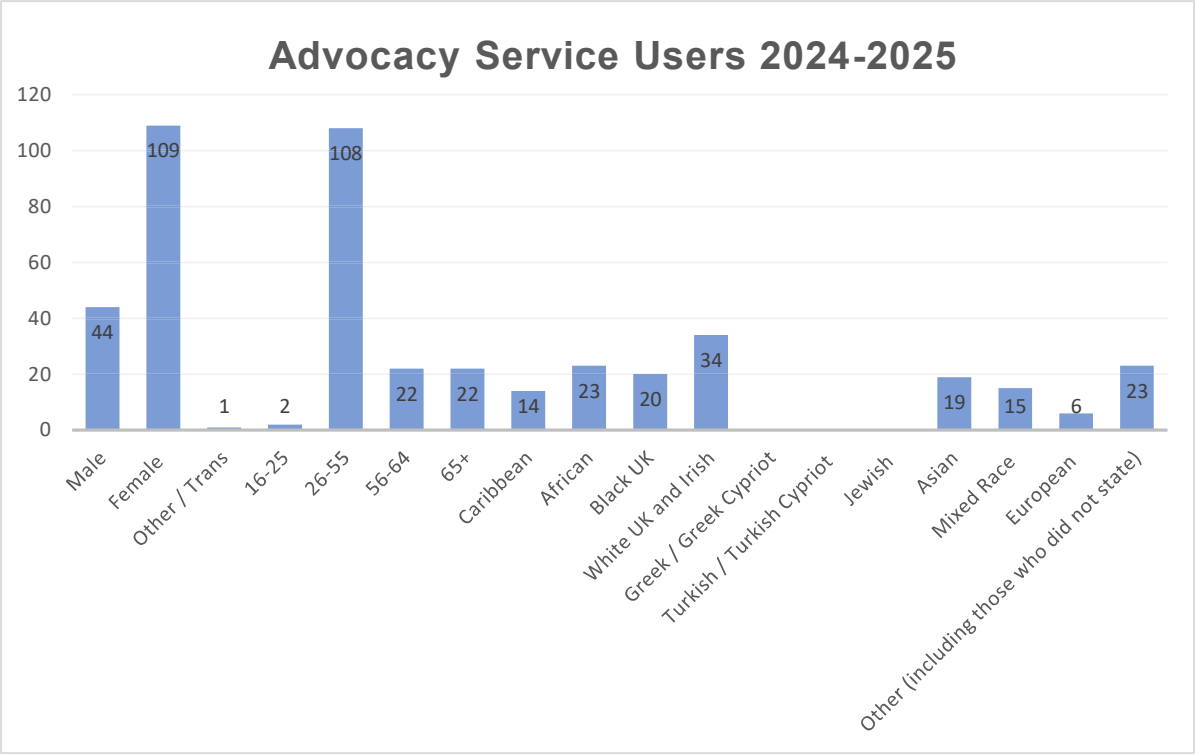
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

a) **ADVOCACY continued:**

Funding during this period allowed us to support a total of 154 disabled people (157 in 2023-2024), with their non-statutory, statutory and health advocacy matters; some of whom had multiple issues which included:

- health-related issues including accessing medical services, communicating with health professionals regarding their treatment and making complaints;
- housing support, which included adaptations and repairs;
- physical and mental health / emotional wellbeing support;
- support around their domestic, family and personal challenges;
- statutory advocacy issues including Care Act assessments and safeguarding enquiries;
- Child protection.

The following bar chart presents statistical data for the 154 disabled people (157 in 2023-2024) who utilised the Advocacy service:



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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

b) **DISABILITY HATE CRIME:**

The organisation continued its role within a consortium funded by the Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime (MOPAC) entitled "Community Alliance To Combat Hate" ("CATCH"), which started its life in 2016-17. The consortium completed its initial 2-year contract last year and is now in the final phase of an additional 2-year extension, which is due to expire in Oct 2025 (making 4-years in total).

CATCH partners are:

- Galop (lead partner and anti-LGBT+ hate crime specialist);
- Choice in Hackney (Anti-disability hate crime specialist);
- Real (Anti-disability hate crime specialist);
- Stay Safe East (Anti-disability hate crime specialist);
- Community Security Trust (Anti-Semitic hate crime specialist);
- East European Resource Centre (Anti-Central and Eastern European hate crime specialist);
- Tell MAMA (Anti-Muslim hate crime specialist); and
- The Monitoring Group (Anti-racist hate crime specialist).

The consortium works in partnership with the above network of community organisations specialising in supporting people who have experienced a hate crime due to their protected characteristics i.e. race/ethnicity, faith/religion, sexual orientation/gender identity and/or disability. Referrals come into CHOICE via CATCH's triage service, which is managed by Galop.

CATCH partners work to tackle hate crime, discrimination and abuse within their protected characteristic equality strands. Whilst we all have our own individual specialisms, network partners often come together to work inter-sectionally or make referrals to network organisations within the partnership. We also work very closely with the Metropolitan Police Service - the source of some referrals during the period.

CHOICE's Hate Crime Advocate identifies the support needs of individuals and enables them to access other services and also:

- Assists with reporting incidents;
- Supports individuals through criminal justice processes;
- Delivers outreach to communities impacted by hate crime to promote the service;
- Share good practice internally within the partnership.

Some of the assistance provided throughout the year was to support service users within the Criminal Justice System. Many of these service users are referred to CHOICE after being unsuccessful in having their voices heard. This may be due to an entrenched reluctance of individuals to engage with disabled people as their equals.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

b) **DISABILITY HATE CRIME continued:**
As long ago as 2012, the government recognised that:

- *"Disability hate crime is a serious issue which affects a considerable number of disabled people and their families each year. In March, the Home Office published findings from the British Crime Survey 2010/11 which suggested that there were 65,000 disability hate crimes a year. They also published Police data for 2011/12 which showed that only 1,744 disability hate crimes were recorded by the police".*

It is surprising to note that within the period of one year only a small percentage (less than 3 per cent) of disability hate crimes were recorded by the police. It would be interesting to compare the disability hate crime picture from 2011/12 to what has happened over the last 12-months but unfortunately, statistics on hate crimes recorded by the police and information on hate crime from the Crime Survey for England and Wales to Mar 2025 will not be released until Oct 2025.

Since the CATCH consortium's inception in 2016/17, CHOICE and other partners have worked very closely with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) who have made many direct referrals into the Hate Crime partnership.

The MPS website actively encourages survivors of any type of hate crime to come forward and report it and includes a helpful definition of what hate crime and hate crime incidents are:

- *"In most crimes it is something the victim has in their possession or control that motivates the offender to commit the crime. With hate crime it is 'who' the victim is, or 'what' the victim appears to be that motivates the offender to commit the crime.*
  A hate crime is defined as 'Any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race; religion or perceived religion; sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation; disability or perceived disability and any crime motivated by hostility or prejudice against a person who is transgender or perceived to be transgender".[3]

[3] https://www.met.police.uk/ro/report/hate-crime/information/v1/hate-crime/what-is-hate-crime/

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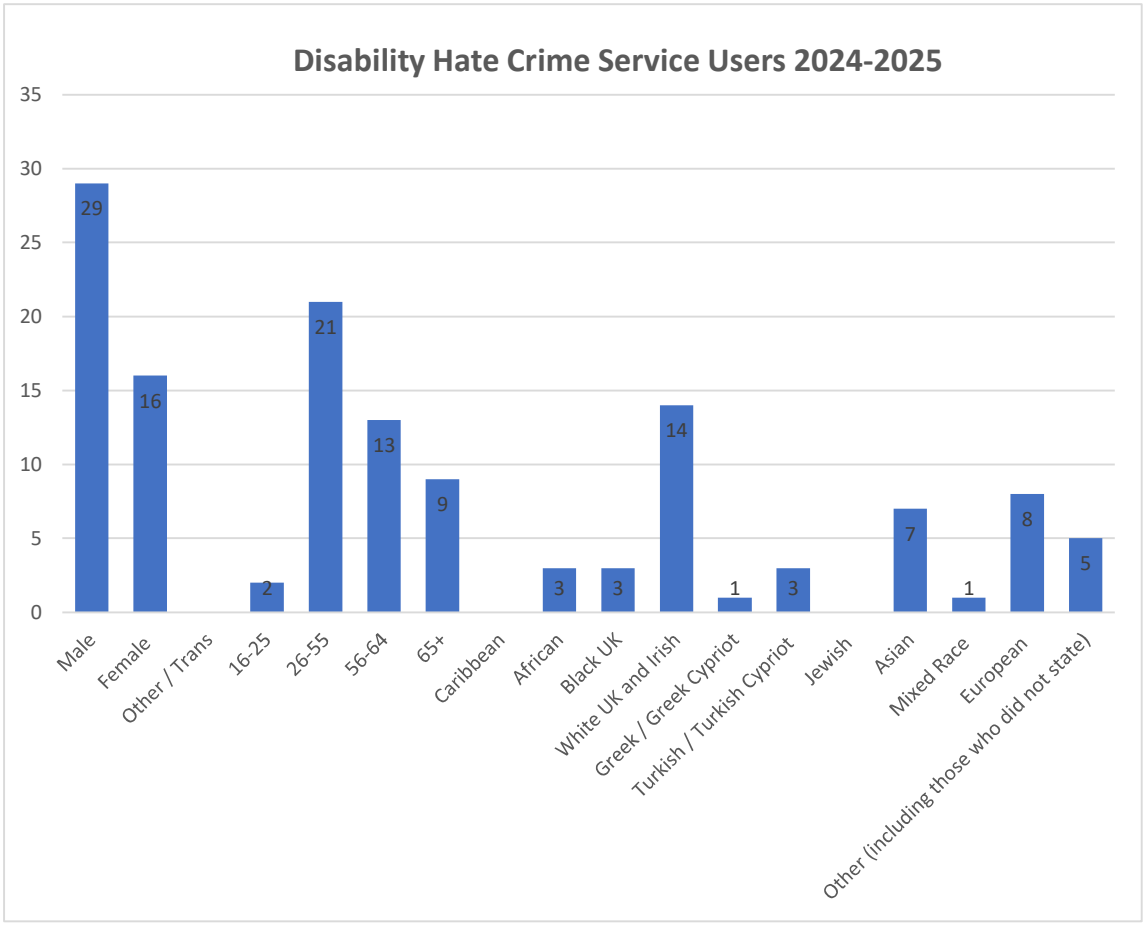
CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

b) **DISABILITY HATE CRIME continued:**

At the time of writing, the organisation is pleased to report the existing lead provider, Galop successfully bid for the Hate Crime contract allowing CHOICE to continue to offer that service beyond Oct 2025, when it was due to expire. As a consequence CHOICE is hosting a Hate Crime Awareness Day in the autumn of 2025 in association with Hackney Council and the CATCH partners to provide advice, information, awareness and support survivors of hate crime. Further details of the event will be provided in next year's report.

During the year, CHOICE met the needs of 45 disabled people with their disability hate crime matters (32 in 2023-2024). The following bar chart presents data for the Hate Crime Project:



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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) **INFORMATION GUIDANCE & ADVOCACY (IGA) Project:**

The organisation is now in its second of five-years funding totalling £294,400 from City Bridge Trust, the funding arm of The City of London Corporation's charity, Bridge House Estates (1035628) towards its Information Guidance and Advocacy (IGA) service.

This project is about giving service users equality, a voice and upholding their rights. In particular through the provision of holistic, person-centred and co-produced solutions to issues. This will ensure the user is engaged at every stage of the process, that they are listened to and lead in decision-making; thereby allowing them to make informed choices and have control and a voice over how they run their lives.

The service is fully accessible for service users with information broken down into manageable chunks, expanded on, and/or explained in ways that are accessible as many times as is necessary utilising a variety of formats (i.e. Easy Read, Braille). This raises disabled people's awareness of needed services, which, when taken advantage of, improve their quality of life. Accessible information will also allow informed decision-making.

The service is headed up by an experienced IGA Officer who mentors disabled volunteers giving them the confidence, knowledge and skills to firstly take on light, followed by more complex cases. The IGA team work jointly to provide the service virtually/in person through partnership working with disabled people supporting with:

- Breaking down information that someone with i.e. learning difficulties has received: explaining/ensuring they understand the content, providing solutions, meeting deadlines and supporting to make informed decisions.

- Form-filling for accessible travel i.e. Blue Badge applications, welfare benefit applications, essential disability-related items i.e. washing machine for a disabled person who is incontinent/on low income.

- Provision of information via text etc to promote and increase uptake of needed services and to encourage users to make cost-savings from providers with workers negotiating on their behalf for favourable terms.

- Non-statutory advocacy i.e. obtaining care package, resolving complaints, appeals etc.

These timely interventions ensure service users play an active role in co-producing solutions to resolve their issues with IGA supporting to prioritise and review documentation; responding promptly to avoid crisis.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) IGA Project continued:

Some of the many benefits of this new service is that: the IGA Officer is not limited by a restrictive eligibility criteria and will be able to discuss all matters so that multiple issues can be dealt with amongst the team as necessary. For example, one volunteer can apply to the landlord to make adaptations or essential repairs to the home, whilst another works alongside the first to apply for grants to furnish it. A third volunteer can apply for free or affordable accessible transport i.e. a Freedom Pass. All of the above provides one service user with the ability to reduce social isolation by going out and about in their community, and improved health and wellbeing as their home is being made accessible and more comfortable.

The above example has allowed other services within the Charity to be able to make referrals into the IGA where they are unable to deal with matters due to restrictive eligibility criteria. This one-stop-shop approach is appealing to both CHOICE – as our service is more holistic but also benefits the service user who doesn't have to repeat themselves to another provider as all their data is stored securely on one central database (Charity Log), which is easily accessible by other teams.

Below are some IGA highlights during the period under review:

- **Volunteer numbers** – the organisation exceeded the funder's target by having 9 new disabled volunteers plus 3 remaining in post from the previous year. All of whom were engaged with a wide variety of administrative tasks, casework (i.e. housing issues, welfare benefits, form-filling, general advocacy issues) and research.
  One volunteer moved from being an IGA volunteer to supporting our Hate Crime Advocate in a voluntary role. Another obtained well-paid work and a third obtained two short-term paid contracts (one being with CHOICE as a Trainee Advocate).

- **Caseworker training** – all caseworkers (volunteers) had undertaken the Choices into Work in-house advocacy training, which included principles of empowerment and 'agency' e.g. allowing the service user to make 'unwise' but informed decisions which were reiterated during the caseworker induction sessions.

- **Partnership working** – all service users sign partnership agreements and agree to share changes to life, circumstances or mental health to ensure everyone maintains a safe and collaborative working partnership. Everyone also receives and approves summaries of initial instruction meetings.

- **Provision of accessible information** – over 100 recipients received bulk messages from the IGA service with useful information about local organisations / services that could attract concessions or cost-savings on i.e. energy bills.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

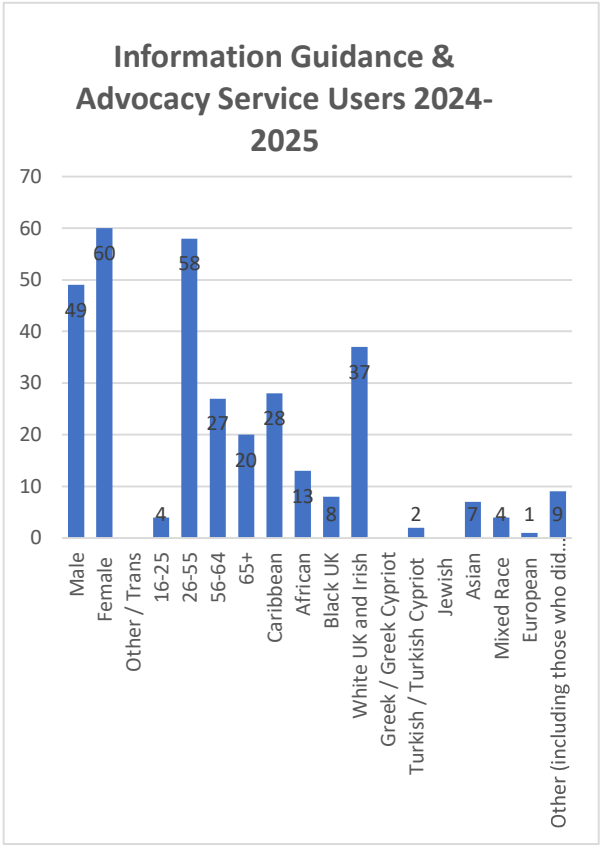
c) IGA Project continued:

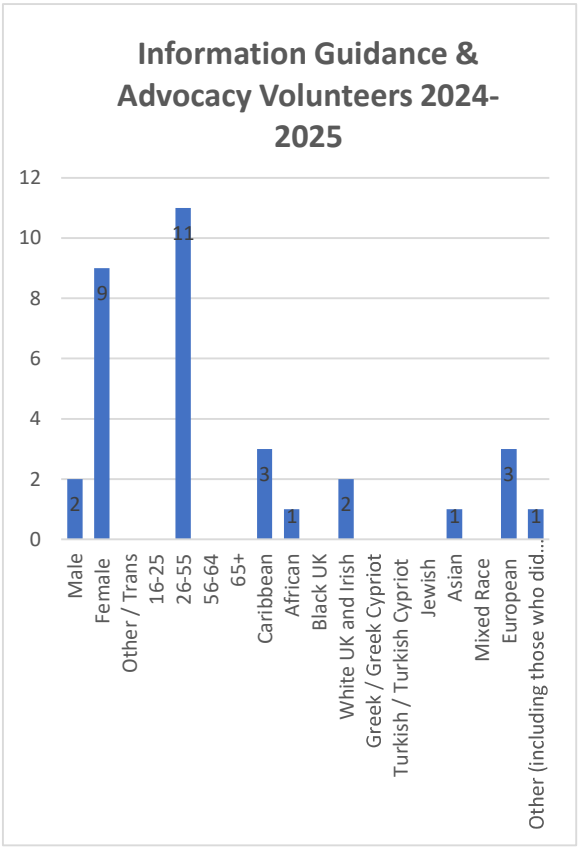
- **Explaining and prioritising paperwork** – of the 160 new referrals entering the service in the year only 8 required no paperwork explained but over 80 had 2 or more documents that required explanation. As such, the funder's target for this area of work was exceeded.

- **Form-filling** – this was typically made up of claims and appeals for benefits; applications to join a housing register; and separate disability questionnaires (with one referral requiring three separate questionnaires). Again, the funder's target was exceeded.

- **Non-Statutory Advocacy** – the types of issues dealt with under this area of work ranged from housing repairs to an Independent Office for Police Conduct investigation and the target was exceeded.

The following bar chart presents statistical data for the 109 disabled people (75 in 2023-2024) who utilised the IGA service together with the 11 Volunteers (5 in 2023-2024) who supported them:





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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) COMMUNITY CARE & HOUSING:

This new service, which started in Jan 2025 is funded by City Bridge Foundation's Propel programme with the Disability Law Service (DLS) as the lead provider. DLS is funded to train two Trainee Solicitors to partner with Deaf & Disabled People's Organisations (DDPOs) – one of which is CHOICE - to give advice to disabled people and their carers in an holistic manner that is accessible and takes into account reasonable adjustments.

The aim of the service is to promote social welfare advice; linking trainee solicitors with organisations in the community. This collaboration allowed CHOICE to launch a free legal advice clinic providing advice to those who have a community care or housing issue.

The community care and housing legal clinic accepts referrals from CHOICE's Community Care & Housing Advisor who will provide general advice to disabled people but can also make referrals into the legal clinic for service users to receive specialist advice. This clinic runs once a week alternating each week between the two areas of law. Service users can get support with the following areas:

Community Care:

- Requesting, Reviewing & Challenging Care & Support Assessments and Plans for local authority care and support services (adult service users, children service users and carers);
- Challenging Personal Budgets & requesting Direct Payments for care and support services;
- Challenging financial assessments & charges for care / support services;
- Challenging 'Disabled Facilities Grant' decisions; and
- Requesting aftercare services following sectioning under the Mental Health Act 1983.

Housing:

- Homelessness assistance for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness;
- Possessions ('Eviction') proceedings whether with Local Authority, Housing Associations / Trusts or private landlords;
- Unlawful eviction;
- Housing disrepair matters;
- Neighbour and landlord harassment; and
- Anti-social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs).

Whilst still in its infancy, the organisation is hopeful the Community Care & Housing service will continue beyond its 1-year as initial discussions with the lead provider, DLS have shown promise.

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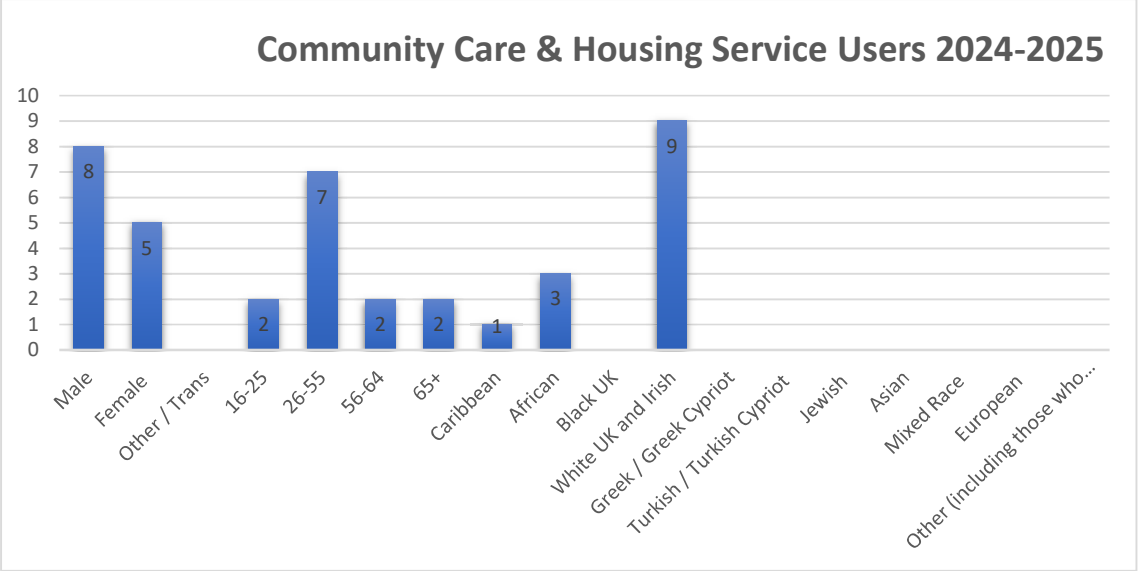
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) COMMUNITY CARE & HOUSING PROJECT continued:

The Community Care & Housing service had already supported 13 disabled people since its inception in Jan 2025 – 31st Mar 2025 and service users' statistical data is provided below:



e) TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT DEPT (TED):

CHOICE received 3-years continuation funding from Henry Smith Charity's Improving Lives programme, which is due to expire in Jan 2026. This funding allowed the Training & Employment Dept ("TED") to run part of its fully accredited suite of training programmes made up of:

- Choices into Work training – each programme consists of 13-weeks classroom-based generic advocacy training followed by a 12-week work placement at CHOICE or host organisations. Funding allowed the Charity to run two Choices into Work programmes this year;

- Disability Hate Crime specialist training – a 6-week classroom-based training course followed by a 12-week work placement at CHOICE and host organisations. Funding allowed the organisation to hold one training programme this year; and

- Disability & Domestic Violence specialist training – 6-weeks classroom-based training followed by 12-weeks work placement at CHOICE and host organisations. Unfortunately, this specialist programme was unfunded during the period under review and as such no programmes are planned until further funding has been sourced.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT DEPT (TED):

Henry Smith Charity – Improving Lives also fund trainees to engage in supplementary sessions of: Coaching; a Job Club; and Mentoring schemes. Further details are below.

Choices into Work training:

This *generic advocacy* training programme is now in its fifteenth year and fully accredited. On successful completion of all components (classroom-based element and work placement), trainees are awarded a nationally recognised qualification (some for the first time) from CHOICE's accrediting body, Open College Network Credit 4 Learning (OCN).

Course content:

Currently, the self-explanatory course content includes topics on:

- History and models of disability;
- Principles of Advocacy Parts 1-3;
- Confidence Building;
- Local Authority services;
- Legislation;
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk;
- Welfare Benefits Parts 1-2;
- Pathways into Academics;
- Applying for Work;
- Job Search; and
- Networking.

The course continues to be delivered with a choice of online (via Zoom Video Conferencing) or on a face-to-face basis. This mixed approach allows access to disabled trainees who would ordinarily be unable to attend the course in-person whilst the face-to-face experience provides an additional layer of networking opportunities that some of our trainees find very beneficial.

A total of 26 disabled people engaged in the 2 Choices into Work generic advocacy training programmes held in the year (26 in 2023-2024).

Disability Hate Crime training programme:

This specialist training programme was funded by Henry Smith Charity – Improving Lives during the year; allowing us to recruit and engage disabled people to undertake accredited disability-related training not carried out anywhere else in the United Kingdom.

The training is specialist as trainees are expected to come with some relevant experience or academic qualification as the course is intensive. Unlike the generic advocacy focussed Choices into Work training programme, which offers a range of accreditation levels, the Disability Hate Crime training course only offers a Level 4 award, which is at Diploma level.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT DEPT continued:

Disability Hate Crime training programme:

Training model:
The Disability Hate Crime training course is made up of:

- Classroom-based element - six 6-hour sessions, with work tasks to complete for each session. Trainee numbers per programme were limited to a maximum of 8. A variety of assessment methods were included such as homework; essays; presentations; and the end of term 2500-word essay.

- Work experience through work placement - 12-weeks totalling 72-hours+ at CHOICE or other host organisations, allowing trainees to put what they learnt during the classroom element into practice when they advocated for themselves and disabled survivors of hate crime.

Work placement and job opportunities:
Due to the organisation providing Disability Hate Crime Advocacy as part of the Community Alliance to Combat Hate consortium, which is funded by the Mayor of London, trainees could also be offered a work placement at CHOICE where they could be exposed to relevant casework.

Training and experience in this area has allowed more disabled people to apply for jobs as Hate Crime Advocates, within local government, the police service and university, as well as voluntary opportunities as representatives on consultative committees in these areas.

One training programme was held during the year at an accessible venue. This delivery method offered trainees greater flexibility, particularly those who were already employed and could therefore undertake the course (including their work placement, which contained appropriate casework) from their workplaces should they choose to do so.

Course content:
The following areas were included in the course:

- Representing clients in multi-agency meetings; carrying out risk assessments; Safeguarding; Care Act assessments; Trauma-based approach; Complaints to agencies such as the police and housing; the roles of the different agencies and bodies i.e. Housing, Anti-Social Behaviour Teams; and supporting people through the criminal justice system – including reporting to the police and going to court.

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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT DEPT continued:

Disability Hate Crime training programme continued:

Fundraising efforts:
There were changes to personnel during the period as the part-time Disability Hate Crime Trainer post, which was job-shared between two individuals, saw one leave to take up a full-time post elsewhere and the other retire. At the time of writing, CHOICE has undertaken a substantial fundraising drive for the TED and is hopeful that all elements (and some new ones, which will be facilitated by alumni during i.e. Train the Trainer courses) will form part of our offer to disabled people who wish to improve their knowledge, skills, educational attainment and work experiences.

A total of 8 disabled people undertook the Disability Hate Crime training course during the year (2023-2024: 8).

Disability & Domestic Violence training programme:
The organisation was unable to continue this specialist training programme during the year as it remained unfunded. However, in the hope that it will be able to source funding at some stage, a brief overview of the course is given below:

Course content:
Each programme has 6-sessions designed to train a group of disabled people to become professional advocates, specialising in domestic violence. Training topics include:

- Introduction to domestic violence; Safety planning and risk assessments; Child protection processes; Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC); Housing issues; and the civil and criminal courts.

The disability element is very rarely addressed even within the disabled movement and this course will be able to equip trainees with the skills needed to better manage situations, bridge the gap within domestic violence and disability and examine in detail how the two can be related.

The service is essential due to the increase of incidents of domestic violence and the demand for support services, particularly within mainstream organisations (which are often inaccessible for disabled people).

As the disabled people CHOICE works with continue to face multiple barriers of discrimination in their lives, having these additional skills and knowledge will assist them to grow in confidence and compete for jobs against non-disabled candidates.

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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT DEPT continued:

Coaching:
The coaching sessions are supplemental to the Choices into Work training programmes. The focus on personal development, confidence building, preparing service users for sourcing and retaining work etc. made them appealing and have been in high demand.

Carried out on a one-to-one basis by a highly skilled and experienced Coach, the sessions provide disabled people with the space to self-reflect and address employment challenges. Different confidence building techniques are provided in an empathetic and encouraging environment, which had positive impacts on trainee outcomes.

Some coaching session themes included:
- confidence building;
- visualisation techniques;
- goal setting; and
- role-plays to help with interviews and meetings with employers.

CHOICE is pleased to have successfully supported 24 trainees (20 in 2023-2024) with a wide-range of employment-related issues during the period.

Job Club:
As with the coaching sessions, it was not essential for trainees to attend the Job Club in order to receive their accredited award. However, these sessions remained very popular.

As group sessions were held on a fortnightly basis, there was enough time for trainees to complete their vital coursework in between sessions to allow for regular attendance.

Its focus on developing employment skills where trainees shared their experiences and challenges in a collaborative and supportive environment with their peers. Topics for discussion included:

- applying for work;
- networking;
- speaking to employers about access needs; and
- many more topics intended to support our trainees to find and stay in work.

19 disabled people (25 in 2023-2024) took part in the Job Club.

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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT DEPT continued:

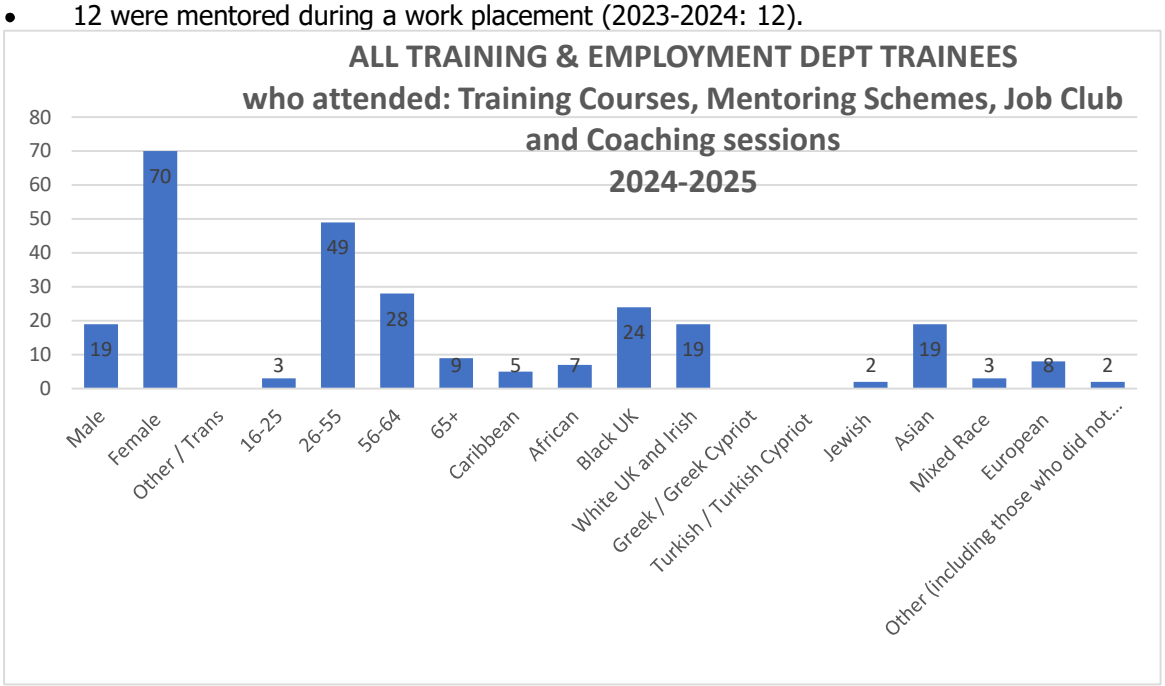
Mentoring:

Trainees who successfully completed the classroom-based elements of our training courses had the opportunity to put everything they learnt into practice as they familiarised themselves with the work of an Advocate during their work placement at CHOICE or a host organisation. The work placement was an essential part of the course and in order to receive the OCN award, it remains a requirement for both the classroom-based and work placement elements to be completed.

CHOICE trainees shadowed an experienced disabled Advocate during their bespoke and fully accessible placement, where they viewed the Advocate's casework, understood how to apply the classroom-based elements of the course to "live" cases and adopted the many different approaches and disciplines that come with advocacy practice. 12 trainees benefited from this work placement (12 in 2023-2024).

This year, the organisation is proud to report a 41% employment success rate among our trainees. The bar chart below shows demographics of the following disabled trainees:

- 26 completed 2 Advocacy Choices into Work courses (2023-2024:26);
- 8 completed 1 Disability Hate Crime course (2023-2024: 8);
- 24 took part in Coaching sessions (2023-2024: 20);
- 19 engaged in the Job Club (2023-2024: 25); and
- 12 were mentored during a work placement (2023-2024: 12).



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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

f) BEFRIENDING PLUS / VOLUNTEER PROJECT:

CHOICE's Befriending Plus / Volunteer project is a long-running service which tackles feelings of loneliness and social isolation that some disabled people experience. Whilst it remained unfunded during the period under review, CHOICE used some of its reserves to continue some of its services. The impact that the scaled down version has had on its disabled beneficiaries had been significant, as it provided essential support in everyday life through a range of volunteer-led initiatives in the office or within the community as follows:

- Office volunteers - disabled and non-disabled volunteers gain office experience whilst supporting CHOICE in its core functions including CHOICE's social media platforms, meeting fundraising aims, administration, design and marketing.

- Befriending - volunteers regularly contact service users / escort them to places, reducing social isolation and encouraging community engagement and feelings of independence.

- Gardening - transforming inaccessible green spaces into places they can conveniently take in the fresh air, exercise and enjoy time outdoors thereby also increasing mental and physical health and wellbeing.

- Corporate Volunteering – the Charity was thrilled to have regular contact with three local organisations who approached us to coordinate corporate volunteering days. These group sessions, where teams take on multiple gardens in a day, has become an enjoyable event for both the disabled recipients and the volunteers.

Following the Coronavirus ("COVID-19") pandemic, the project was expanded, enabling disabled people to also benefit from the following services:

- Walking friends - volunteers encourage service users to leave their homes, take in some exercise and enjoy the fresh air whilst maintaining social-distancing practices.

- Shopping and medication drop-off - volunteers purchase groceries and medication and deliver them to the door of the disabled service user.

Results and Impact:

This year, the Befriending Plus / Volunteer Project supported:

- 22 gardening relationships
- 9 befriending partnerships
- 6 walking volunteers
- 6 shopping volunteers
- 3 Administrators

Each of the above relationships represents a unique and valued connection, making daily life more manageable and meaningful for members of the local community.

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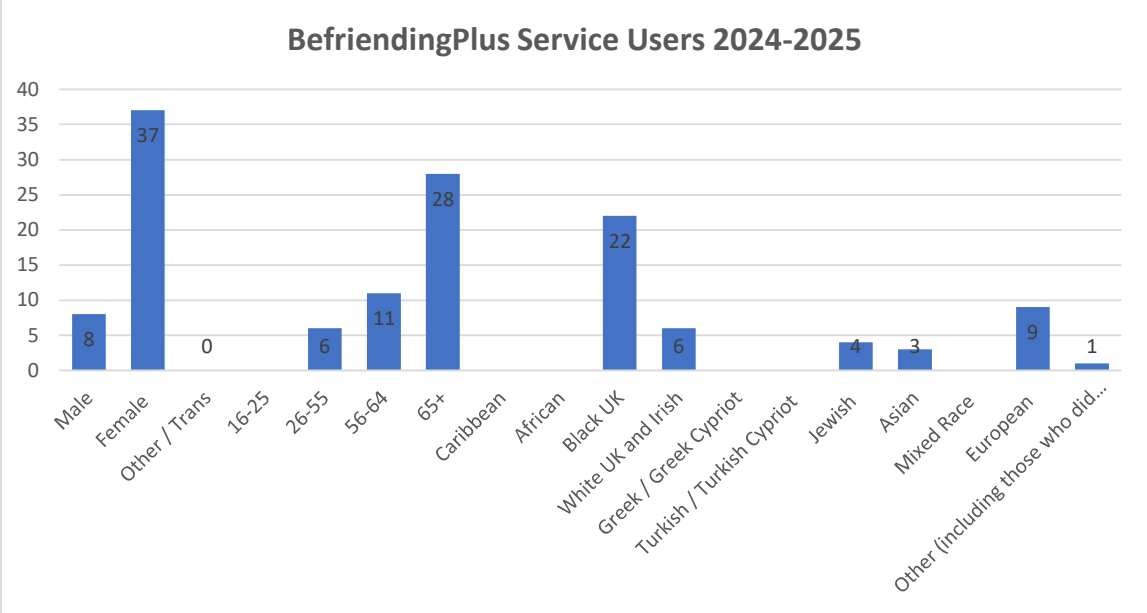
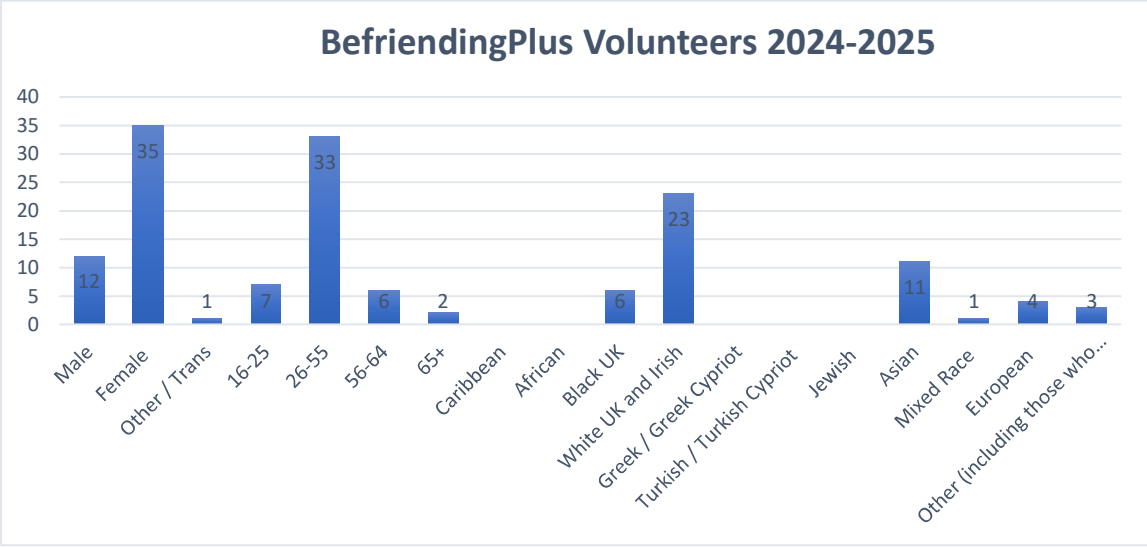
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

f) BEFRIENDING PLUS / VOLUNTEER PROJECT continued:

The Befriending Plus / Volunteer project supported 45 service users (73 in 2023-2024); and 48 volunteers (70 in 2023-2024) in the year as shown in the bar chart below:





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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

g) ACTIVE LIFESTYLE:

CHOICE's Active Lifestyle service supports local disabled people in wellbeing activities to improve their overall physical and mental health whilst also reducing social isolation. Starting its life in 2012, it has organised a variety of events over the years including:

- Boccia;
- Golf workshops;
- Kayaking at Hackney Reservoir;
- Women's boxing;
- Squash; Tennis; and
- Leyton Orient Football Club's Community Day.

The project's main activities include:

- Exercise sessions organised in conjunction with CHOICE's host organisation, Salvation Army Hoxton for face-to-face and/or online sessions, where service users can enjoy keep fit activities from the comfort of their homes;

- Social clubs (also from the Salvation Army or online) where disabled service users can bond over shared interests and experiences;

- Buddies / volunteers are provided to escort disabled people to local accessible gyms / recreational centres to support with navigating their way around the different equipment available.

Unfortunately, the project has been unfunded for several years and unable to offer any activities. CHOICE is hopeful that with a concerted fundraising effort and the cooperation of local businesses, the organisation will be able to revive this valuable project.

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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

h) DR MALCOLM AICKIN:

This year saw the very sad passing of our Chair, Dr Malcolm Aickin who had been a much-loved friend to the organisation. Aged 75 years and having served CHOICE as a Treasurer from 2010-11 until 2024, when he became Chair, Malcolm passed away in Dec 2024.

The following is a tribute in loving memory of Malcolm:

Dr Malcolm Aickin,
Chair of the Board of Trustees of
CHOICE IN HACKNEY

Photographed during **Trustees, Staff and Volunteers "Meet and Greet" on 26th Sept 2024**
in the Garden Room of the Marie Lloyd Centre
to celebrate CHOICE IN HACKNEY's first few months in
the newly refurbished community hub.

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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

h) DR MALCOLM AICKIN continued:

CHOICE's end of year meal:
During Jan 2024, Trustees, volunteers and staff gathered together at the Open Kitchen N1 in Hoxton Street for a slightly delayed end of year evening meal and we were pleased to have Malcolm (front, right) join us on the day.

CHOICE's 25th anniversary event:
CHOICE marked its 25th anniversary at an event held on 13th Sep 2017 at Amnesty International UK Human Rights Action Centre. The event was opened by Malcolm Aickin who recounted the history of CHOICE (i.e. that it started its life as an advocacy project, having just 2-advocates and a part-time administrator).

Here is an extract of Malcolm's inspirational speech, which he gave during the 25th Anniversary celebrations:
"*Let me welcome you to this celebration of 25 years of CHOICE IN HACKNEY, which has always been a Disabled People's User Led Organisation. So, let me tell you I am Dyslexic. As I am sure you know Dyslexia runs in families. So, I want to tell you a story about my grandfather's uncle: he was so seriously affected by Dyslexia that it was unlikely he would follow his boyhood dream of a career in joining the Royal Navy… However, after undertaking an oral examination (instead of a written one), he went on to pass his training at Dartmouth.*

There was a Blue Plaque outside the house he lived in in Whitehall, which commemorates him and it was later turned into the first headquarters of the Secret Intelligence Service that he founded. His successors have been known as "C" ever since and in James Bond novels, as "M". So, he did not do badly!

However, we should not think life is easy. There are Trustees at CHOICE IN HACKNEY who had been told by other organisations their impairment meant they could not possibly be a charity trustee. They are hardworking, competent diligent Trustees: to deny them that opportunity is just a terrible waste of human potential."

Dr Malcolm Aickin, the then Treasurer of CHOICE IN HACKNEY, addressing delegates at the CHOICE IN HACKNEY 25th Anniversary celebration

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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

h) DR MALCOLM AICKIN continued:

Photo:
CHOICE IN HACKNEY Treasurer, **Malcolm Aickin** (left) and a service user light candles on the CHOICE IN HACKNEY 25th Anniversary cake.

TESTIMONIES:
The CHOICE team all had nothing but praise for Malcolm as demonstrated below:

"My co-trustees have made my job as Chair a real pleasure and having a Treasurer as hard working and reliable as Malcolm, is very reassuring!" **Mary Julian, as CHOICE Chair during the 2014-15 Annual General Meeting**

"Its such sad news to hear of the passing of Malcolm, he was such a pleasant, joyful and approachable person. He will be sadly missed, as he was very supportive to the staff and to the organisation". **Ola Macauley, CHOICE Advocate**

"Malcolm is synonymous with the board for me. His charming manner and affable nature made him a pleasure to see at CHOICE IN HACKNEY events. Even when times were tough for CHOICE IN HACKNEY, his reports always made our future seem bright. I'll never forget the enthusiasm he showed for our projects both inside and outside of the organisation". **Paul Salt, CHOICE Volunteer Coordinator and Administrator**

"Malcolm was a very approachable person who I really enjoyed working with over the years – a very patient man who could make the most complicated of issues appear straightforward and easy to follow. He was a real ambassador for CHOICE IN HACKNEY who was always available to offer his support whenever it was needed." **Monica Matthews, CHOICE Administrator**

"I have always found Malcolm to be a good listener who always had 5-minutes to spare when I needed to brainstorm or have another person's perspective on the organisation: there was a sense of relief after our conversations. He was also very willing to help and would often attend meetings with potential funders and consultants to offer his unique insights and contributions – all of which were very valuable."
Caroline Nelson, CHOICE Chief Executive Officer

Dr Malcolm Aickin will be sadly missed by all.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

i) MONITORING & EVALUATION OF SERVICES:

Trustees are pleased to report the CHOICE team continued its work with consultant, Jason Pollard of Community Impact CIC throughout this financial year. The Client Relationship Management (CRM) database, Charity Log allowed the Charity to develop a set of working impact outcomes and measurement indicators that captured the aims and objectives of each service.

Each project entered data directly onto the CRM, logging outcomes, outputs, and service users' feedback. A variety of reports were produced for funders and for discussion at:

- the Annual General Meeting;
- Sub-Groups;
- Steering Groups; and
- Team meetings.

CHOICE is now in a better position to know when it is functioning correctly and where there is room for improvement so that service provision matches our users' wants and needs.

The Monitoring & Evaluation framework created a large volume of work that included finalising the Outcomes Framework demonstrating how projects can capture:

- data on deliverables (outputs);
- Engagement data (satisfaction surveys etc); and
- Impact (i.e. what difference our services make).

This approach aligns impact reporting to a set of outcome measures and brings all three data types into a single reporting framework.

Anonymised case studies also form part of the evaluation, and are written to show the work CHOICE does in practice.

The draft Impact Report for the Advocacy service describes some of the ways advocacy interventions made a difference to disabled people. Change is described against outcomes which are clearly defined and measureable. Between Jan – Dec 2024 a review was conducted of 25 randomised service user cases and within each advocacy area (IGA; Hate Crime; and General) individual cases were analysed to understand the:

1. Service user's issue of concern;
2. Actions taken by the Advocate;
3. Role the Advocate took in each particular case; and
4. Outcome.

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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

i) MONITORING & EVALUATION OF SERVICES continued:

Cases were catalogued by i.e. their complexity. Taken together, the data collected was used to describe advocacy in practice, and some of the ways advocacy benefited disabled people accessing it. For General Advocacy, it was noted cases covered a wide range of issues however, within the case review:

- at least 7 cases (28%) had some type of housing concern;
- health-related issues were raised in 20% of cases; and
- family law matters accounted for 12%.

Housing was the largest area of concern and a number of outcomes are relevant to housing advocacy (i.e. having the financial resources to live independently, being aware of the full range of benefits and entitlements available, or simply feeling safe at home).

The case review showed that providing service users with greater control over their lives is empowering and has a positive effect on their well-being. Interviews showed this impact to be an important one as stated by one participant who said: "… I feel a lot more relaxed now. I don't have that… high level of anxiety that I had before. I also know that CHOICE is just a phone call or email way…"

The full draft report is available upon request.

j) FUNDERS – NEW AND OLD:

During the year under review, there were funder contracts that were due to expire, some were being retendered whilst another allowed the Charity to introduce a new complementary service to its current offer. Each one will be discussed in turn:

i) Health Advocacy - funder, Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust's 3-year health advocacy contract ended in Oct 2024 with potential for a 2-year extension (1-year at a time). This service is for the provision of advocacy for physically and sensory impaired disabled people who are residents of City of London and London Borough of Hackney. The Trust is a long-term funder of CHOICE and there is a good working relationship.

As per the contract, CHOICE negotiated a 1-year extension with the Trust in Oct 2024, which included a 2.2% increase to support the rise in cost of living. Although this is due to expire on 31st Oct 2025, CHOICE will approach the Trust in Aug 2025 to express an interest in extending the contract by 1-year for the second (and final) time. If successful, this will allow the organisation to continue to offer a health advocacy service to 31st Oct 2026.

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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

j) FUNDERS – NEW AND OLD continued:

ii) Retendering of Hate Crime consortium - funder, Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime (MOPAC) re-tendered the Hate Crime service, which is due to expire in Sept 2025. The organisation has been a partner within the consortium entitled "Community Alliance To Combat Hate" ("CATCH") since inception in 2016-17. The consortium works in partnership with a network of community organisations who specialise in supporting people who have experienced a hate crime due to their protected characteristics.
Existing lead provider, Galop successfully bid for the contract allowing CHOICE to continue to offer that service and negotiated an increase to the initial offer of 6-hours per week; increasing it to 14-hours per week.

iii) Community Care & Housing Service – this new service, which started in Jan 2025 promotes social welfare and housing advice linking disabled Hackney residents with trainee solicitors providing a free legal advice clinic. A detailed breakdown of the service is provided earlier in the report.

k) NEW SERVICES:

i) Statutory advocacy – the CHOICE advocates are undertaking a Level 4 National Vocational Qualification in statutory advocacy training (with two separate specialist modules: one on NHS Complaints and the other on the Care Act). The Advocates will begin to have a statutory advocacy caseload starting around Sept 2025. This type of work is in demand and gives the advocates greater variety and diversity of work experience as the non-statutory advocacy work will reduce over time.

The training is fully funded by lead provider, Rethink Mental Illness including 1-day per month each for study costs and full supervision.

ii) Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) – at the time of writing funder, Rethink Mental Illness have approached CHOICE to undertake some DoLs work for 14-hours per week for 6-months initially. Going forward, there is a possibility of an extension and this will be linked to CHOICE's mentoring scheme to allow trainees to specialise in this field.

Technical supervision will be undertaken by Rethink's Community Advocacy Partnerships Manager who has experience in this field with the CHOICE Chief Executive Officer undertaking formal supervision to reduce costs.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

l) QUALITY MARKS:

i) Trusted Charity Standard: the process to renew this quality mark which the organisation first acquired in Oct 2018 has started.

Achieving the award offers both users and funders/commissioners external verification of the quality and credibility of CHOICE, as it has allowed the organisation to:

- improve the way it works – providing a better quality of service to those that rely on it;
- have more efficient organisational systems and procedures – freeing up much needed time and energy to focus on what really matters;
- provide greater credibility and legitimacy – by reassuring beneficiaries, supporters, donors, volunteers and staff who want to know their organisation is well run, accountable and transparent;
- engage the whole organisation – involving everyone in the process of improving the way they work. In that regard, Trusted Charity Standard will want to meet with staff, trustees and possibly service users and volunteers.

ii) Advice Quality Standard (AQS): the organisation is in the process of acquiring the AQS for organisations offering face-to-face advice.

The key benefits of the AQS is that it provides case management best practice.

CHOICE Advocates will:
- be better able to plan their casework;
- carry it out following best practice guidelines; and
- regularly review it to foster continuous improvement. In particular, being aware of the main areas of risk.

By working within the AQS framework, staff can closely scrutinise their work and develop good habits to improve their working practices.

iii) Open College Network Credit4Learning (OCN): - is the awarding body of CHOICE's Training & Employment Dept (TED) accredited suite of programmes. CHOICE continues to be recognised by OCN as a training academy, which it has enjoyed since 2013/14.

Formal award levels start at Level 1 – 3 for Trainees undertaking the Choices into Work course (specialising in Advocacy) however for those with relevant experience, this can increased to a Level 4 Diploma (for specialist Hate Crime and/or Disability & Domestic Violence courses).

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

m) COLLABORATIVE WORKING:

CHOICE has worked collaboratively with organisations for many years. In particular, Inclusion London, which supports 70+ Deaf & Disabled People's Organisations (DDPOs) across London to promote disabled people's equality and inclusion. CHOICE benefited from the Cornerstone 2 consortium made up of nine DDPOs, led by Inclusion London. The organisation continues to benefit from this collaboration by having access to the "*Talking About Disability*" guide, which is available upon request. The guide aims to give anyone working to make society more inclusive for disabled people some powerful tools to help change hearts and minds on disability.

The consortium developed and tested communications resources to reframe the narrative around disability: changing understanding, thereby creating systemic change. This will build capacity and capabilities not only of project partners, but all 70+ London DDPOs, increasing their visibility and ability to advocate for change and reach more disabled Londoners.

The guide is in two parts. Part One ('What are strategic communications?') is a brief introduction to strategic communications and framing – what it is, why it's important and what it involves. Part Two ('How to talk about disability') is based on research insights.

More recently, CHOICE along with other London-based DDPOs engaged with Inclusion London on a piece of *employment-based* research. This paid activity is part of a consortium led by Inclusion London in conjunction with the Learning and Work Institute. It offers DDPOs a central voice in shaping and influencing the research and its recommendations on employment support for disabled people.

Each DDPO was involved in the following ways:

- Providing some DDPO researcher time to input into the design of the research, analysis of findings and final recommendations;
- Setting up a DDPO advisory group made up of London-based DDPO CEOs, alongside Inclusion London and the researchers that met 4 times between Jan – May 2025 to advise and input into research design, findings and recommendations;
- Promoting and publicising the research project to DDPO members and service users so they can be interviewed and become research participants; and
- Advise The Learning and Work Institute on access issues.

The Learning and Work Institute agreed to work collaboratively with DDPOs on the research, findings and recommendations that will come out of the work.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

n) CHALLENGING GOVERNMENT REFORMS TO WELFARE BENEFITS:

A response to the government's Green Paper: "Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working" (pub. 18 Mar 2025) was forwarded to the Secretary of State on 15th Apr 2025 by the CHOICE Chief Executive Officer who worked collaboratively with CHOICE Trustees / staff. The green paper includes benefit changes that are explicitly designed to cut welfare spending with a focus on disability-related and incapacity benefits (i.e. Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment and contributory benefits), which will negatively impact many disabled people and those with long-term health conditions. A copy of the letter was sent to local MPs (Dame Meg Hillier and Diane Abbott) who invited the organisation to formally respond to the consultation, which it duly did.

As a result of these activities and the many resulting protests, the Secretary of State issued a statement on 30th Jun 2025 that said:

- *"The Government has committed to making two changes to strengthen the Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) Bill: implementing the new eligibility requirements for PIP from Nov 2026 for new claims only, and adjusting Universal Credit rates to make sure all existing recipients of the Universal Credit health element – and any new claimant meeting the severe conditions criteria and those who qualify under Special Rules for End of Life – have the combined rate of their Universal Credit standard allowance and Universal Credit health element protected in real terms*".

This demonstrates the power of working collectively so that disabled people's voices can be heard and positive tangible action can be taken.

o) RESTRUCTURING:

Thanks to three-year's core funding (2023-2026) from Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales and the foundation's Enhance package, CHOICE's advocacy service underwent a restructuring process with support from consultancy firm, Roots HR.

A new Deputy Chief Executive Officer role, which will, amongst other tasks include the line management of the Advocacy team and deputising for the CHOICE CEO during i.e. periods of annual leave.

Following an internal recruitment process, the successful candidate who already has a part-time role with CHOICE is now in post and fulfilling 7-hours per week.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

p) HELLO (AGAIN) AND GOODBYE:

The CHOICE team:

- Welcomes: Advocacy Mentor (Hate Crime and Generic Advocacy), **Zoe Rubenstein** and Community Care & Housing Advisor, **Emily-May Palmer** both of whom are familiar with the organisation having either volunteered and/or worked with it previously.

- Bids farewell to: Disability Hate Crime Trainer, **David Landau** as he settles into his retirement and Trainee Disability Rights Advocate, **Jacek Korczak** whose temporary post with the organisation came to an end.

The whole organisation wishes them well for the future.

q) FUNDERS:

In the year under review, CHOICE received funding from:

1. **Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust** – to provide health advocacy to disabled residents of the City of London and Hackney who have physical and/or sensory impairments.

2. **London Borough of Hackney via Rethink Mental Illness** - to provide a statutory and non-statutory advocacy service to disabled Hackney adults who are known to Adult Social Care teams, un-befriended, unable to speak up for themselves and require support with a specific advocacy issue.

3. **Henry Smith Charity - Improving Lives** – towards the Choices into Work and Disability Hate Crime training courses (both part of the Training & Employment Dept), which provides classroom-based advocacy/disability hate crime training, work placements and mentoring. Additional coaching support and a Job Club is also funded.

4. **Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales** – a three-year unrestricted grant to support CHOICE's charitable activities / costs.

5. **Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime** (MOPAC) – to provide disability hate crime advocacy to disabled people who live or work in Greater London as part of the Community Alliance To Combat Hate (CATCH) consortium.

6. **City Bridge Foundation** (the funding arm of The City of London Corporation's charity, Bridge House Estates) – five-year's funding towards the provision of information, guidance and advocacy to disabled residents of Hackney and the City, allowing independence, choice and control over their lives and reducing inequality.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

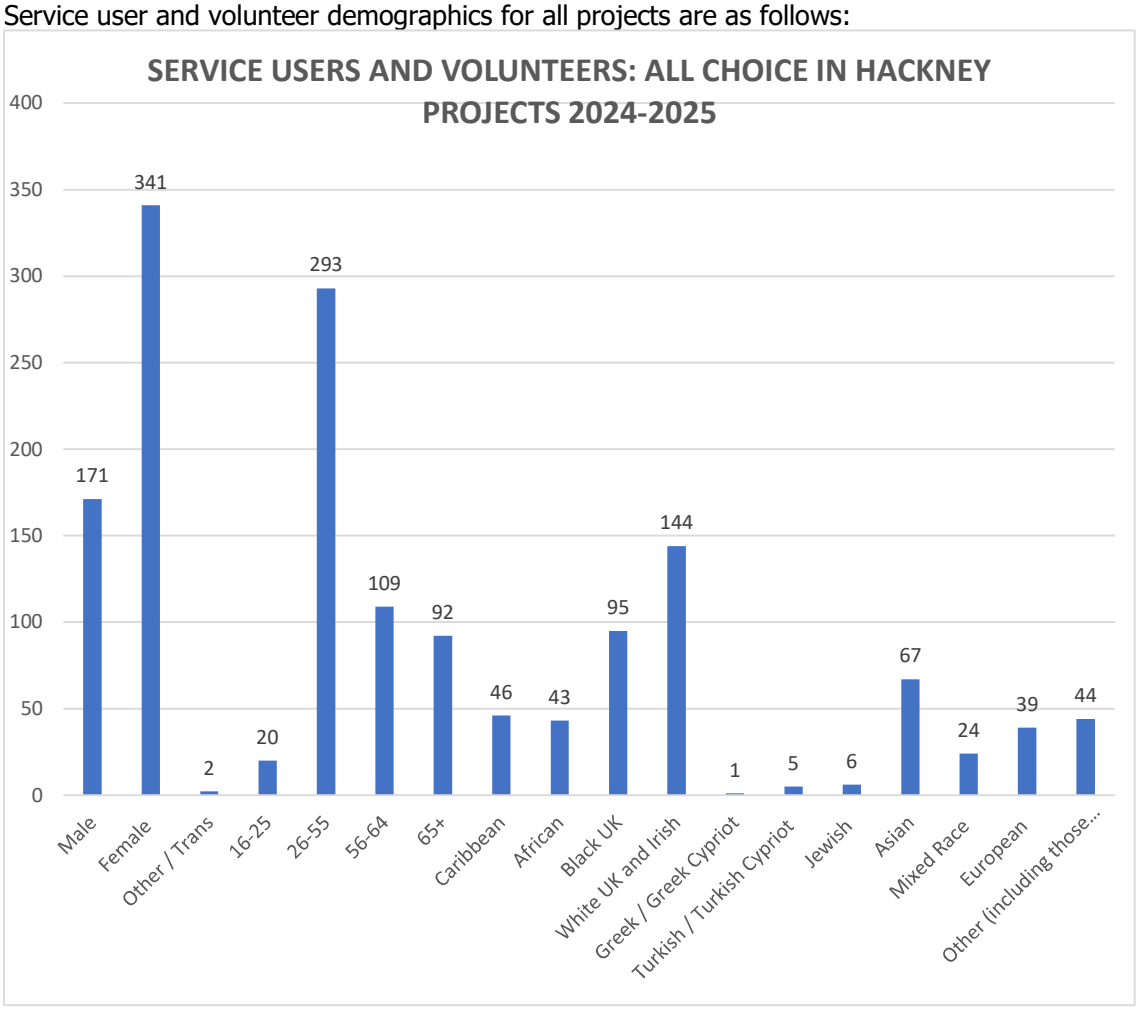
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

q) FUNDERS continued:

7. **Disability Law Service (DLS)** – this legal advice consortium funded by City Bridge Foundation's Propel programme provided a Community Care & Housing (CC&H) service to residents of Hackney promoting social welfare / housing advice. CHOICE's CC&H Advisor provided general advice and made referrals into DLS' legal clinic for specialist advice.

The level of funding in the year allowed CHOICE to work with a total of 514 people (1,021 in 2023-2024). Whilst this is significantly lower than in the last year, it should be noted that last year's funding allowed us to support an additional 518 people (340 service users and 178 volunteers) through the "Relieving the cost of living fund for disabled people in Hackney".

Service user and volunteer demographics for all projects are as follows:



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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

r) PARTNERSHIP WORKING:

CHOICE is committed to partnership working to ensure our quality assurance standards are met and that we provide quality services to disabled people. We understand that as a small charity with limited resources, it is in our best interests to amplify our reach by cooperating with other organisations in order that we achieve our goals, aims / missions and targets, either collectively or individually.

Partnership working allows us to improve our reach to include more disabled people by working across sectors and boroughs with other organisations. In so doing, we raise awareness of the person-centred disabled-focussed services we provide within an expanded community. Thus securing the rights of more disabled people as full citizens, enabling them to improve their quality of life and promote an inclusive society where they participate fully and equally.

CHOICE is pleased to continually expand and strengthen the network of organisations who are open to reciprocal working, which encourages sharing a lived experience of disability, knowledge, training opportunities, services, a loyal customer base as well as joining together to strengthen consortium-based funding applications.

CHOICE's network of organisations includes, but is not limited to:

1. **Rethink Mental Illness (RMI)** – the lead provider of CHOICE's statutory and non-statutory advocacy services, which are funded by London Borough of Hackney. This relationship has developed well over the last 2+years and there is good rapport between both partners (at senior and staff levels) with regular referrals being made into the services.

2. **Community Alliance to Combat Hate ("CATCH")** – the consortium works in partnership with a network of community organisations (including CHOICE via its Disability Hate Crime service) specialising in supporting people who have experienced a hate crime due to their protected characteristics i.e. race/ethnicity, faith/religion, sexual orientation/gender identity and/or disability. Referrals come into CHOICE via CATCH's triage service, which is managed by Galop, the lead provider.

CHOICE also carries out joint-working with other disability-related partner organisations - Real and Stay Safe East.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

r) **PARTNERSHIP WORKING continued:**

3. **Hackney Council for Voluntary Service (HCVS)** – CHOICE is a long-term associate member of HCVS which acts as the catalyst between Hackney's third sector organisations / residents and the local authority to i.e. address inequalities in the borough. We have developed good working relationships with the charity and our Chief Executive Officer is a former board member. Our staff have gained knowledge, developed key skills after attending numerous training courses including on completing grant applications, first aid etc. We have also lent our support to HCVS' campaigns to lobby central and local governments to make Hackney a better place to live and work.

4. **Hackney People First** – supports disabled people with Learning Disabilities and CHOICE worked collaboratively with them for many years. In 2014, CHOICE partnered with them (and other local organisations including Disability Back-Up and the People's Network) to hold an event organised by and for Hackney's disabled residents to help develop inclusive and accessible services entitled "Nothing About Us, Without Us". The event was well attended with guest speakers including local Councillors.

5. **Inclusion London** – this pan-London disability-related organisation provides CHOICE with a range of training programmes to build our skills, knowledge and sustainability. CHOICE responds to requests for support in their policy work.

6. **Marie Lloyd Centre** – CHOICE's new location is within this centre of expertise, warmth, activity and connection for disabled people, older people, carers and those at risk of harm from addition as it is shared space with other voluntary and third sector organisations where there are opportunities for closer joint-working. Our partners include: Age UK East London (landlord), City & Hackney Carers Centre, Holly Street Luncheon Club, the Huddleston Centre, MRS Independent Living and soon to include the Hackney Harm Reduction Hub.

7. **Hackney Opportunity Hub** – this organisation has provided us with both accessible training venues in the past for the classroom-based element of the Choices into Work project and trainees wanting to upskill and improve their employment prospects by undertaking the course.

8. **Alliance for Inclusive Education ("ALLFIE")** – we are working jointly with ALLFIE to increase the number of younger disabled people we support with our services, in particular CHOICE's Training & Employment Dept activities.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Financial Review:
At the end of the previous year Restricted Funds held amounted to £136,101. The majority of these were expended on the projects for which they were intended as set out in Note 12 of the financial statements. Further funds have been raised for ongoing activities and Restricted Funds of £62,502 are carried forward. In consequence there was a deficit in the Restricted Funds on the year of £73,599 (2024: deficit £60,798).

The unrestricted reserves carried forward from the previous year amounted to £140,603. After considering the deficit for the year of £41,682 (2024: surplus £92,988) the unrestricted reserves carried forward amounted to £98,921.

Total incoming resources amounted to £168,781 (2024: £319,482) and total resources expended were £284,062 (2024: £287,292). This resulted in a deficit on the year of £115,281 (2024: surplus £32,190).

Risk:
Trustees are pleased to report that following the appointment of a part-time Deputy Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who manages the Advocacy team, the CEO has been able to focus on the management of the whole organisation. This has continued to reduce the risk of over-reliance on the CEO allowing her to focus on meeting the strategic aims of the Charity and fundraising.

A new source of income has allowed CHOICE to introduce a new service – the Community Care & Housing service. This project is part of a consortium headed up by the Disability Law Service (DLS) and is funded for 1-year. However, the charity is hopeful the contract length will be extended beyond Jan 2026. This service has allowed the other projects within CHOICE to make referrals into it particularly with housing issues, which are very contemporary and our service users have access to specialist legal advice therefore mitigating risk of i.e. homelessness. The organisation will continue to source new funding in order to build on its current offer to its service users.

Due to increased use of Information Communications Technology, CHOICE dispensed with paper records in order to reduce storage space. With this came the risks from cyber-attack and the need for electronic data security. The Charity has taken further steps to enhance the reasonable data security measures that were already in place across all team members and Trustees are satisfied with these levels of protection.

CHOICE remains committed to the ideals of a Disabled People's User-Led Organisation ("DPULO"). As noted previously, this presents its own risks in a period of financial austerity. CHOICE continues to adapt business models and funding bids to articulate the added value created by employment of disabled staff. CHOICE will continue to work with others such as Inclusion London to campaign for Access to Work to cover full costs.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Reserves Policy:
The Charity sets aside funds, as unrestricted reserves to meet future anticipated or contingent expenditure, in particular to cover costs such as staff sickness or redundancy, to develop new activities and to ensure the continuity of services through difficult financial periods. The Board of Trustees, after review, decided that the Charity should aim for a level of the "free reserves" of between 3 and 9 months recurrent expenditure, which equates to approximately £72,500 - £217,500.

CHOICE has made some use of Reserves to maintain existing and to develop new services. As a result, the tangible assets ("free reserves") have reduced and at the year-end amounted to £98,921 (2024: £140,603).

GOING CONCERN:
The Trustees actively foster relations with existing funders and seek additional funding sources emphasising the value for money in terms of historic costs per service user outcome. Further multi-year funding has been secured and will continue to be sourced, although as noted above, Restricted Funds are less than at the end of the previous year, they remain at a healthy level.

In consequence, the Trustees are of the opinion that the Charity will be able to continue as a going concern into 2028 and beyond.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees (who are also the directors of Choice in Hackney 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), including Financial Reporting Standard 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland".

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 information of which the charitable company's examiners are unaware; and
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant information and to establish that the examiners are aware of that information.

The independent examiner, Knox Cropper LLP, 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.

APPROVAL
This report was approved by the Board of Directors and Trustees on 12th Sept 2025 and signed on their behalf by:

Andrew Price
.....
Vice-Chair: Andrew Price

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INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

TO THE MEMBERS OF CHOICE IN HACKNEY

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of Choice in Hackney for the period ended 31 March 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charitable company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act'). You are satisfied that the accounts of the Company are not required by charity or company law to be audited and have chosen instead to have an independent examination.

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the Company's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Richard Billinghurst
Knox Cropper LLP
Chartered Accountants
65-68 Leadenhall Street, London, EC3A 2AD

Date: 22/09/2025

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
(INCORPORATING THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

	Notes	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2025 £	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2024 £
INCOME FROM:							
Grants and donations	2(a)	85,361	1,347	86,708	153,157	84,042	237,199
Charitable activities	2(b)	-	81,052	81,052	-	81,743	81,743
Investments		-	1,021	1,021	-	540	540
Other income		-	-	-	-	-	-
Total		85,361	83,420	168,781	153,157	166,325	319,482
EXPENDITURE ON:							
Raising funds	3	-	10,736	10,736	-	6,590	6,590
Charitable activities	3	158,960	114,366	273,326	213,955	66,747	280,702
Total		158,960	125,102	284,062	213,955	73,337	287,292
Net income/(expenditure)		(73,599)	(41,682)	(115,281)	(60,798)	92,988	32,190
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		(73,599)	(41,682)	(115,281)	(60,798)	92,988	32,190
Balances brought forward at 1 April		136,101	140,603	276,704	196,899	47,615	244,514
BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31 MARCH		62,502	98,921	161,423	136,101	140,603	276,704

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31st MARCH 2025

	Notes	2025		2024	
		£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible Assets	7		-		-
Intangible Assets	8		2,246		3,208
			2,246		3,208
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	9	103,315		194,633	
Cash at Bank and in hand		71,195		105,528	
		174,510		300,161	
CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year	10	(15,333)		(26,665)	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			159,177		273,496
NET ASSETS			161,423		276,704
FUNDS					
Restricted Funds	12		62,502		136,101
Unrestricted Funds					
Designated Funds			-		-
General Fund	11		98,921		140,603
			161,423		276,704

The Company is exempt from the requirements relating to preparing audited accounts in accordance with Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006. The members have not required the Company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for:

a) ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and;

b) preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of each financial year and of its profit or loss for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the company.

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 12th Sep 2025 and signed on behalf of the board

Vice-Chair: Andrew Price

Treasurer: Matthew Baxter

Registered Company Number: 03423122
Registered Charity Number: 1077287

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

a. Basis of Preparation of Accounts

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), 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.

The presentation currency of the financial statements is Pound Sterling (£).

b. Company Status

CHOICE IN HACKNEY is a company limited by guarantee. In the event of the Charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the Charity.

c. Fund Accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the objects of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements. Statutory grants which are given as contributions towards the Charity's core services are treated as unrestricted.

d. Incoming resources

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.

e. Resources expended

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been included under expenses categories that aggregate all costs for allocation to activities. Governance costs include the costs of servicing meetings of the Board of Trustees, audit and strategic planning.

f. Tangible and Intangible Fixed Assets and Depreciation

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the costs of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on:
Furniture/Fittings: 25% straight line basis
Office Equipment: 25% straight line basis

Intangible assets are stated at cost less amortisation. Assets are amortised once brought into use. Amortisation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost less estimated residual value of each asset over its expected useful life, as follows:
CRM system: 20% straight line basis

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

g. **Allocation of Overhead and Support Costs**
Overhead and support costs have been allocated between charitable activities and other expenditure on the basis of staff time. The allocation of overhead and support costs is analysed in note 3.

h. **Operating Leases**
Rentals payable under operating leases are charged to the statement of financial activities as they fall due over the term of the lease.

2(a). **INCOMING RESOURCES FROM GENERATED FUNDS**
- **Grants received**

	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	2025 Total £	2024 Total £
City Bridge Trust	56,540	-	56,540	57,315
Lloyds Bank Foundation	-	-	-	75,000
Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC)	23,175	-	23,175	22,838
The National Lottery	-	-	-	73,004
Inclusion London	-	823	823	7,375
Hackney Council FO	-	-	-	166
Alliance for Inclusive Education	-	120	120	300
Other income and Donations	-	404	404	1,201
Disability Law Service	5,646	-	5,646	-
	85,361	1,347	86,708	237,199

2(b). **INCOMING RESOURCES FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES**
- Contracts for services and performance related grants

	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	2025 Total £	2024 Total £
Homerton University Hospital – Advocacy	-	47,866	47,866	47,431
The Advocacy Project – Advocacy				4,380
Rethink Mental Illness - Advocacy	-	33,186	33,186	29,932
	-	81,052	81,052	81,743

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

3. ANALYSIS OF RESOURCES EXPENDED

	Raising Funds	Charitable Activities	Total 2025	Total 2024
Unrestricted	£	£	£	£
Staff costs	10,736	96,627	107,363	65,896
Staff training	-	-	-	50
Accountancy	-	1,100	1,100	662
Independent examination fee	-	1,030	1,030	850
Rent	-	6,860	6,860	1,150
Other Costs	-	8,039	8,039	4,479
Legal & Professional Fees	-	710	710	250
	10,736	114,366	125,102	73,337
Restricted				
Staff costs	-	124,722	124,722	152,161
Staff training	-	95	95	150
Accountancy	-	2,357	2,357	2,628
Independent examination fee	-	2,370	2,370	2,400
Rent	-	15,709	15,709	21,200
Other Costs	-	11,920	11,920	32,990
Legal & Professional Fees	-	1,787	1,787	2,426
	-	158,960	158,960	213,955
	10,736	273,326	284,062	287,292

Staff costs have been allocated to the above expenditure heads on the basis of estimated staff time spent on the activities. Support costs and governance costs are included in the above analysis. Governance costs amounted to £18,000 (2024: £18,000).

4. STAFF NUMBERS AND COSTS

	2025 £	2024 £
Salaries	213,092	203,475
Social security costs	14,613	10,538
Employer pension	4,380	4,044
Redundancy costs	-	-
	232,085	218,057

The average number of employees during the year was 11 (2024:10).
1 employee earned more than £60,000 during the year under review (2024: none).
The remuneration of senior management amounted to £62,941 (2024: £51,117).

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

5. TRUSTEES REMUNERATION

During the year, one Trustee received reimbursement of expenses amounting to £13 (2024: £13).

No trustee received any remuneration other than disclosed in these accounts.

6. TAXATION

CHOICE is a registered charity and is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income and capital gains received to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

7. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Furniture £	Office Equipment £	Total £
Cost			
At 1st April 2024	2,316	23,964	26,280
Additions	-	-	-
At 31st March 2025	2,316	23,964	26,280
Depreciation			
At 1st April 2024	2,316	23,964	26,280
Charged for the year	-	-	-
At 31st March 2025	2,316	23,964	26,280
Net Book Value			
At 31st March 2025	-	-	-
At 31st March 2024	-	-	-

8. INTANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	CRM System £
Cost	
At 1st April 2024	4,812
Additions	-
At 31st March 2025	4,812
Depreciation	
At 1st April 2024	1,604
Charged for the year	962
At 31st March 2025	2,566
Net Book Value	
At 31st March 2025	2,246
At 31st March 2024	3,208

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

9. **DEBTORS**

	2025 £	2024 £
Grant debtors	35,211	34,679
Prepayments and other debtors	8,154	5,054
Accrued income	59,950	154,900
	103,315	194,633

10. **CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within this year**

PAYE	5,492	7,024
Accruals and other creditors	9,841	19,641
	15,333	26,665

11. **UNRESTRICTED FUNDS**

	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
General Fund	140,603	83,420	(125,102)	-	98,921
Total Unrestricted Funds	140,603	83,420	(125,102)	-	98,921

PRIOR YEAR	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
General Fund	47,615	166,325	(73,337)	-	140,603
Total Unrestricted Funds	47,615	166,325	(73,337)	-	140,603

Docusign Envelope ID: F9BEE19B-D335-4F95-A8DE-8071C0C91FE3

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

12. **RESTRICTED FUNDS**

	Brought Forward	Incoming Resources	Resources Expended	Transfers	Carried Forward
	£	£	£	£	£
Disability LIB	499	23,175	(23,674)	-	-
Advocacy, Training and Employment	126,710	-	(67,187)	-	59,523
Information Guidance & Advocacy	8,892	56,540	(62,453)	-	2,979
Disability Law Service Active Lifestyle	-	5,646	(5,646)	-	-
Total Restricted Funds	136,101	85,361	(158,960)	-	62,502

PRIOR YEAR	Brought Forward	Incoming Resources	Resources Expended	Transfers	Carried Forward
	£	£	£	£	£
Disability LIB	499	22,838	(22,838)	-	499
Advocacy, Training and Employment	196,400	-	(69,690)	-	126,710
Information Guidance & Advocacy	-	57,315	(48,423)	-	8,892
Cost of Living Fund	-	73,004	(73,004)	-	-
Total Restricted Funds	196,899	153,157	(213,955)	-	136,101

Disability LIB – this was a one-off grant from Disability LIB towards disabled people's communication support, such as translation and interpretation costs.

Advocacy, Training and Employment (now known as the Choices into Work) - this represents amounts received towards the Choices into Work Project to train disabled people to enable them to find meaningful employment in advocacy or other related fields. This project also offers coaching, confidence building and mentoring.

Disability Hate Crime Project – this represents funding received from the Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC). CHOICE operates within the "Community Alliance To Combat Hate" (CATCH) consortium to support disabled survivors of hate crime that take place within London and surrounding boroughs.

Information Guidance & Advocacy – funding received from City Bridge Trust (the funding arm of The City of London Corporation's charity, Bridge House Estate) – for the provision of information, guidance and advocacy to disabled residents of Hackney and the City, allowing independence, choice and control over their lives and reducing inequality.

Docusign Envelope ID: F9BEE19B-D335-4F95-A8DE-8071C0C91FE3

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

Community Care & Housing – the service is funded by City Bridge Foundation and promotes social welfare advice; linking trainee solicitors with organisations in the community. This collaboration between the lead provider, Disability Law Service and CHOICE allowed the charity to launch a free legal advice clinic providing advice to those who have a community care or housing issue.

Cost of Living Fund – The Government's Community Organisations Cost of Living Fund, delivered by The National Lottery Community Fund supported a new project "Relieving the cost of living for disabled people of Hackney". This went towards the continuation and expansion of existing services to help meet the increased levels of demand within the cost of living crisis.

13. FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

At the 31st March 2025 the Charity had commitments under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

	2025	2024
Amounts payable:	£	£
Within one year	3,924	23,713
Between two and five years	3,270	12,402
After five years	-	-
	7,194	36,115

In addition to the above, the Charity has a licence agreement for its office premises for an annual rent of £25,000. The licence is reviewed every June.

14. CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

There were no capital commitments at 31st March 2025 (2024: Nil).

15. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

There were no contingent liabilities at 31st March 2025 (2024: Nil).

16. NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Fixed Assets	Cash at Bank and in Hand	Debtors	Current Liabilities	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted	2,246	68,643	43,365	(15,333)	98,921
Restricted	-	2,552	59,950	-	62,502
Total	2,246	71,195	103,315	(15,333)	161,423

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2025

PRIOR YEAR	**Fixed Assets**	**Cash at Bank and in Hand**	**Debtors**	**Current Liabilities**	**Total**
	£	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted	3,208	40,663	123,397	(26,665)	140,603
Restricted	-	64,865	71,236	-	136,101
Total	3,208	105,528	194,633	(26,665)	276,704

17. **RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS**

There were no related party transaction during the year.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

England & Wales - Charity number 1077287

Accounts

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

(Company Limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES REPORT

AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

COMPANY NO: 03423122
CHARITY NO : 1077287

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

TRUSTEES REPORT

AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2024

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

The Trustees present their report and the financial statement for the year ended 31st March 2024.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Trustees

Malcolm Aickin	Chair
Andrew Price	Vice-Chair
Matthew Baxter (appointed 18th September 2023)	Treasurer
Thomas Brayford	
Patricia Charlesworth (resigned 26th January 2024)	
Mary Julian	
Debra Schiman	
Bharat Siyani	

Company Secretary and Executive Director	Caroline Nelson
Company reg. no.	03423122
Charity reg. no.	1077287
Registered Office	CHOICE IN HACKNEY Defoe Block, Ground Floor 50 Hoxton Street London N1 6LP
Independent Examiner	Knox Cropper LLP 65 Leadenhall Street London EC3A 2AD
Bankers	Barclays Bank PLC Leicester LE87 2BB

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

The Trustees, who are also the Directors of the charitable company for the purposes of the Companies Act present their combined directors' report and trustees' report, as required by company law, together with the financial statements of CHOICE IN HACKNEY ("CHOICE" or "the Charity") for the year ended 31st March 2024. The Trustees confirm that the trustees report and the financial statements of the Charity comply with current statutory requirements, the requirements of the Charity's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland ("FRS 102").

Administration Details of the Charity, its Trustees and Advisors

Administration details relating to CHOICE are set out under Legal and Administrative Information, on page 1.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Charity is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Trustees are recruited from members of the Charity, ex-employees and from the wider community. They are elected and co-opted under the terms of the company's Articles of Association. Users are represented on the Board of Trustees. At the Annual General Meeting, the Board of Trustees is elected by the members of the Charity and serve from the close of that meeting until the close of the succeeding Annual General Meeting. The Board of Trustees consists of not less than 3 members and until otherwise determined by a General Meeting, not more than 12 members.

Trustees were given an induction to the work of CHOICE by the Executive Director and introduced to all staff members. The formal policies and procedures are reviewed annually.
The Management of the Charity is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees. Operational decisions are taken by the Executive Director and staff. Strategic decisions are made by the Board of Trustees in consultation with the Executive Director. The Board of Trustees meets at least 4 times a year and the Executive Director attends all meetings.

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and in particular, to those related to its operations and finances of the Charity, and are satisfied that systems and procedures are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks. A review of the risk assessment was carried out by members of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Director during the year.

Public Benefit

In reviewing the Charity's aims and objectives and in planning future activities, the Trustees refer to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit.

Objectives and Activities

CHOICE has the charitable objectives of working with disabled, Greater London residents by providing Independent Living Services including, but not limited to: Active Lifestyle, Advocacy, Befriending Plus / Volunteering, Disability Hate Crime and Training & Employment.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

The objectives of the Charity are:

a) To relieve disabled persons in Greater London who require assistance, helping to realise their full potential and lead fulfilling lives. In particular, by the provision of a service that assists such persons obtaining their full rights and privileges they are entitled to as citizens.

b) To advance the education of the general public as to the needs and interests of disabled people.

The Charity Commission granted CHOICE permission to operate across Greater London, which is reflected in CHOICE' Memorandum.

A selection of CHOICE IN HACKNEY staff members - from left to right

Front: Advocate, **Paula Smith** and Chief Executive Officer (CEO), **Caroline Nelson**
Back: Advocate & Trainer, **Lucia Bellini**; Advocacy Training & Employment Coordinator, **Haq Ismail**; Administrator and Volunteer Coordinator, **Paul Salt**; Hate Crime Advocate, **Felicia Tay** and Information Guidance & Advocacy Officer, **Colin Finch**

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance:
In the period under review, CHOICE promoted the following services to disabled Greater London residents aged 18 plus and their networks:

- Advocacy;
- Disability Hate Crime;
- Information Guidance & Advocacy;
- Training & Employment (which includes Choices into Work training, specialist Disability Hate Crime and/or Disability & Domestic Violence training, supplementary coaching, Job Club plus a Mentoring scheme);
- Befriending Plus / Volunteering;
- Active Lifestyle; and
- Relieving the Cost of Living for Disabled People in Hackney.

a) **ADVOCACY:**
CHOICE advocates support our disabled service users to obtain the services needed to live an independent and dignified lifestyle in the community. The Advocate works in partnership with the disabled user to obtain his/her rights.

Community advocacy service:
CHOICE's community advocacy service is in two parts:

- Non-statutory advocacy - CHOICE supports disabled people with issue-based matters that fall outside of statutory advocacy. This includes support to obtain accessible housing, making complaints, carrying out assessments, meeting educational needs and child protection matters for disabled parents.

- Statutory advocacy – Provided when a disabled person is legally entitled to access the support of an advocate under a particular area of legislation for example the Independent Care Act 2014. This includes undertaking Care Act assessments, Care & Support planning, Reviews and Safeguarding issues.

You may recall last year's report contained details of the retender process that London Borough of Hackney undertook for both its statutory and non-statutory advocacy contracts, which saw one lead provider (The Advocacy Project) being replaced by another (Rethink Advocacy) - a separate operating part of the national organisation: Rethink Mental Illness.

CHOICE has been sub-contracted to Rethink to provide community-based Advocacy since Jul 2023. Having discussed the matter with the funder, the Charity is hopeful the contract will be extended for a further year as it is needed and a valuable resource for the disabled Hackney residents it supports. This has been clearly demonstrated through the Charity's quarterly monitoring reports, which have consistently exceeded contracted targets since Jul 2023.

The issue is users have complex needs and (often multiple) issues. For example CHOICE has a service user who is autistic, visually impaired, has mental health and other health issues: her basic needs are not being met because she continues to receive inaccessible information, which frustrate CHOICE's support processes. Also, her multiple issues must be prioritised i.e. her homelessness matter being placed first, which will take some time to satisfactorily resolve.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

a) **ADVOCACY continued:**

Community advocacy service continued:
Often, the charity adapts its services to meet those demands in creative ways to ensure our users do not "fall through gaps". For example, navigating users through a Child Protection process is very time-intensive (and therefore costly) and can include the Advocate engaging in the following assessments: Parental; Psychiatric; and Psychological.

For parental assessments alone, there can be between 5-10 assessments per user, lasting 2-hours each. In order to meet both our users and funder's expectations, CHOICE proposed that Advocates attend a maximum of 1-2 parental assessments only to explain the reason and process of the assessment to the user; and meet with the assessors to explain the service user's needs.

This is not always possible i.e. if the user has learning difficulties / other issues such as visual impairments and could quickly become overwhelmed. The organisation hopes that with patience and a greater understanding of needs, it will be able to continue to offer the right level of support needed by its users. The charity looks forward to working with Rethink in the future to be able to achieve this.

Health Advocacy:
Health Advocacy has formed a vital part of CHOICE's service provision for over a decade firstly under Service Level Agreements, which were renewed annually until Nov 2021 when we were moved to contracts. CHOICE is now in its third and final year of a three-year contract with Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust), which has the possibility of a 2-year extension. This funding supports local disabled people in the City of London and Hackney who have physical and/or sensory impairments with their health advocacy needs.

The fundamental emphasis and focus of health advocacy is seeing things from the user's perspective, aiming to empower users to access and use health services on an informed and equitable basis. Thus shifting the unbalanced relationship between service users (particularly those from different impairment, ethnic and cultural backgrounds).

CHOICE's health advocacy role is to elicit the views, needs, expectations and concerns of its service users and to actively pursue and act in their best interests. This involves Advocates working with the disabled person to:

- be more involved in important decisions about their health care needs;
- know and use their rights;
- Access the health care services they need;
- Voice their wishes and feelings;
- Receive support to raise concerns or complaints;
- Access and use health services on an equal basis.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

a) **ADVOCACY continued**:

Health Advocacy continued:
The year under review has been a turbulent and disruptive one for many people who needed to access the health service (especially disabled people who required additional support to do so) due to industrial action. According to NHS England:

- *"…over five days there were 101,977 cancellations of acute inpatient and outpatient appointments. At the peak of the action, there were 20,342 staff not at work due to industrial action. In the previous action by junior doctors over three days, there were 106,120 cancellations. The cumulative total of acute inpatient and outpatient appointments cancelled in eight months of industrial action now stands at 698,813"*[1].

CHOICE's health advocacy service is needed now more than ever as the above demonstrates – disabled people needed support to reschedule cancelled appointments. Also, ancillary support services sourced to prevent health issues worsening in the interim.

An advertising campaign for the Health Advocacy service, which included leafleting key locations (i.e. GP surgeries, community centres etc), had garnered interest supporting us to consistently meet or exceed our monthly monitoring targets. CHOICE Advocates also conducted outreach sessions within St Bartholomew's and St Leonard's Hospitals raising awareness of the health advocacy service, making it more accessible to disabled people.

During the year, CHOICE supported service users using a variety of methods including: telephone, email, face-to-face and online engagements both within the community (i.e. hospitals, local authority offices, community centres, home visits) and from the CHOICE office.

Funding during this period allowed us to support a total of 157 disabled people with their non-statutory, statutory and health advocacy matters; some of whom had multiple issues which included:

- health-related issues including, accessing medical services, communicating with health professionals regarding their treatment, and making complaints;
- housing support, which included adaptations and repairs;
- physical and mental health / emotional wellbeing support;
- support around their domestic, family and personal challenges;
- statutory advocacy issues including Care Act assessments and safeguarding enquiries.

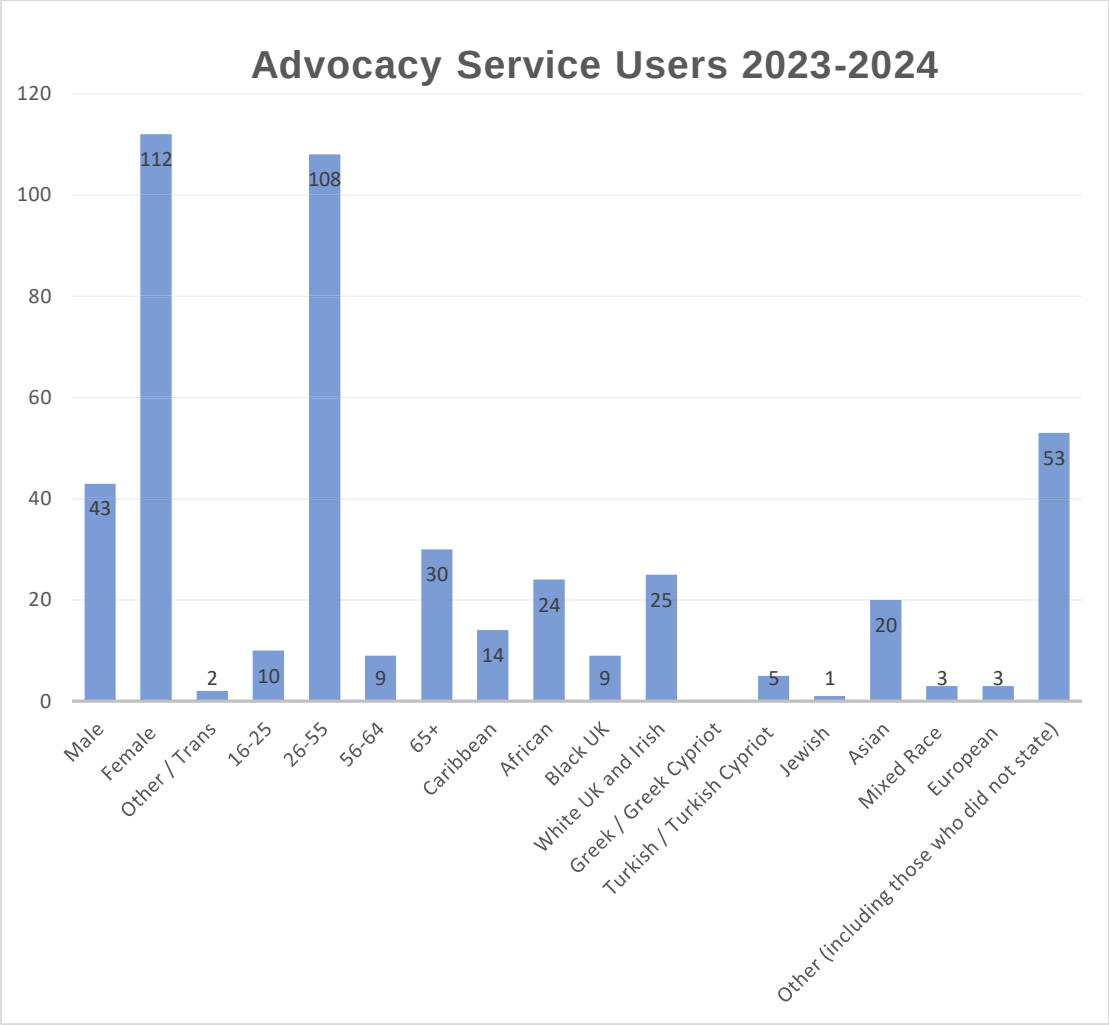
[1] https://www.england.nhs.uk/2023/07/nhs-england-publishes-data-on-latest-junior-doctors-strike/

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

a) **ADVOCACY continued**:

The following bar chart presents statistical data for the 157 disabled people (154 in 2022-2023) who utilised the Advocacy service:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

b) **DISABILITY HATE CRIME:**

The organisation continues its role within a consortium funded by the Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime (MOPAC) entitled "Community Alliance to Combat Hate" ("CATCH"), which started its in life 2016-17. The consortium is now in the second of a 2-year contract, which has the potential for an additional 2-year extension (4-years total).

CATCH partners are:

- Galop (lead partner and anti-LGBT+ hate crime specialist);
- Choice in Hackney (Anti-disability hate crime specialist);
- Real (Anti-disability hate crime specialist);
- Stay Safe East (Anti-disability hate crime specialist);
- Community Security Trust (Anti-Semitic hate crime specialist);
- East European Resource Centre (Anti-Central / Eastern European hate crime specialist);
- Tell MAMA (Anti-Muslim hate crime specialist); and
- The Monitoring Group (Anti-racist hate crime specialist).

The consortium works in partnership with the above network of community organisations specialising in supporting people who have experienced a hate crime due to their protected characteristics i.e.: race / ethnicity, faith / religion, sexual orientation / gender identity and/or disability. Referrals come into CHOICE via CATCH's triage service, which is managed by Galop.

CATCH partners work to tackle hate crime, discrimination and abuse within their protected characteristic equality strands. Whilst we all have our own individual specialisms, network partners often come together to work inter-sectionally or make referrals to network organisations within the partnership. We also work very closely with the Metropolitan Police Service - the source of many referrals during the period.

CHOICE's Hate Crime Advocate identifies the support needs of individuals and enables them to access other services and also:

- Assists with reporting incidents;
- Supports individuals through criminal justice processes;
- Delivers outreach to communities impacted by hate crime to promote the service; and
- Share good practice internally within the partnership.

The majority of the assistance provided throughout the year was to support service users within the Criminal Justice System. Many of these service users are referred to CHOICE after being unsuccessful in having their voices heard.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

b) **DISABILITY HATE CRIME continued:**

The number of disability hate crimes recorded for 2023-2024 in England will not be available until much later in the year (Oct 2024). It was noted there had been a significant increase in hate crimes last year[23] and the BBC reported in Nov 2023 that hate crime is on the rise in Hackney[4] with 1,077 hate crimes being reported during the period Nov 2022–Oct 2023 for one strand of hate crime alone. The issue of hate has become so acute that the borough is to recruit a team of Hate Crime Champions in a drive to keep local residents safe.

As we have good local connections, we were invited to take part in Hackney Council's Hate Crime week during the year where publicity material was handed out to passers-by providing knowledge and information on hate crime (what it is and what to do if they were attacked based on a protected characteristic). The week of action resulted in referrals into the CATCH triage. The photo below is featured in Hackney Council's "No Place for Hate: Hate Crime Strategy 2023-2026"[5] and shows our Hate Crime worker at the stall:

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3 Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021

4 https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-67569692

5 https://drive.google.com/file/d/17RCKTjATj2upwDggh0-n2HdcYmBgu5-_/view

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

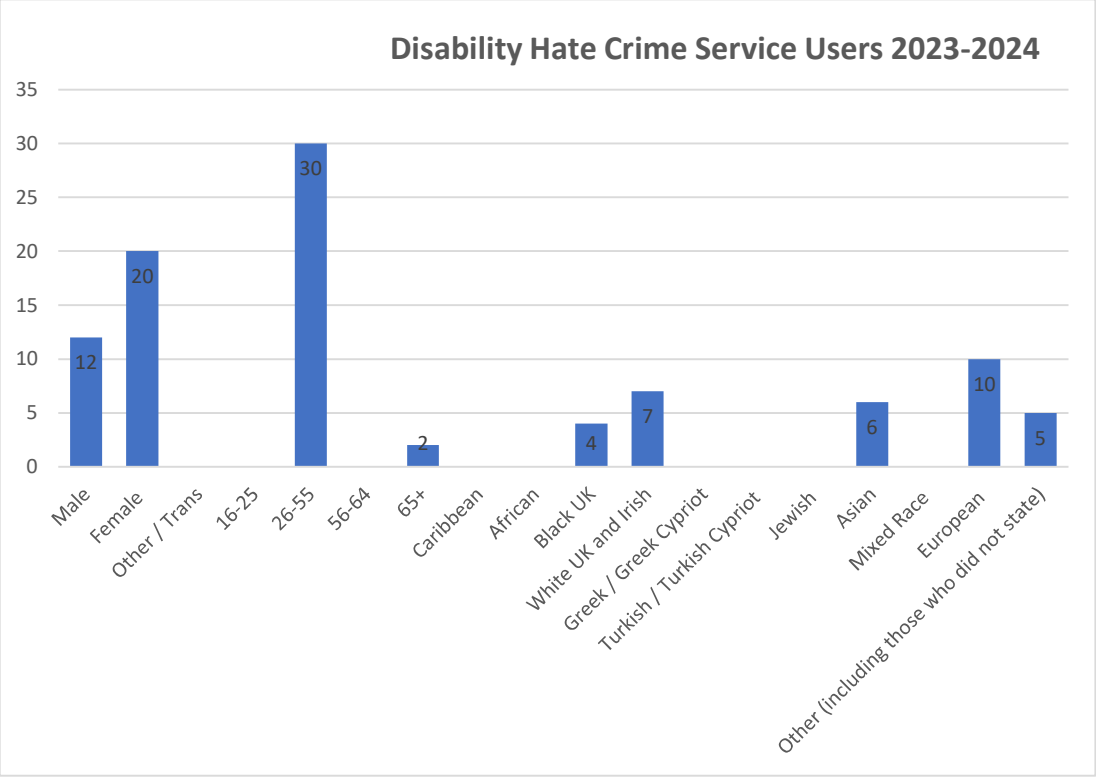
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

b) **DISABILITY HATE CRIME continued:**

It appears that anti-social behaviour is on the rise with many CHOICE service users experiencing it for many years. This type of activity engages the Hate Crime Worker in liaising with all the agencies involved. However, sometimes the service users cannot be informed of the specific action that has been taken against the perpetrator due to confidentiality.

During the year, CHOICE met the needs of 32 disabled people with their disability hate crime matters (45 in 2022-2023).

The following bar chart presents data for the Hate Crime Project:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) **INFORMATION GUIDANCE & ADVOCACY (IGA) Project:**
Thanks to 5-years funding totalling £294,400 received from City Bridge Trust, the funding arm of The City of London Corporation's charity, Bridge House Estates (1035628), CHOICE established an Information Guidance and Advocacy (IGA) service.

This service raises disabled people's awareness of their rights, co-produces solutions to issues and thereby, allows them to make informed choices, and have control and a voice over how they run their lives.

This new service is headed up by an experienced IGA Officer who mentors disabled volunteers giving them the confidence, knowledge and skills to firstly take on light, followed by more complex cases. The IGA team work jointly to provide the service virtually/in person through partnership working with disabled people supporting with:

- Breaking down information that someone with i.e. learning difficulties has received: explaining/ensuring they understand the content, provide solutions, meet deadlines and support to make informed decisions.

- Form-filling for i.e. Blue Badge applications, welfare benefit applications, essential disability-related items i.e. washing machine for a disabled person who is incontinent/on low income.

- Provision of information via text etc to promote and increase uptake of needed services and to encourage users to make cost-savings from providers with workers negotiating on their behalf for favourable terms.

- Non-statutory advocacy i.e. obtaining care package, resolving complaints, appeals etc.

The service is fully accessible for service users with information broken down into manageable chunks, expanded on, and/or explained in ways that are accessible to service users as many times as is necessary utilising a variety of formats (i.e. Easy Read, Braille). These timely interventions ensure service users play an active role in co-producing solutions to resolve their issues and avoid crisis.

Some of the many benefits of this new service is that: the IGA Officer is not limited by a restrictive eligibility criteria and will be able to discuss all matters so that multiple issues can be dealt with amongst the team as necessary. For example, one volunteer can apply to the landlord to make adaptations or essential repairs to the home, whilst another works alongside the first to apply for grants to furnish it. A third volunteer can apply for free or affordable accessible transport i.e. Freedom Pass. All of the above provides one service user with the ability to reduce social isolation by going out and about in their community, and improved health and wellbeing as their home is being made accessible and more comfortable.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) **INFORMATION GUIDANCE & ADVOCACY (IGA) Project cont'd:**
The above example has allowed other services within the Charity to be able to make referrals into the IGA where they are unable to deal with matters due to restrictive eligibility criteria. This one-stop-shop approach is appealing to both CHOICE – as our service is more holistic but also benefits the service user who doesn't have to repeat themselves to another provider as all their data is stored securely on one central database (Charity Log), which is easily accessible by other teams.

Below are some of the examples of the work carried out by the IGA team during the year:

- **Care Financial Assessments** – this is when a decision is made as to what contribution the service user should be making towards home care. IGA provided a combination of form-filling, e.g., for service users unable to do that themselves, and Advocacy, e.g., utilising the Care Act 2014. This act prevents the Local Authority insisting on the service user increasing their contribution to the extent that the disabled person's income would fall below the Minimum Income Guarantee.

- **Complaints** – these included:

  a) Arranging with the phone provider to stop sending paper bills to the service user (which negatively impacted the user's mental health);

  b) Having the Local Authority enforce a Dedicated Parking Bay;

  c) Challenging colleges to meet a disabled student's access needs; and

  d) Having the police justify their conduct after children were removed from their home, and having those children being subjected to medical intervention, without their parents' consent.

Other examples of work carried out by the IGA team included:

- **Housing –** this forms a large part of IGA's workload mainly because of the condition the properties are in, which can adversely affect health, e.g., mould and damp particularly for those with Asthma, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) etc. Other issues include the size and layout of the property becoming unsuitable for disabled residents access needs, e.g., flats that are not on the ground floor and have no working lift.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) **INFORMATION GUIDANCE & ADVOCACY (IGA) Project cont'd:**

- **Housing continued -** the Local Authority had also informed some service users the housing waiting list was closed but after IGA's intervention, which included completing forms – several residents had their applications accepted or re-started. One disabled resident wanted a move to Sheltered Accommodation after feeling harassed by a neighbour. Their landlord failed to respond as they thought the service user was imagining it. Through joint home visits with the landlord, and partnership work with mental health services, this request is now actively progressing.

- **Transport –** IGA team successfully applied for and appealed for Freedom, Bus & Tram passes as well as Blue Badges. The unenforced Dedicated Parking Bay, mentioned above in "Complaints", was granted after the IGA team wrote an appeal. A disabled resident had unsuccessfully attempted for several months to apply for Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) exemption, however IGA was able to obtain it for them within 48 hours.

  There were also two successful negotiations with Motability scheme[6]. In one negotiation, Motability granted more time to the disabled service user to explore finance options. In the other, although IGA were unable to overturn the sanction for a vehicle being used by people other than the owner, our support gave the user the confidence to disclose why this was and we subsequently supported them in meetings with solicitors.

- **Benefits** – accounted for over half the IGA caseload as the majority of the referrals under this heading required many sessions over weeks and months. The highest amount of time provided to a single service user was 38 hours - they had multiple issues including a benefit appeal. Their case was prepared and IGA acted as the Representative at Tribunal at two separate hearings. The time and effort paid-off, as the individual received a backdated sum of over £11,000.

  Another service user was extremely anxious at the prospect of facing a Tribunal. As a result of IGA's efforts, and despite refusing the claim and appeal, which were both lodged before IGA became involved, the Dept for Work & Pensions (DWP) conceded without going to court, awarding the full benefit plus a backdated payment of over £3,000.

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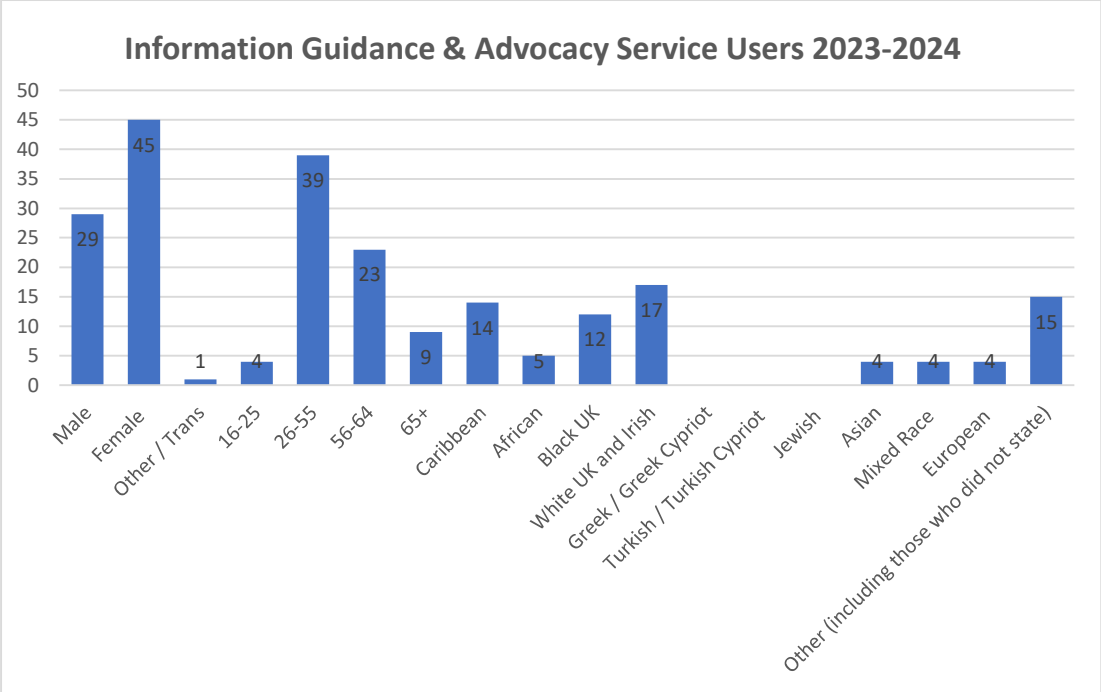
6 Motability is a scheme intended to enable disabled people, their families / carers to lease a new car, scooter or powered wheelchair, using their disability benefit. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motability

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) **INFORMATION GUIDANCE & ADVOCACY (IGA) Project cont'd:**
Some service users had multiple issues and as such, 75 beneficiaries generated 101 cases or referrals between them. Below is the statistical data for the IGA project:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT DEPT:**
The Training & Employment Dept ("TED") provides disabled people with a fully accredited suite of training programmes made up of:

- Choices into Work training – each programme consists of 12-weeks classroom-based generic advocacy training followed by a 13-week work placement at CHOICE or host organisations. Henry Smith Charity – Improving Lives fund two Choices into Work programmes per year over a three-year period;

- Disability Hate Crime specialist training – a 6-week classroom-based training course followed by a 12-week work placement at CHOICE and host organisations will be held each year over a three-year period also funded by Henry Smith Charity–Improving Lives; and

- Disability & Domestic Violence specialist training – 6-weeks classroom-based training followed by 12-weeks work placement at CHOICE and host organisations. Unfortunately, this specialist programme's 3-year funding from Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales expired in February 2023 and as such no programmes are planned until further funding has been sourced.

Henry Smith Charity – Improving Lives also fund trainees to engage in the following supplementary sessions:
- Coaching;
- Job Club; and
- Mentoring schemes.

Choices into Work training:
This training programme is fully accredited and on successful completion of all components (classroom-based element and work placement), trainees are awarded a nationally recognised qualification (some for the first time) from CHOICE's accrediting body, Open College Network Credit 4 Learning.

The project is stronger than it was a year ago, which is entirely due to the new funding. Two Choices into Work training courses (the 44th and 45th courses) were delivered during the period, which were attended by 26 disabled people, exceeding our goal of 24.

Henry Smith Charity funding has allowed the Choices into Work course to completely transform the work it is doing. For example:

- all of its training slides have been revamped, making them reflective of the current needs of a Disability Advocate;

- the course has been restructured to be more informative but also easier to follow; and

- interactive elements have been added.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT DEPT continued:**

Choices into Work training continued:
Other changes to the course include shifting from delivering three generic advocacy courses a year to two generic and one Hate Crime – allowing for more variety. This allows us to focus on fully recruiting for one course at a time. The course has also settled into its mixed approach of combining a hybrid delivery model whereby some training courses are delivered on a face-to-face basis whilst others are online via Zoom Video Conferencing. The online training has allowed us to deliver our services to disabled trainees who would usually be unable to attend the course. Meanwhile, the hybrid method has allowed us to blend approaches and provide the face-to-face experience that some of our trainees find very beneficial.

The Choices into Work course refined its growing services this year, and now offers a more complete and holistically supportive service than ever before. As we begin to scrutinise the longest waiting list we've ever had ahead of our 46th course, it's clear that the service is as in demand as it's ever been and is making a significant difference to its attendees.

During the period a total of 26 disabled people engaged in the 2 Choices into Work generic advocacy training programmes held in the year (34 in 2022-2023).

Coaching:
The coaching sessions are a non-essential part of the Choices into Work programme. Whilst trainee attendance wasn't mandatory, their focus on personal development, confidence building, preparing service users for sourcing and retaining work etc. made them appealing and have been in high demand. Some coaching session themes included:

- confidence building;
- visualisation techniques;
- goal setting;
- skills auditing; and
- role-plays to help with interviews and meetings with employers.

CHOICE is pleased to have supported 20 trainees (13 in 2022-2023) across 120 sessions with a wide-range of employment-related concerns during the period.

Job Club:
As with the coaching sessions, it is not essential for trainees to attend the Job Club in order to receive their accredited award. However, the fervour with which places have been taken up by our trainees is reassuring that this is valuable work as attendance at these sessions are growing.

The group sessions continued to attract trainees in need of support with:

- applying for work;
- networking;
- speaking to employers about access needs; and
- many more topics intended to support our trainees to find and stay in work. These sessions have proven invaluable to our service users who return, session after session.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT DEPT continued:**

Choices into Work training continued:

Job Club continued:
The Charity is particularly proud of its Job Club, which offers not only an opportunity for trainees to learn about employment skills but also to share experiences and network with each other. 17 disabled people (14 in 2022-2023) took part in the Job Club during the year.

Case history:
Below is a case history of a Trainee who undertook the Choices into Work course and also enjoyed supplementary Coaching and Job Club sessions:

AA is a woman in her 30s who experiences Cerebral Palsy and has never worked. She is a powered wheelchair user who requires carers to help her with most daily living activities. She came to the Choices into Work course in-person and initially struggled to regularly attend. The Trainer encouraged her to continue to attend, as she showed great promise with classroom contributions and homework.

AA decided to move online and attended much more regularly. AA's experience and understanding were invaluable to her fellow trainees, and she performed well in assessments. She passed the Choices into Work course with a Level 3 award: the first qualification earned since leaving school with no GCSEs.

Since passing the course, AA has attended Job Club sessions, where she has been able to envisage a better future for herself and is determined to taking the most important steps to reaching her goals. She had also completed her work placement with our Advocacy Mentor, who noted early on that she had low confidence in communicating with clients. However, by the end of the placement, AA was confident carrying out face-to-face meetings with service users.

Here is a quote from AA about her experience on the Choices into Work course:

"The course has changed my life. I feel like I can do what I want to do now. I can help people instead of just being helped."

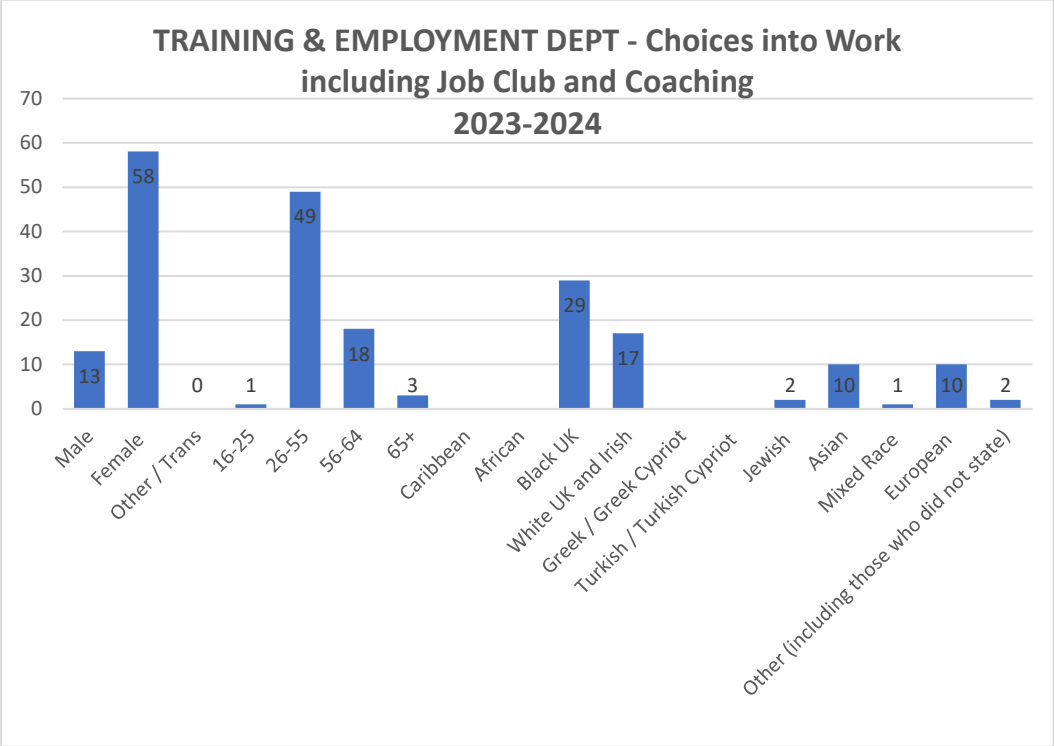
The bar chart below shows demographics of:
- 26 disabled people (34 in 2022-2023) who attended 2 Choices into Work programmes;
- 20 disabled people (13 in 2022-2023) who took part in the Coaching sessions; and
- 25 disabled people (14 in 2022-2023) who engaged in the Job Club.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT DEPT continued:**

Choices into Work training continued:



Disability & Domestic Violence training:
Funding from Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales expired in Feb 2023 and the organisation was therefore unable to continue this specialist training programme during the year. However, in the hope that it will be able to source funding at some stage, a brief overview of the course is given below:

Course content:
Each programme has 6-sessions designed to train a group of disabled people to become professional advocates, specialising in domestic violence. Training topics include: Introduction to domestic violence; Safety planning and risk assessments; Child protection processes; Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC); Housing issues; and the civil and criminal courts.

The disability element is very rarely addressed even within the disabled movement and this course will be able to equip trainees with the skills needed to better manage situations, bridge the gap within domestic violence and disability and examine in detail how the two can be related.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT DEPT continued:**

Disability & Domestic Violence training continued:
The service is essential due to the increase of incidents of domestic violence and the demand for support services, particularly within mainstream organisations (which are often inaccessible for disabled people).

As the disabled people CHOICE works with continue to face multiple barriers of discrimination in their lives, having these additional skills and knowledge will assist them to grow in confidence and compete for jobs against non-disabled candidates.

12 people undertook the Disability & Domestic Violence course last year over 2-programmes (2022-2023).

Disability Hate Crime training programme:
This specialist training programme was funded by Henry Smith Charity – Improving Lives during the year; allowing us to recruit and engage disabled people to undertake accredited disability-related training not carried out anywhere else in the United Kingdom.

The training is specialist as trainees are expected to come with some relevant experience or academic qualification as the course is intensive. Unlike the generic advocacy focussed Choices into Work training programme, which offers a range of accreditation levels, the Disability Hate Crime training course only offers a Level 4 award, which is at Diploma level.

Training model:
The Disability Hate Crime training course is made up of:

- Classroom-based element - six 6-hour sessions, with work tasks to complete for each session. Trainee numbers per programme were limited to a maximum of 8. A variety of assessment methods were included such as homework; essays; presentations; and the end of term 2500-word essay.

- Work experience through work placement - 12-weeks totalling 72-hours+ at CHOICE or other host organisations, allowing trainees to put what they learnt during the classroom element into practice when they advocated for themselves and disabled survivors of hate crime.

Whilst Hate Crime training is a comparatively new development, CHOICE has been providing Disability Hate Crime Advocacy as part of a consortium (the Community Alliance to Combat Hate), which has been funded by the Mayor of London for just under a decade. This meant that trainees placed at CHOICE could be exposed to relevant casework.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

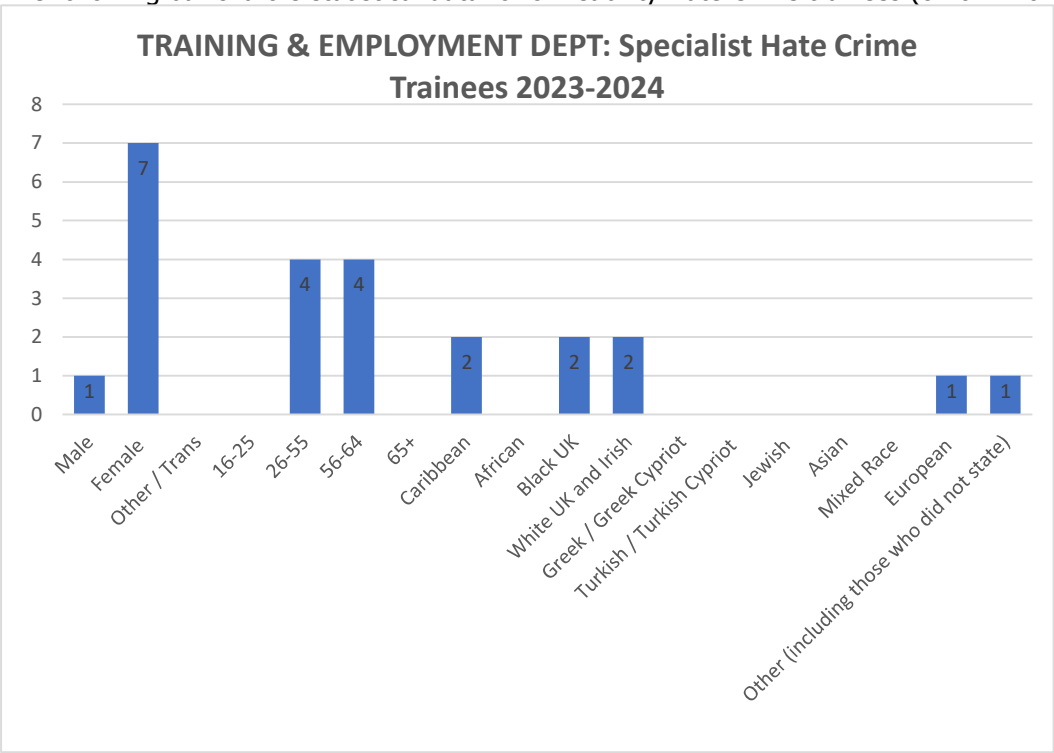
d) **TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT DEPT continued:**

Disability Hate Crime training programme continued:
Training and experience in this area has allowed more disabled people to apply for jobs in local government, the police service and universities, as well as voluntary opportunities as representatives on consultative committees in these areas.
One training programme was held during the year where trainees gained knowledge and experience through 6-virtual classroom-based training sessions (delivered entirely online via Zoom Video Conferencing). This delivery method offered trainees greater flexibility, particularly those who were already employed and could therefore undertake the course (including their work placement, which contained appropriate casework) from their places of work.

Course content:
The following areas, were included in the course:

- Representing clients in multi-agency meetings; carrying out risk assessments; Safeguarding; Care Act assessments; Trauma-based approach; Complaints to agencies such as the police and housing; the roles of the different agencies and bodies i.e. Housing, Anti-Social Behaviour Teams; and supporting people through the criminal justice system – including reporting to the police and going to court.

The following bar chart is statistical data for 8 Disability Hate Crime trainees (8 2022-2023):



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT DEPT continued:**

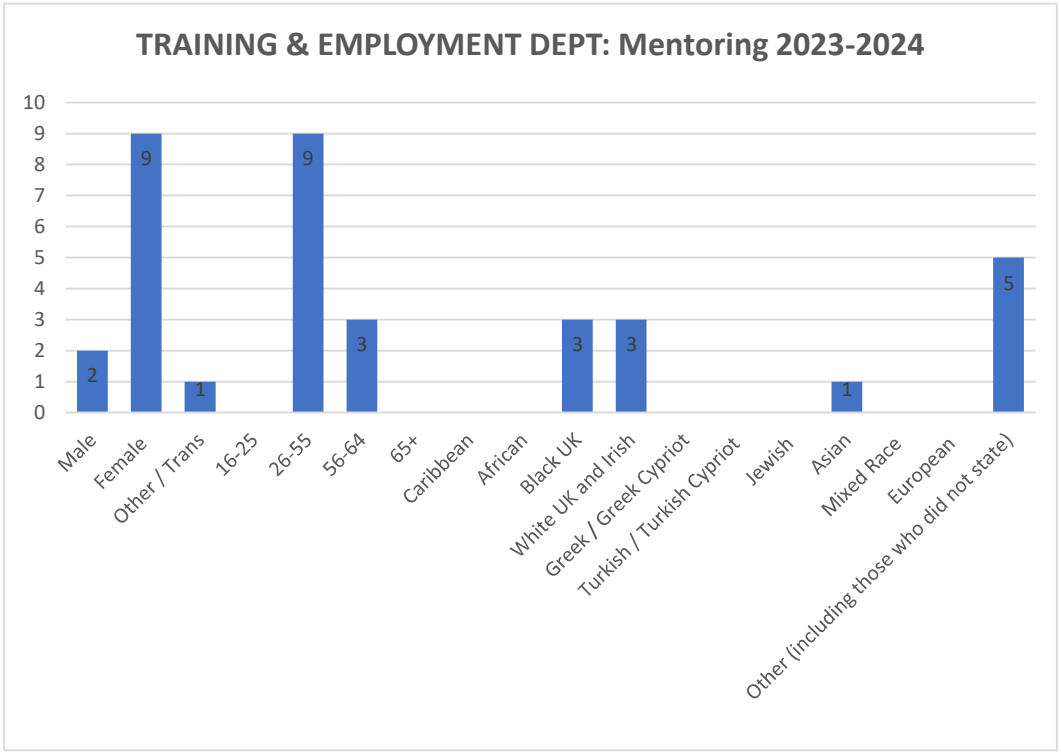
Mentoring:

Thanks to 3-year's funding from Henry Smith Charity – Improving Lives, CHOICE was also able to include a mentoring programme as part of its TED service.

Trainees who successfully completed the classroom-based elements of our training courses had the opportunity to put everything they learnt into practice as they familiarised themselves with the work of an Advocate during their work placement at CHOICE or a host organisation. The work placement is an essential part of the course and in order to receive the OCN award, it is a requirement for both the classroom-based and work placement elements to be completed.

CHOICE trainees shadowed an experienced disabled Advocate where they viewed the Advocate's casework, understood how to apply the classroom-based elements of the course to "live" cases and adopted the many different approaches and disciplines that come with advocacy practice.

During the period 12 trainees benefited from this work placement (7 in 2022-2023) as shown by the bar chart below:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

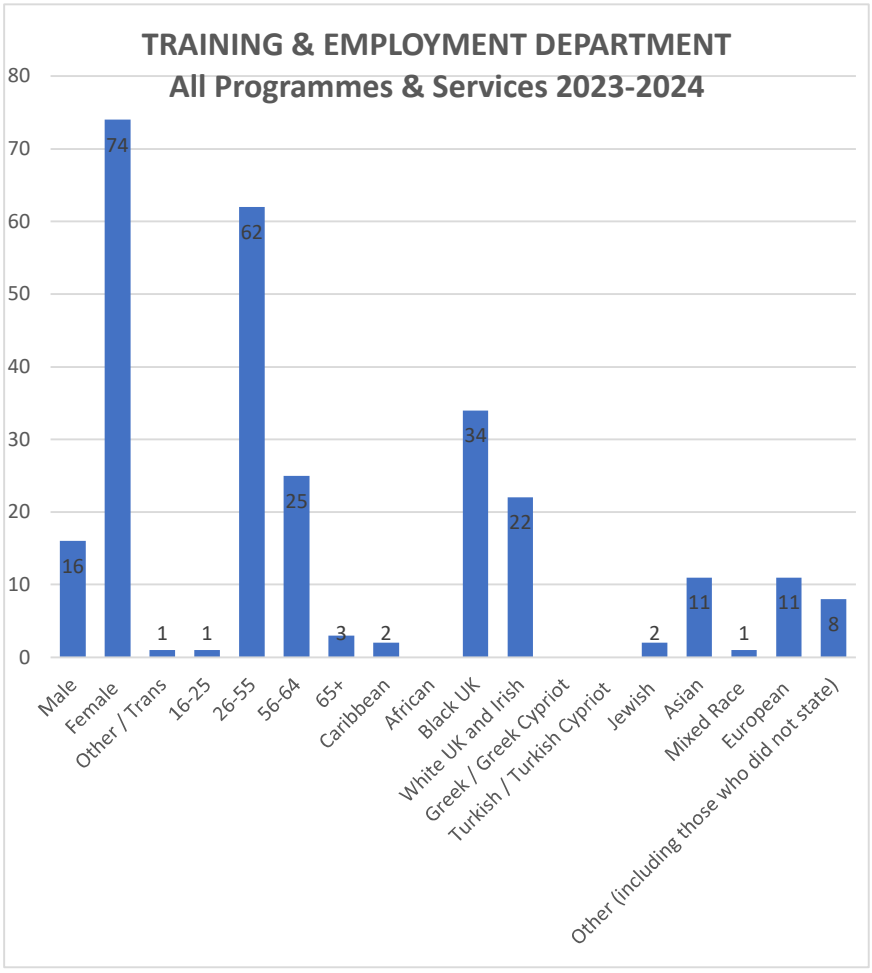
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT DEPT continued:**

During the period under review the Training & Employment Dept supported:

- 26 disabled people (34 in 2022-2023) to complete 2 Choices into Work programmes;
- 8 disabled people (8 in 2022-2023) to complete 1 Disability Hate Crime programme;
- 20 disabled people (13 in 2022-2023) to take part in Coaching sessions;
- 25 disabled people (14 in 2022-2023) to engage in the Job Club; and
- 12 disabled people (7 in 2022-2023) benefited from Mentoring.

A total of 91 individuals benefited from the services available within the Training & Employment Dept (87 in 2022-2023). Despite 2 (as opposed to 3) generic advocacy Choices into Work programmes being run and no Disability & Domestic Violence courses being held in the year, the figure has increased overall due to more trainees attending supplementary sessions and the mentoring scheme. Trainees' statistical data is shown below:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **BEFRIENDING PLUS / VOLUNTEER PROJECT:**

CHOICE's Befriending Plus / Volunteer project is a long-running service which goes some way to tackle the feelings of loneliness and social isolation that some disabled people experience. It is supported by volunteers in the office or within the community as follows:

- Office volunteers - disabled and non-disabled volunteers gain office experience whilst supporting CHOICE in its core functions including CHOICE's social media platforms, meeting fundraising aims, administration, design and marketing.

- Befriending - volunteers regularly contact service users / escort them to places, reducing social isolation and encouraging community engagement.

- Gardening - transforming inaccessible green spaces into places they can conveniently take in the fresh air, exercise and enjoy time outdoors.

Following the Coronavirus ("COVID-19") pandemic, the project was expanded, enabling disabled people to benefit from the following services:

- Walking friends - volunteers encourage service users to leave their homes, take in some exercise and enjoy the fresh air whilst maintaining social-distancing practices.

- Shopping and medication drop-off - volunteers purchase groceries and medication and deliver them to the door of the disabled service user.

- Website development - volunteers from CodeAid completely redesigned the CHOICE site and added stunning new features such as online donations and referrals facilities.

Whilst the project was unfunded as a "stand alone", it benefited immensely from the Government's Community Organisations Cost of Living Fund, which was delivered by The National Lottery Community Fund (the largest community funder in the UK). Part of the funding that went towards CHOICE's project "Relieving the cost of living for disabled people in Hackney" enabled us to substantially increase our volunteer and service user numbers, making substantial impacts on their lives.

The figures below are solely for the Befriending Plus / Volunteer project, which supported 73 service users (91 in 2022-2023); and 70 volunteers (93 in 2022-2023) in the year – demographics are shown below:

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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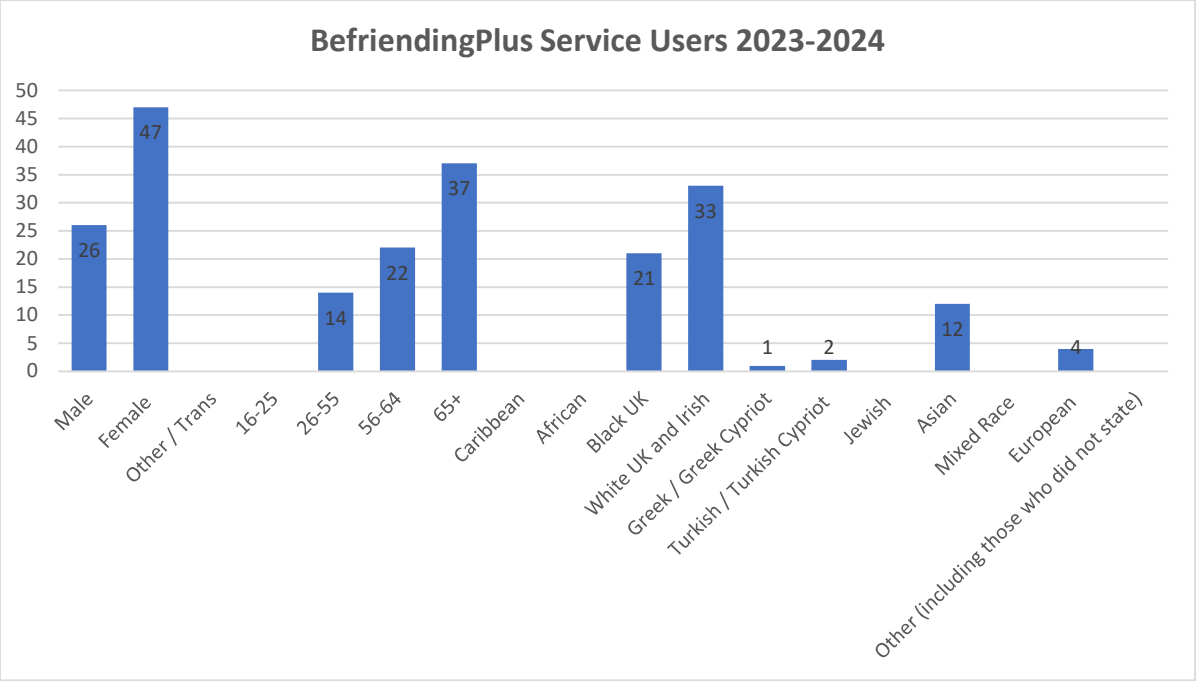
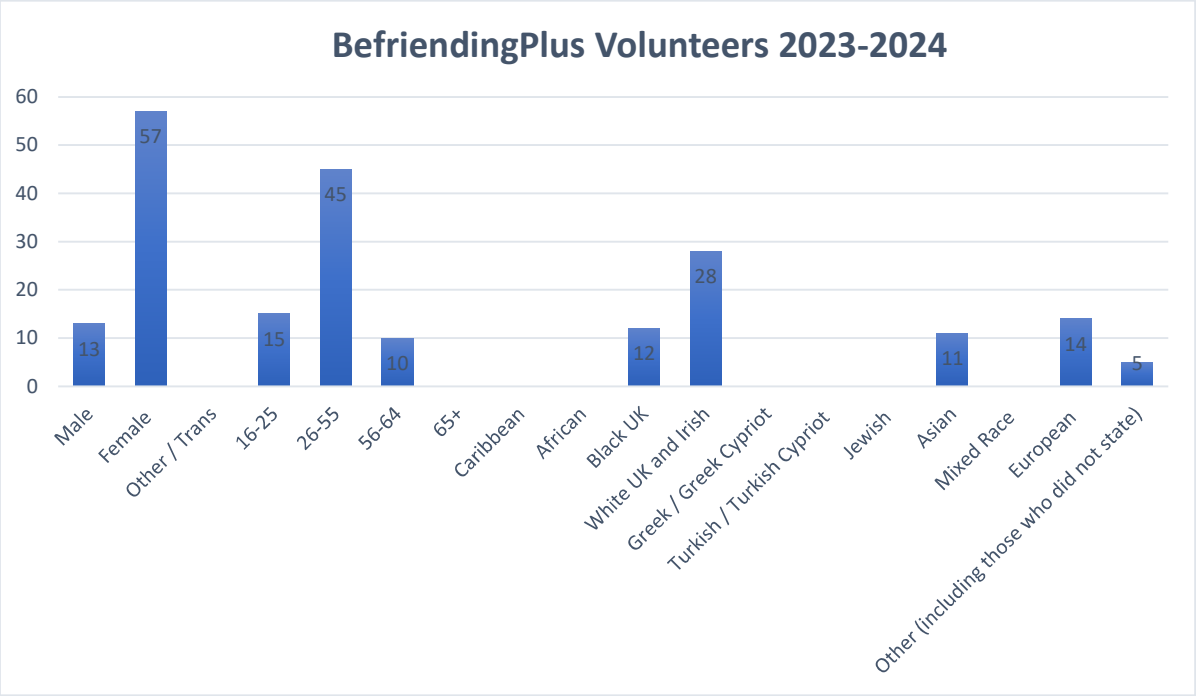
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **BEFRIENDING PLUS / VOLUNTEER PROJECT continued:**





CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

f) **ACTIVE LIFESTYLE**:
CHOICE's Active Lifestyle service supports local disabled people in wellbeing activities to improve their overall physical and mental health whilst also reducing social isolation.

Starting its life in 2012, it has organised a variety of events over the years including:
- Boccia;
- Golf workshops;
- Kayaking at Hackney Reservoir;
- Women's boxing;
- Squash;
- Tennis; and
- Leyton Orient Football Club's Community Day.

The project's main activities include:

- Exercise sessions organised in conjunction with CHOICE's host organisation, Salvation Army Hoxton for face-to-face and/or online sessions, where service users can enjoy keep fit activities from the comfort of their homes;

- Social clubs (also from the Salvation Army or online) where disabled service users can bond over shared interests and experiences;

- Buddies / volunteers are provided to escort disabled people to local accessible gyms / recreational centres to support with navigating their way around the different equipment available.

Unfortunately, the project has been unfunded for the last two years and unable to offer any activities. CHOICE is hopeful that with a concerted fundraising effort and the cooperation of local businesses, the organisation will be able to revive this valuable project.

g) **RELIEVING THE COST OF LIVING FOR DISABLED PEOPLE, HACKNEY:**
The Government's Community Organisations Cost of Living Fund is being delivered by The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest community funder in the UK. Following an application made to the funder in Sep 2023, CHOICE received an award of £73,004 in Dec 2023 to support the Charity tackle the many issues arising out of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and a new project "Relieving the cost of living for disabled people in Hackney" was born.

You will note the gap between CHOICE completing the funding application (Sep 2023) and receiving news of the award from the funder (Dec 2023), which was a critical period of time for the charity as caseloads across all projects had increased substantially with issues related to the cost of living.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

g) **RELIEVING THE COST OF LIVING FOR DISABLED PEOPLE, HACKNEY continued:**
One of the benefits of the award is that it included a retrospective period of funding from mid-Jul 2023 amounting to £22,622. This meant the organisation could recover its increased costs for the (unfunded) work it had already undertaken. The funding window however was short as all work and the remaining funding of £50,382 had to cease and be spent by 31st Mar 2024.

Project statistics are impressive: the following details beneficiaries supported and personnel engaged during both retrospective (24th Jul 2023 - 12th Dec 2023) and ongoing periods (13th Dec 2023 - 31st Mar 2024):

DESCRIPTION	JUL 2023-DEC 2023	DEC 2023-MAR 2024	TOTAL
Beneficiaries supported	127	343	**470**
Issues dealt with	261	375	**636**
Volunteers engaged	105	197	**302**
Volunteer hours	571	1405	**1976**
Staff engaged *(with some carrying out dual roles)*	3	8	**11**
Staff hours	810	1424	**2232**

NB: These statistics are based on multiple issues with service users, staff and volunteers being counted once for every engagement during the period.

Casework:
This funding allowed CHOICE staff and volunteers to "cherry pick" which project would be most suitable for service users to be referred into. This is because the support offered to service users was wide and varied – spanning our entire services including but especially: Advocacy, Information & Guidance, Befriending / Volunteering. The only proviso being that the work must relate to the service user's ability to better cope within the cost of living crisis. This included the following:

- All service users being offered a financial health check;

- A form-filling service to maximise welfare benefits for new/existing claimants of Personal Independence Payment, Universal Credit, Housing/Council Tax benefits etc.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

g) **RELIEVING THE COST OF LIVING FOR DISABLED PEOPLE, HACKNEY continued:**

Casework continued:
This support extended to reviews, appeals etc enabling disabled people who, according to the Institute for Government (IfG, 2022) are amongst the worst-affected households on low incomes) closely align their income with the rising costs of living;

- Applications to reduce travel costs via Freedom Pass, Blue Badge, Taxi Card etc to facilitate accessible travel, particularly in the cost of living crisis when the price of public transport increased by 5.9% (Metro, Jan 2023);

- Negotiating with landlords/energy providers for affordable repayment plans to clear arrears built-up when housing/household services (electricity, gas, food/drink), made the largest annual contribution to inflation. This reduced the risk of disabled people in low-income households going without essentials to pay for higher-than-average energy bills (IfG, 2022) sometimes through highly-priced pre-payment meters. Disabled people will also avoid evictions and not add to Hackney's 229 rough sleepers. (Trust for London-Poverty / Inequality Indicators);

- Grant applications for cookers, washing machines, new flooring – all of which are too expensive for low income users;

- Obtaining a reasonably priced care agency within the user's budget;

- Informing users via email/text of how to make cost-savings i.e. on energy bills, the location of / eligibility criterions of food banks and other services;

- Liaising with the council to move tenants to more suitable / affordable accommodation.

- Providing volunteers to escort service users to / attend supermarkets on their behalves, making savings of 9.5% (Which, 2021) when compared to closer but more expensive convenience stores. For low-income households, supermarkets have a greater choice of affordable, nutrient-rich foods, which improved the diet and health/wellbeing of disabled people who also took advantage of special offers;

- Volunteers also provided free gardening, making outside spaces accessible, and a venue for social engagements (to cut back on expensive outings).

The above examples of work carried out attracted multiple outcomes for users to improve their standard of living during the cost of living crisis, which is crucial for the disabled people CHOICE supports as based on the latest forecasts, it will take a long time (2027/28) for household incomes to recover to previous levels. However, living standards will remain below pre-pandemic levels, meaning the effects of the cost of living crisis are likely to be felt for a long time (IfG, 2022).

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

g) **RELIEVING THE COST OF LIVING FOR DISABLED PEOPLE, HACKNEY continued:**
The organisation is very pleased and proud to have been able to support so many disabled people to successfully achieve their outcomes. Working in partnership with the service users, CHOICE offered a seamless / holistic delivery method, which meant issues were dealt with quickly with referrals being made internally and externally to ensure the user gained maximum benefit within the funded period.

Case studies:
Some of the project successes have been highlighted below within in-depth case studies.

Advocacy Case study 1:
Advocacy Service user 1 has dementia and is 80 years old with a long history of mental health issues. A safeguarding alert was raised by an Occupational Therapist (OT) as he told them that he had given his bank card to two of his female friends and they had used it to take money out of the cashpoint for themselves.

The CHOICE Advocate attended a capacity meeting with the service user and he was found to have capacity to manage his finances but that carers would be sent to his home. Different carers were coming into the service user's home at different times and, he refused to let them in. Furthermore, as the service user had substantial savings and was informed he would have to pay for the carers (even though he did not want them). At the same time, the housing association refused to carry out repairs (the property was in poor condition and contractors refused to enter due to health and safety).

The Advocate had to communicate with the service user by text message due to his various impairments - the service user told the Advocate he did not want any carers however, it was clear he needed some assistance. After he spent some time in hospital, he agreed to CHOICE advocating on his behalf. An affordable care agency was sourced and once trust had been established, major deep cleaning was carried out.

Advocacy Case study 2:
Relates to a woman in her late 30s who has multiple physical and mental health issues who was evicted from private rented accommodation. Hackney Housing are helping her to find private accommodation. Unfortunately, those properties are too small and don't accommodate disability-related equipment.
The Advocate discovered the service user was already in receipt of Personal Independence Payments (PIP), however at the low component for daily living and no mobility. A Change of Circumstances Form was submitted, however the DWP refused to provide the outcome. The Advocate rang DWP and was eventually informed a decision would be sent in two weeks. However, four days later she was notified the decision had stayed the same. Information was gathered to submit a Mandatory Reconsideration and the outcome is awaited however, as clear evidence showing the service user utilises a mobility aid was sent in support of the application, the Advocate is confident the decision will change, helping her to secure more accessible housing.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

g) **RELIEVING THE COST OF LIVING FOR DISABLED PEOPLE, HACKNEY continued:**

Case studies continued:

Information Guidance & Advocacy (IGA) Case study 1:
Is a White British male, aged in his late 70's with multiple, long-term health conditions. The presenting issue is debt-related with substantial arrears on Council Tax/Rent. The service user is sole tenant of a Local Authority flat he shares with one of his adult sons.

Various letters notifying the service user of the arrears were not responded to and so the Local Authority escalated to the threat of court action with the possibility of the loss of his Secure Tenancy and Eviction. The resident son is also the DWP Appointee i.e. letters are addressed to him and payment is made into his (not the service user's) Bank Account. The son also receives benefits in his own right and is reluctant to be the father's carer, as Carers Allowance would reduce his Universal Credit.

The service user's other son also uses our service – he revealed the father received respite care in a local hospice. The father also informed us he had not seen correspondence from the Local Authority: a home visit was arranged. The first step was to avoid court action and the Local Authority temporarily lifted the threat of Court action.

The IGA team liaised with his sons resulting in them clearing the rent arrears thereby removing the immediate risk of eviction. However, the family could not clear the Council Tax arrears but they were granted additional time to clear the arrears. In addition, IGA assisted the service user to make applications for (back-dated) Council Tax Reduction (CTR) and Council Tax Exemption.

IGA also supported the service user to open a sole bank account, which was nearby his home to receive his benefits direct. The service user has now asked us to help him explore and possibly apply for Sheltered or Supported Living and has expressed feeling much more confident about his financial situation going forward thanks to the support CHOICE provided.

IGA Case study 2:
Is a Black British / Caribbean male in his mid-40's who is separated from his partner and, although their joint children do visit, he lives alone. The service user has severely impaired mobility and has been diagnosed with experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
The presenting issue was benefits – he was previously in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) with one component at Higher rate but nothing for the other components. Following the transition to PIP, he was awarded Standard rate for both however, he believed he should be awarded Enhanced rates.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

g) **RELIEVING THE COST OF LIVING FOR DISABLED PEOPLE, HACKNEY continued:**

Case studies continued:

IGA Case study 2 continued:
IGA made a home visit with the Wellbeing Worker from his GP Practice. This resulted in our request for his medical records being fast-tracked to draft his Appeal, known as a Mandatory Reconsideration (MR). Having the Wellbeing Worker present enabled us to become aware of other professionals i.e. the Psychiatric Therapist who agreed to provide written testimony.

We gathered other medical evidence, composed and submitted the MR. Unfortunately, the DWP could not trace receiving it and the Appeal was out of time however, DWP agreed to us re-sending a copy of the MR. The Appeal was refused and the CHOICE team explained the remaining option was to apply to a Benefits Tribunal and offered to act as Representative. The service user was very anxious: he would find it impossible, physically or emotionally, to attend. IGA explained the option of the phone or video hearing and he agreed so long as IGA would also be present.

We explained that he had the option for both written and oral evidence and his Wellbeing Worker offered to attend as Witness and IGA also undertook to provide guidance on the exact meaning of key words used in Benefit claims e.g, 'Aid or appliance', 'assistance or prompting or supervision' so that they could write a Statement. This gave the service user confidence and he agreed to let us apply for a Hearing. By facilitating a multi-agency approach, we were able to put-together a strong and comprehensive submission to the Tribunals Office. It was so good the DWP, who are sent a copy by the Court and have to disclose the claimants entire file to all parties, took the unusual decision not to contest the application and, despite twice rejecting the service user's claim, agreed to award both components at the Enhanced rate.

The service user received a back-dated sum of £3,396.58, increased monthly payments and is now entitled to apply for other concessions including the Motability Scheme. Together with the Wellbeing worker, we are helping the service user explore the option of a Motability scooter that, along with increased income, will greatly enhance his independence. The whole outcome has led the service use to feel more positive as it is demonstrable proof that good things can happen if you receive the right assistance.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

g) **RELIEVING THE COST OF LIVING FOR DISABLED PEOPLE, HACKNEY continued:**

Case studies continued:

Volunteer Project Case study 1:
Is an older woman living on her own; she has mobility issues, which means she struggles to walk unsupported and is always at risk of falling. She enjoyed her independence throughout her life but had now become dependent on delivery services and her small care package. The Volunteer Coordinator, paired her with an enthusiastic volunteer hoping to find some meaningful work away from her day job. They immediately became firm friends.

The volunteer assisted the service user to leave her home and gave her the confidence to go to the shops and procure food for the week. This also encouraged her to eat healthily so that she could enjoy her walks with the volunteer more. Our volunteer helped the service user to engage with local services and community groups, widening her group of friends. This includes giving her access to a lunch club that pooled resources together to make affordable meals for everyone. Now the service user enjoys a much more robust lifestyle with a great deal of pressure taken off of her and her finances.

Volunteer Project Case study 2:
Lives in council housing and has a large garden but is not well enough to look after it herself. As a result of the state of the garden, her upstairs neighbours often hassle her and threaten to report her to the landlord. The landlord declared the garden is our service user's responsibility and she must look after it or face eviction. Facing either incorporating a gardener in her already strained finances, or facing the stress and expense of a move, she turned to CHOICE. We firstly organised a team of corporate volunteers to clear the excess growth and get her garden under control. We then paired her with a dedicated individual volunteer who regularly visits to keep the garden tidy. Not only has this relieved the tensions between the service user and her neighbours and landlord, but she is also able to enjoy this space now, improving her wellbeing.

Overview of the Volunteer Project:
The service has grown and changed during this period to reflect the pressing needs of people in the community. Hundreds of volunteer hours have been utilised to support our disabled service users, improving lives throughout the borough.

Our shopping service arose from the challenges of the pandemic but has proven to be essential to vulnerable adults in our community. Getting out and procuring shopping has proven extremely challenging, especially for those who have fallen through the gap of our strained care system. Our volunteers meet with service users and accompany them to the shops to procure groceries and daily essentials.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

g) **RELIEVING THE COST OF LIVING FOR DISABLED PEOPLE, HACKNEY continued:**

Overview of the Volunteer Project con't

Not only is this a helpful method of supporting service users to get the essentials, it also helps them to save money. Many of our service users cannot get to the shops and would therefore have to depend upon delivery services to get their shopping. This is very expensive and contributes to a sedentary lifestyle, leading to more care needs, greater health risks, and ultimately, more expense for both the service user and support services. By providing volunteers, we allow the service user to exercise and save money.

For disabled people, the crisis made it especially difficult to stay on top of maintaining their gardens. The cost of hiring gardeners and the decrease in general health have made it difficult to look after their green spaces. This can cause many complex problems. Aside from denying the service user access to an essential source of mental and physical restoration, the growth can cause serious problems to the property and tensions with neighbours. Not being able to manage their gardens causes a major strain on the service users' resources and well-being.

Our gardeners work directly with an individual disabled person to help them manage these precious outdoor spaces. They assist the service user to reduce maintenance costs of their homes and gardens, promoting greater wellbeing, reducing healthcare costs and even lower food costs by helping to plant some fresh produce. Service users have responded very enthusiastically to the service and the demand has never been higher.

In addition to our individual gardening opportunities, we have also accommodated large groups of corporate volunteers. Organisations receive volunteer days to give back to their communities and grow as a team. Volunteering with us has meant that our service users have benefited from large scale efforts such as removing huge amounts of overgrowth from the gardens over a shorter period of time.

With the increasing burden of rising prices, stress levels only compound the issue of social isolation. Our befriending service pairs our isolated and vulnerable service users with volunteers who help them to leave their homes and engage with community services such as parks. Not only does this relieve some of the pressure on care services, it also provides emotional support and important information sharing. Instead of engaging in high-cost outings or entertainment, our service users can enjoy low-cost or free activities with their volunteers within their local community. All service users of the volunteer service have been offered our texting service with bespoke messages providing advice to help save money and find support services. Many service users now engage with community services such as advocacy and advice, resulting in saving money during the crisis.

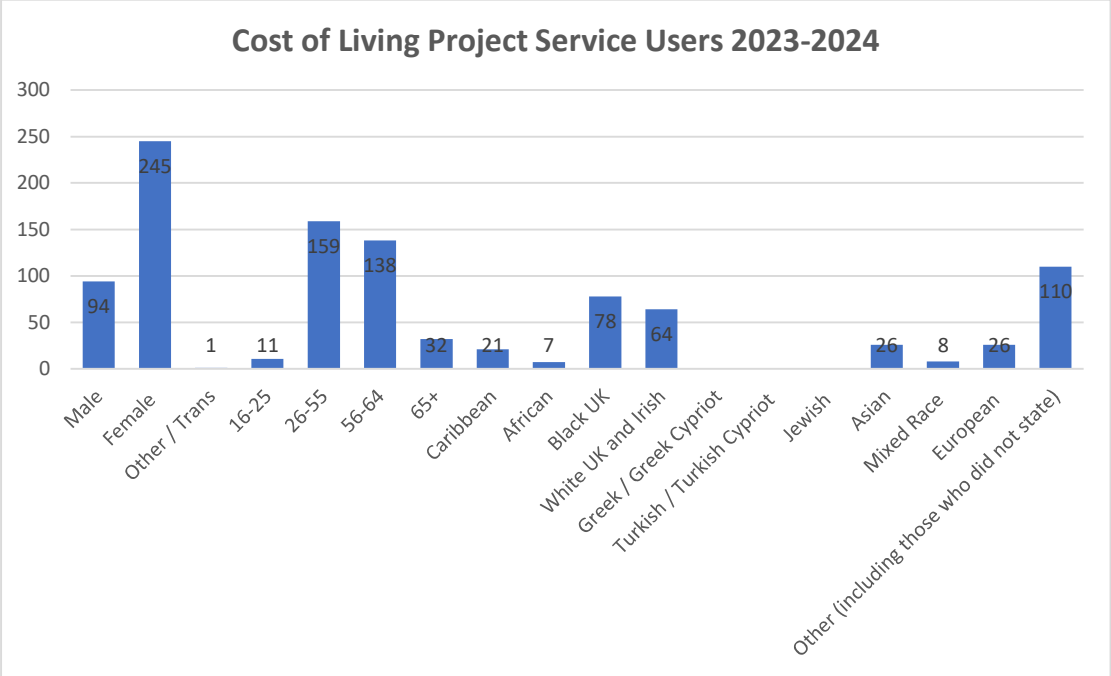
Everyone reported a great increase in wellbeing / financial security as a result of CHOICE's Volunteering services, which has always prioritised the wellbeing of its disabled service users – the funding allowed us to consider our services as part of an holistic approach to improving their circumstances.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

g) **RELIEVING THE COST OF LIVING FOR DISABLED PEOPLE, HACKNEY continued:**

The bar chart below provides statistical data for the project:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

h) **NEW DEVELOPMENTS:**
Trustees can provide an update on some of the innovative and exciting developments that have allowed CHOICE to enhance its service offer during the year as follows:

1. Effective data capture:
CHOICE has streamlined all of its data into one Client Relationship Management (CRM) system, Charity Log. Having utilised the CRM for over a year, the CHOICE team are now very familiar with its functions and are using it to effectively record and recall service users data, mapping their journeys from referral stage to successful completion. As streamlined data relating to each beneficiary can be saved in one location, information is not missed and next steps / appointments are actioned with pop-up reminders each time a team member logs in.

Regular training sessions have been conducted to ensure all team members are proficient in using the CRM. This has significantly improved the efficiency of data management and communication within the organisation, allowing for more effective tracking of service user, trainee and volunteer activities plus better service delivery to the community. Everyone within the organisation has benefited from the many improvements the CRM has brought with it. At the click of a button data can be organised according to the team member with their service users listed in alphabetical order – each with the latest actions carried out, a full case history and/or the next steps.

Externally, the CRM also supports CHOICE to present ourselves as a professional organisation to those who call, wanting an update on their case. Whether the actual assigned team member is available or not – any member of the team can undertake the all-important security checks before updating the caller on the up-to-date position of their case.

The enhanced use of the CRM has also facilitated more accurate reporting and analysis, enabling the charity to make informed decisions and strategise for future growth and impact.

2. Monitoring & Evaluation of services:
The CHOICE team continued its work with consultant, Jason Pollard of Community Impact CIC throughout this financial year. The CRM allowed the Charity to develop a set of working impact outcomes and measurement indicators that capture the aims and objectives of each service.

CHOICE's evaluation strategy for 2023-24 is almost ready to be published and will be available to download from the CHOICE website soon. This work will include reporting the difference CHOICE's services make through case studies, which are developed from multiple, and anonymised cases the CHOICE team have worked on. Each one is an example of how CHOICE's work impacts on our client group in each area we measure work against. Reporting through case studies in this way allows the organisation to show how i.e. advocacy and employment services make a practical difference to the lives of disabled people.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

h) **NEW DEVELOPMENTS continued:**

3. Business Planning:
Funder, Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales allowed us to engage facilitator and consultant, Hilary Barnard to complete this piece of work. Everyone within the organisation (including Trustees, staff, volunteers and service users) were engaged in finalising CHOICE's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan, which is available upon request.

4. New premises:
Following years of talks and negotiations, Trustees are pleased to announce CHOICE has joined other voluntary and community sector organisations within newly refurbished accessible premises of the Marie Lloyd Centre on Queensbridge Road. As well as providing a base for CHOICE to operate from (which includes modern training facilities) it is also an opportunity to expand our partnership working capabilities with organisations based at the centre who share our values and client group (i.e. disabled / older people).

CHOICE's new partners are: Age UK East London, City & Hackney Carers Centre, Holly Street Luncheon Club, the Huddleston Centre and MRS Independent Living. Their names and logos are prominently displayed outside the Marie Lloyd Centre:

The venue facilitates better access for staff and volunteers, a smoother "internal" referral process and the opportunity for our trainees to undertake work placements with partner organisations acting as hosts.

5. New Project:
City Bridge Foundation, the funding arm of The City of London Corporation's charity, Bridge House Estates (1035628), funds CHOICE's **Information, Guidance & Advocacy (IGA) service**. This is where the IGA Officer trains a team of volunteers to support disabled residents of the City of London and Hackney. The IGA project complements CHOICE's existing provision by filling gaps to allow us to provide a more holistic service to disabled people.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

h) **NEW DEVELOPMENTS continued:**

5. New Project continued:

Thanks to an early publicity drive, the IGA service attracted referrals from a wide range of sources (i.e. through both individuals and local organisations); below is some feedback from one such organisation – Carers First:

"CHOICE have proved to be a vital service to which we signpost carers for additional support. Many of our carers have shared positive feedback about the support that they have received from CHOICE. Their service complements ours, as they meet an essential and consistent need for both advocacy and support with form filling".

It has also been very encouraging to have received feedback about the support received by the Charity's disabled service users – here is just one example of many:

"I would like to provide my written support to CHOICE, as I believe this service has been particularly beneficial and supportive to me at a time when I was experiencing a great deal of despair, as I had nowhere to turn to for help.
This project has been reassuring in assisting me in dealing with my case, in a proficient manner".

Details of the project's other achievements and successes are noted elsewhere in the report.

Others areas of interest that have benefited the organisation throughout the year include:

6. Restructuring:

CHOICE is no stranger to restructuring processes as our Training & Employment Dept was borne out of such a process in 2018-19 with high quality accredited training courses (Choices into Work, Disability & Domestic Violence and Disability Hate Crime) and a staff team being organised and managed by the Advocacy Training & Employment Coordinator. Not only did this provide a coherent and well-defined training structure but also released the CEO from the need to manage and supervise the workloads of 5 team members that included: three Trainers, an Advocacy Mentor, and a Work Experience Coach.

Thanks to three-year's core funding (2023-2026) from Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales and the foundation's Enhance package, CHOICE underwent phase two of this restructuring process with support from consultancy firm, Roots HR. Work already undertaken included:

- A consultant meeting with the CEO / 2 Trustees to discuss i.e. the CEO's workload; and
- Once clarification had been provided as to where particular tasks that were no longer to be carried out by the CEO were to be allocated - an up-to-date CEO job description was produced.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

h) **NEW DEVELOPMENTS continued:**

6. Restructuring continued:
All parties (CHOICE / Roots HR) had agreed there was a need to create a new Deputy CEO role, which will, amongst other tasks include the line management of the Advocacy team and deputising for the CHOICE CEO during i.e. periods of annual leave.

The post was advertised internally amongst CHOICE staff and volunteers and applications have been received from interested team members. This is a very exciting phase of our restructuring journey and Trustees are looking forward to informing the reader of its successful outcome in next year's report.

7. Fundraising and income diversification:
Consultant, Alex Buckmire who was introduced to the Charity via Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales' Enhance package, provided invaluable support to CHOICE on how to meet its fundraising and income diversification goals.

After meeting with the CEO and Fundraising Sub-Group (FSG) of the Charity[7], Alex supported CHOICE to develop a Fundraising Strategy which defines the objectives, methods and specific tasks related to diversifying CHOICE's fundraising portfolio. In particular, to develop a stable and growing base of financial support that will cover the Charity's annual operational expenses, transactional project costs, and future aims through fiscal years 2023-2028. A copy of the fundraising plan, which was approved by the Board of Trustees on 18th Sept 2023 is available on request.

Alex worked tirelessly to support CHOICE and often went above and beyond what was expected of him. For example, as well as completing the above Fundraising Plan, he also:

- Introduced a grant and activity timeline document, which includes sources of potential funders so CHOICE is continually aware of which of its projects are funded and for how long;
- Produced an outcomes statement, allowing CHOICE to consider possible outcomes its projects make to help inform the Charity of possible funding to explore. By relating the outcomes to the funding it becomes a gateway to explore service provision in line with CHOICE's strategic aims;
- The terms of reference for CHOICE's sub-groups (which includes Personnel/Human Resources, Fundraising and Finance) who act on behalf of the wider Board of Trustees during sub-group meetings, carry out specific functions, oversee organisational planning and make recommendations to the wider Board of Trustees; and
- Hosted two online fundraising workshops for Trustees, staff and volunteers – complete with slides.

[7] FSG includes Trustee(s), the CEO, a Volunteer and a staff member.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

h) **NEW DEVELOPMENTS continued:**

8. The Cost of Living crisis:

The impact of the cost of living crisis has been felt globally over the last few years. CHOICE is located in the London Borough of Hackney, which is one of the most deprived areas of England (Index of Deprivation, 2019). Not surprisingly, the CHOICE team had noted an increased demand for its services. Already disproportionately affected by austerity measures and the pandemic (due to i.e. reductions in benefits / care packages), disabled people are now struggling to maintain a decent standard of living within the cost of living crisis. This is due to hikes in inflation and food / utilities costs. Often this results in our client-group going without essentials to meet escalating energy costs, which is inappropriate and risky for continued health and wellbeing.

These challenges were two-fold: not only were they having a detrimental effect on the disabled people we support (only 27% of whom are economically active compared to 78% of non-disabled people in Hackney) but CHOICE was also struggling to meet their needs. Something had to be done, and quickly, as CHOICE's existing services could not cope with the increased levels of demand.

After a lot of hard work over the autumn, the CEO completed a funding application for a new project entitled: "Relieving the cost of living for disabled people in Hackney". In mid-Dec 2023 the Government's Community Organisations Cost of Living Fund, which is being delivered by The National Lottery Community Fund, informed us we were awarded £73,000 towards our project.

Unusually, the funding included a retrospective period, allowing CHOICE to backdate the project's costs to Jul–mid-Dec 2023. This was a great help for the Charity as it would not have been able to recover the additional costs made during that period without that funding. The funding expired on 31st Mar 2024 although the needs of disabled people during the ongoing cost of living crisis continues. CHOICE is actively seeking funding from elsewhere to carry on with the very needed work undertaken.

9. CHOICE website:

Trustees would like to extend a very special "thank you" to Kevin Dunphy, Associate Product Manager of the global digital transformation consulting company, Publicis Sapient and the wider CodeAid Digital team who supported CHOICE to voluntarily revamp the CHOICE website. As a registered charity, CHOICE has little or no funding set aside to update its website and so having Kevin's team on board to redesign it has been amazing.

An organisation's website is the most important public-facing platform available in today's modern age and it was really important that CHOICE's underwent this refresh. It is much more dynamic, brighter and even more accessible, which is central to CHOICE's work of supporting disabled adults aged 18+. Please follow this link to access the new-look site:
https://choiceinhackney.org/

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

h) **NEW DEVELOPMENTS continued:**

10. Strategic Communications:
CHOICE joined a consortium made up of Deaf & Disabled People's Organisations (DDPOs) to improve the Charity's communications strategies by reframing the disability-related narratives.

This work was funded by City Bridge Trust Cornerstone Fund and included workshops to understand what and *how* people currently think about disability, and to transform the way we talk about it. The pan-London disability-organisation Inclusion London, together with Inclusion Barnet, Equally Ours and the partnership of seven DDPOs undertook an innovative research project, called 'Talking about Disability'.

The project's aim was to build greater public understanding of the equal worth of disabled people, the causes of disability inequality, and the essential role of DDPOs in creating positive change. The Talking About Disability Practical guide are available upon request.

11. Goodbye:
At the time of writing, the wider CHOICE team bids farewell to Lucia Bellini – CHOICE's Advocate, Mentor and Trainer as she goes on to pastures new. We wish her well in her ventures (and are pleased that she will remain with CHOICE on a part-time basis to fulfil her role as Disability Hate Crime Trainer).

12. Team (Christmas?) spirit:
It is always nice to be given the opportunity for the wider CHOICE team to 'down tools' and enjoy each other's company over some good food and that is exactly what we were able to do in Jan 2024. Trustees, volunteers and staff gathered together at the Open Kitchen N1 (OKN1) in Hoxton Street for a slightly delayed end of year evening meal.

Left: Volunteer, **Edna** sits next to Hate Crime Trainer, **David Landau**, CEO, **Caroline Nelson**) & Trustees: **Bharat Siyani, Thomas Brayford** and **Malcolm Aickin**
Right from the front: Hate Crime Advocate, **Felicia Tay** sits next to Advocacy Training & Employment Coordinator, **Haq Ismail**, Trustees: **Debra Schiman, Mary Julian** and **Andrew Price**, Volunteers: **Waruna** and **Jacek** and Information Guidance & Advocacy Officer, **Colin Finch**.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

h) **NEW DEVELOPMENTS continued:**

12. Team (Christmas?) spirit con't:

Here are some more pictures of the evening meal:

Left: Information Guidance & Advocacy Officer, **Colin Finch,** Volunteers: **Jacek and Waruna;** Trustees: **Andrew Price, Mary Julian & Debra Schiman,** sit next to Advocacy Training & Employment Coordinator, **Haq Ismail** and Hate Crime Advocate, **Felicia Tay**
Right from the front: Trustees: **Malcolm Aickin, Thomas Brayford** and **Bharat Siyani,** CEO, **Caroline Nelson,** Hate Crime Trainer, **David Landau and Volunteer**, Edna.

Trustee, **Mary Julian** presenting CEO **Caroline Nelson** with a bouquet of flowers

13. Ruth Bashall obituary:

Last year, Trustees informed you of the sad passing of CHOICE's former Chair and Trustee, Ruth Bashall who was very active in the disability-related movement and her obituary appeared in the Guardian in Feb 2024. Below an extract of the obituary by Kirsten Hearn

Ruth's fierce intellect, attention to detail, persuasive tone and persistence grabbed the attention of those with the power to make changes.
She was a huge-hearted woman who put enormous amounts of time, effort and determination into supporting individuals in desperate situations. For her, people mattered, and, above all, everyone had a right to be safe.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

i) **FUNDERS:**
In the year under review, CHOICE received funding from:

1. **Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust** – to provide health advocacy to disabled residents of the City of London and Hackney who have physical and/or sensory impairments.

2. **London Borough of Hackney via Rethink Mental Illness** - to provide a non-statutory advocacy service to disabled and vulnerable Hackney adults who are known to Adult Social Care teams, un-befriended, unable to speak up for themselves and require support with a specific advocacy issue.

3. **Henry Smith Charity - Improving Lives** – towards the Choices into Work and Disability Hate Crime training courses (both part of the Training & Employment Dept), which provides classroom-based advocacy/disability hate crime training, work placements and mentoring. Additional coaching support and a Job Club is also funded.

4. **South Hackney Parochial Charity** – towards the Choices into Work project which provides classroom-based advocacy training, work placements, job search skills and coaching for disabled people within the funder's catchment area.

5. **Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales** – a three-year unrestricted grant to support CHOICE's charitable activities / costs.

6. **Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime** – to provide disability hate crime advocacy to disabled people who live or work in Hackney and surrounding boroughs as part of the Community Alliance to Combat Hate (CATCH) consortium.

7. **The Government's Community Organisations Cost of Living Fund, which was delivered by The National Lottery Community Fund –** towards a new project "Relieving the cost of living for disabled people in Hackney" – for the continuation and expansion of existing services to help meet the increased levels of demand within the cost of living crisis.

8. **City Bridge Foundation** (the funding arm of The City of London Corporation's charity, Bridge House Estates) – five-year's funding towards the provision of information, guidance and advocacy to disabled residents of Hackney and the City, allowing independence, choice and control over their lives and reducing inequality.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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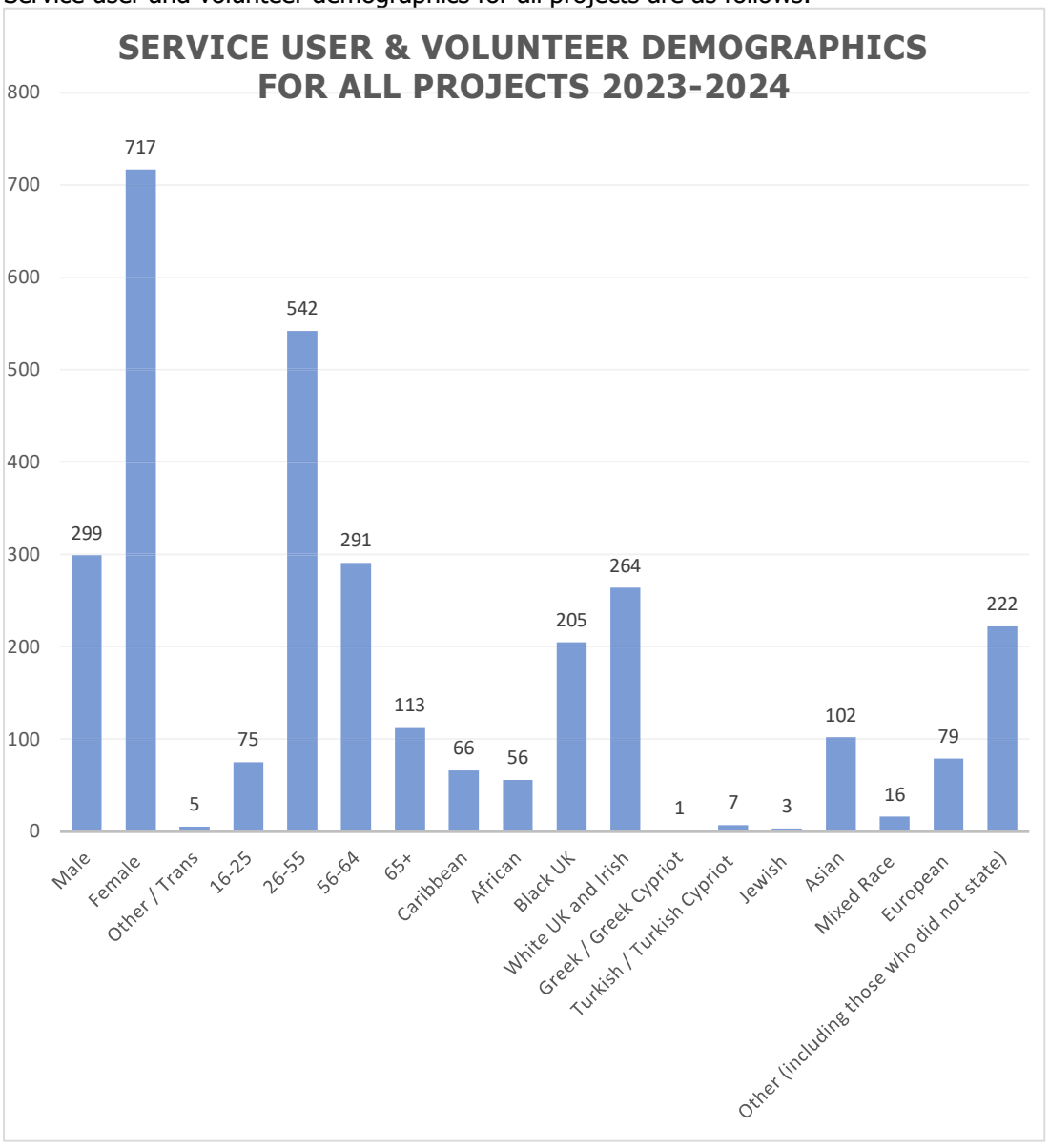
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

i) **FUNDERS continued:**

The level of funding in the year allowed CHOICE to work with a total of 1,021 people (470 in 2022-2023). The organisation has noted there is a low take-up of service users from amongst the Turkish / Turkish Cypriot and Jewish communities. However, it is also noted both groups have strong community welfare organisations that support them within the borough.

Service user and volunteer demographics for all projects are as follows:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

k) **PARTNERSHIP WORKING:**

Partnership working allows us to reach out to more disabled people. CHOICE aims to raise awareness of the services it provides within an expanded community. This will secure the rights of disabled people as full citizens, improve their quality of life and promote an inclusive society where disabled people can participate fully and equally.

CHOICE is pleased to continually expand and strengthen the network of organisations who are open to reciprocal working, which encourages sharing a lived experience of disability, knowledge, training opportunities, services, a loyal customer base as well as joining together to strengthen consortium-based funding applications.

CHOICE's network of organisations includes, but is not limited to:

a) Alliance for Inclusive Education ("ALLFIE") – we are working jointly with ALLFIE to increase the number of younger disabled people we support with our services in particular CHOICE's Training & Employment Dept's activities;

b) Community Alliance to Combat Hate ("CATCH") – this consortium led by the Gay London Police Monitoring Group ("GALOP") regularly make referrals into CHOICE's Disability Hate Crime service. CHOICE also carries out joint-working with partner organisations Real based in Tower Hamlets and Stay Safe East;

c) Disability Action in Haringey and Islington – their staff were invited to undertake the Choices into Work training course and they reciprocated by inviting us to join partnership bids;

d) Hackney Opportunity Hub – this organisation has provided us with both accessible training venues in the past for the classroom-based element of the Choices into Work project and trainees wanting to upskill and improve their employment prospects by undertaking the course;

e) Inclusion London – this pan-London disability-related organisation provides CHOICE with a range of training programmes to build our skills, knowledge and sustainability. CHOICE responds to requests for support in their policy work. More recently, CHOICE joined a consortium made up of disabled people's organisations to improve CHOICE's communications strategies by reframing disability-related narratives;

f) Marie Lloyd Centre – CHOICE's new location within the centre is a shared space with other voluntary and third sector organisations where there are opportunities for closer joint-working. Our partners include: Age UK East London (landlord), City & Hackney Carers Centre, Holly Street Luncheon Club, the Huddleston Centre and MRS Independent Living.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
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Financial Review:

At the end of the previous year Restricted Funds held amounted to £196,899. The majority of these were expended on the projects for which they were intended as set out in Note 12 of the financial statements. Further funds been raised for ongoing activities and Restricted Funds of £136,101 are carried forward. In consequence there was a deficit in the Restricted Funds on the year of £60,798 (2023: surplus £157,706).

There was a surplus for the year on the unrestricted funds of £92,988 (2023: deficit £46,042).

Total incoming resources amounted to £319,482 (2023: £341,417) and total resources expended were £287,292 (2023: £229,753). This resulted in a surplus on the year of £32,190 (2023: £111,664).

Risk:

Last year, CHOICE reported it was looking to reduce the over-reliance on the Chief Executive (CEO) to allow the CEO to concentrate on the management of the whole organisation. The Trustees are pleased to report that a Deputy CEO has now been appointed. We continue to develop and recruit staff to take on the management of specific day-to-day operations.

In past years CHOICE also noted the dependence on securing income for the short-term support of activities was a significant challenge. In the year under review CHOICE, as noted above, secured further multi-year funding for projects. Thus, there has been successful mitigation of these two risks.

The Board of Trustees are continuing to implement structural changes to increase the capacity for organisational and service growth, identified by grant-funded consultants, so the charity can maintain sufficient funding to provide for the needs of its service users.
The charity's continued success is in part through the increased use of Information Communications Technology. CHOICE has dispensed with paper records with a consequent reduction is storage space. But the risks of cyber-attack and the need for electronic data security have increased. The Trustees believe that reasonable data security measures are in place but continue to examine further steps to enhance protections.

CHOICE remains committed to the ideals of a Disabled People's User-Led Organisation ("DPULO"). As noted previously, this presents its own risks in a period of financial austerity. CHOICE continues to adapt business models and funding bids to articulate the added value created by employment of disabled staff. CHOICE will work with others such as Inclusion London, to campaign for Access to Work to cover full costs.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Reserves Policy:

The Charity sets aside funds, as unrestricted reserves, to meet future anticipated or contingent expenditure, in particular to cover costs such as staff sickness or redundancy, to develop new activities and to ensure the continuity of services through difficult financial periods. The Board of Trustees, after review, decided that the Charity should aim for a level of the "free reserves", of between 3 and 9 months recurrent expenditure, which equates to approximately £72,500 - £217,500.

CHOICE has made less use of Reserves to maintain existing and to develop new services. As a result, the tangible assets ("free reserves") have increased and at the year-end amounted to £140,603 (2023: £47,615) and are in the middle of the desired range.

GOING CONCERN

The Trustees actively foster relations with existing funders and seek additional funding sources emphasising the value for money in terms of historic costs per service user outcome. Further multi-year funding has been secured and although as noted above Restricted Funds are less than at the end of the previous year they remain at a healthy level. Also as noted above Unrestricted Funds have increased significantly.

In consequence, the Trustees are of the opinion that the Charity will be able to continue as a going concern into 2028 and beyond.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees (who are also the directors of Choice in Hackney 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), including Financial Reporting Standard 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland".

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:

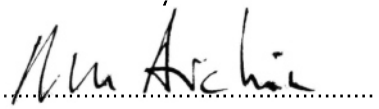
- there is no relevant information of which the charitable company's examiners are unaware; and
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant information and to establish that the examiners are aware of that information.

The independent examiner, Knox Cropper LLP, 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.

APPROVAL

This report was approved by the Board of Directors and Trustees on 26 September 2024 and signed on their behalf by:



Malcolm Aickin

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

TO THE MEMBERS OF CHOICE IN HACKNEY

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Choice in Hackney for the period ended 31 March 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charitable company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act'). You are satisfied that the accounts of the Company are not required by charity or company law to be audited and have chosen instead to have an independent examination.

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the Company's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since the Company's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I can confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a registered member of ICAEW which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Richard Billinghurst
Knox Cropper LLP
Chartered Accountants
65-68 Leadenhall Street, London, EC3A 2AD

Date: 01/10/2024

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
(INCORPORATING THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

	Notes	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2023 £
INCOME FROM:							
Grants and donations	2(a)	153,157	84,042	237,199	266,313	10,806	277,119
Charitable activities	2(b)	-	81,743	81,743	-	64,165	64,165
Investments		-	540	540	-	118	118
Other income		-	-	-	-	15	15
Total		153,157	166,325	319,482	266,313	75,104	341,417
EXPENDITURE ON:							
Raising funds	3	-	6,590	6,590	-	9,581	9,581
Charitable activities	3	213,955	66,747	280,702	106,607	113,565	220,172
Total		213,955	73,337	287,292	106,607	123,146	229,753
Net income/(expenditure)		(60,798)	92,988	32,190	159,706	(48,042)	111,664
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	(2,000)	2,000	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		(60,798)	92,988	32,190	157,706	(46,042)	111,664
Balances brought forward at 1 April		196,899	47,615	244,514	39,193	93,657	132,850
BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31 MARCH		136,101	140,603	276,704	196,899	47,615	244,514

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31st MARCH 2024

	Notes	2024		2023	
		£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible Assets	7		-		-
Intangible Assets	8		3,208		4,170
			3,208		4,170
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	9	194,633		188,548	
Cash at Bank and in hand		105,528		62,512	
		300,161		251,060	
CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year	10	(26,665)		(10,716)	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			273,496		240,344
NET ASSETS			276,704		244,514
FUNDS					
Restricted Funds	12		136,101		196,899
Unrestricted Funds					
Designated Funds			-		-
General Fund	11		140,603		47,615
			276,704		244,514

The Company is exempt from the requirements relating to preparing audited accounts in accordance with Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006. The members have not required the Company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for:

a) ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and;

b) preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of each financial year and of its profit or loss for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the company.

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 26 September 2024 and signed on behalf of the board

Chair: Malcolm Aickin

Treasurer: Matthew Baxter MBAXTER

Registered Company Number: 03423122
Registered Charity Number: 1077287

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

a. Basis of Preparation of Accounts

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), 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.

The presentation currency of the financial statements is Pound Sterling (£).

b. Company Status

CHOICE IN HACKNEY is a company limited by guarantee. In the event of the Charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the Charity.

c. Fund Accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the objects of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements. Statutory grants which are given as contributions towards the Charity's core services are treated as unrestricted.

d. Incoming resources

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.

e. Resources expended

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been included under expenses categories that aggregate all costs for allocation to activities. Governance costs include the costs of servicing meetings of the Board of Trustees, audit and strategic planning.

f. Tangible and Intangible Fixed Assets and Depreciation

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the costs of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on:
Furniture/Fittings: 25% straight line basis
Office Equipment: 25% straight line basis

Intangible assets are stated at cost less amortisation. Assets are amortised once brought into use. Amortisation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost less estimated residual value of each asset over its expected useful life, as follows:
CRM system: 20% straight line basis

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

g. **Allocation of Overhead and Support Costs**
Overhead and support costs have been allocated between charitable activities and other expenditure on the basis of staff time. The allocation of overhead and support costs is analysed in note 3.

h. **Operating Leases**
Rentals payable under operating leases are charged to the statement of financial activities as they fall due over the term of the lease.

2(a). **INCOMING RESOURCES FROM GENERATED FUNDS**
- **Grants received**

	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	2024 Total £	2023 Total £
City Bridge Trust	57,315	-	57,315	-
The Henry Smith Charity	-	-	-	209,900
Lloyds Bank Foundation	-	75,000	75,000	27,050
CATCH Mobilisation	22,838	-	22,838	22,500
South Hackney Parochial	-	-	-	9,113
The National Lottery	73,004	-	73,004	-
Inclusion London	-	7,375	7,375	2,875
Hackney Council FO	-	166	166	225
Alliance for Inclusive Education	-	300	300	300
Other income and Donations	-	1,201	1,201	5,156
DWP Resource Management	-	-	-	-
	153,157	84,042	237,199	277,119

2(b). **INCOMING RESOURCES FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES**
- Contracts for services and performance related grants

	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	2024 Total £	2023 Total £
Homerton University Hospital – Advocacy	-	47,431	47,431	47,431
The Advocacy Project – Advocacy	-	4,380	4,380	16,734
Rethink Mental Illness	-	29,932	29,932	-
	-	81,743	81,743	64,165

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

3. ANALYSIS OF RESOURCES EXPENDED

	Raising Funds	Charitable Activities	Total 2024	Total 2023
Unrestricted	£	£	£	£
Staff costs	6,590	59,306	65,896	95,814
Staff training	-	50	50	269
Accountancy	-	662	662	926
Independent examination fee	-	850	850	1,220
Rent	-	1,150	1,150	7,193
Other Costs	-	4,479	4,479	15,979
Legal & Professional Fees	-	250	250	1,745
	6,590	66,747	73,337	123,146
Restricted				
Staff costs	-	152,161	152,161	82,860
Staff training	-	150	150	150
Accountancy	-	2,628	2,628	1,630
Independent examination fee	-	2,400	2,400	1,630
Rent	-	21,200	21,200	13,550
Other Costs	-	32,990	32,990	5,442
Legal & Professional Fees	-	2,426	2,426	1,345
	-	213,955	213,955	106,607
	6,590	280,702	287,292	229,753

Staff costs have been allocated to the above expenditure heads on the basis of estimated staff time spent on the activities. Support costs and governance costs are included in the above analysis. Governance costs amounted to £18,000 (2023: £18,000).

4. STAFF NUMBERS AND COSTS

	2024 £	2023 £
Salaries	203,475	167,578
Social security costs	10,538	7,786
Employer pension	4,044	3,310
Redundancy costs	-	-
	218,057	178,674

The average number of employees during the year was 10 (2023:10).
No employee earned more than £60,000 during the year under review (2023: none).
The remuneration of senior management amounted to £51,117 (2023: £51,379).

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

5. TRUSTEES REMUNERATION

During the year, one Trustee received reimbursement of expenses amounting to £13 (2022: NIL).

No trustee received any remuneration other than disclosed in these accounts.

6. TAXATION

CHOICE is a registered charity and is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income and capital gains received to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

7. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Furniture £	Office Equipment £	Total £
Cost			
At 1st April 2023	2,316	23,964	26,280
Additions	-	-	-
At 31st March 2024	2,316	23,964	26,280
Depreciation			
At 1st April 2023	2,316	23,964	26,280
Charged for the year	-	-	-
At 31st March 2024	2,316	23,964	26,280
Net Book Value			
At 31st March 2024	-	-	-
At 31st March 2023	-	-	-

8. INTANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	CRM System £
Cost	
At 1st April 2023	4,812
Additions	-
At 31st March 2024	4,812
Depreciation	
At 1st April 2023	642
Charged for the year	962
At 31st March 2024	1,604
Net Book Value	
At 31st March 2024	3,208
At 31st March 2023	4,170

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

9. **DEBTORS**

	2024 £	2023 £
Grant debtors	34,679	10,168
Prepayments and other debtors	5,054	3,480
Accrued income	154,900	174,900
	194,633	188,548

10. **CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within this year**

PAYE	7,024	3,160
Accruals and other creditors	19,641	7,556
	26,665	10,716

11. **UNRESTRICTED FUNDS**

	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
General Fund	47,615	166,325	(73,337)	-	140,603
Total Unrestricted Funds	47,615	166,325	(73,337)	-	140,603

PRIOR YEAR	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
General Fund	93,657	75,104	(123,146)	2,000	47,615
Total Unrestricted Funds	93,657	75,104	(123,146)	2,000	47,615

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

12. **RESTRICTED FUNDS**

	Brought Forward	Incoming Resources	Resources Expended	Transfers	Carried Forward
	£	£	£	£	£
Disability LIB	499	22,838	(22,838)	-	499
Advocacy, Training and Employment	196,400	-	(69,690)	-	126,710
Information Guidance & Advocacy	-	57,315	(48,423)	-	8,892
Cost of Living Fund	-	73,004	(73,004)	-	-
Active Lifestyle	-				
Total Restricted Funds	196,899	153,157	(213,955)	-	136,101

PRIOR YEAR	Brought Forward	Incoming Resources	Resources Expended	Transfers	Carried Forward
	£	£	£	£	£
Disability LIB	499	-	-	-	499
Advocacy, Training and Employment	36,694	243,813	(84,107)	-	196,400
Hate Crime	-	22,500	(22,500)	-	-
CRM System Project	2,000	-	-	(2,000)	-
Active Lifestyle	-	-			-
Total Restricted Funds	39,193	266,313	(106,607)	(2,000)	196,899

Transfer – the prior year transfer to unrestricted fund represents restricted costs capitalised during the financial year.

Disability LIB – this was a one-off grant from Disability LIB towards disabled people's communication support, such as translation and interpretation costs.

Advocacy, Training and Employment (now known as the Choices into Work) - this represents amounts received towards the Choices into Work Project to train disabled people to enable them to find meaningful employment in advocacy or other related fields. This project also offers coaching, confidence building and mentoring.

Disability Hate Crime Project – this represents funding received from the Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC). CHOICE operates within the "Community Alliance To Combat Hate" (CATCH) consortium to support disabled survivors of hate crime that take place within London and surrounding boroughs.

Information Guidance & Advocacy – funding received from City Bridge Trust (the funding arm of The City of London Corporation's charity, Bridge House Estate) – for the provision of information, guidance and advocacy to disabled residents of Hackney and the City, allowing independence, choice and control over their lives and reducing inequality.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

Cost of Living Fund – The Government's Community Organisations Cost of Living Fund, delivered by The National Lottery Community Fund supported a new project "Relieving the cost of living for disabled people of Hackney". This went towards the continuation and expansion of existing services to help meet the increased levels of demand within the cost of living crisis.

Client Relationship Management (CRM) system project – part-funding from The Sylvia Waddilove Foundation UK via Pothecary Witham Weld Solicitors allowed us to purchase the CRM system, Charity Log to efficiently streamline data across all projects and services.

Active Lifestyle – this is funding towards our Active Lifestyle project, which included low-impact exercise sessions as well as group activities all taken out online from the comfort of the service users homes via Zoom Video Conferencing to improve health and wellbeing.

13. FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

At the 31st March 2024 the Charity had commitments under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

	2024	2023
Amounts payable:	£	£
Within one year	23,713	1,053
Between two and five years	12,402	-
After five years	-	-
	36,115	1,053

In addition to the above, the Charity has a licence agreement for its office premises for an annual rent of £21,000. The licence is reviewed every September.

14. CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

There were no capital commitments at 31st March 2024 (2023: Nil).

15. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

There were no contingent liabilities at 31st March 2024 (2023: Nil).

16. NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Fixed Assets	Cash at Bank and in Hand	Debtors	Current Liabilities	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted	3,208	40,663	123,397	(26,665)	140,603
Restricted	-	64,865	71,236	-	136,101
Total	3,208	105,528	194,633	(26,665)	276,704

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2024

PRIOR YEAR	**Fixed Assets**	**Cash at Bank and in Hand**	**Debtors**	**Current Liabilities**	**Total**
	£	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted	4,170	51,689	2,472	(10,716)	47,615
Restricted	-	10,823	186,076	-	196,899
Total	4,170	62,512	188,548	(10,716)	244,514

16. **GOING CONCERN**

The Trustees actively foster relations with existing funders and seek additional funding sources emphasising the value for money in terms of historic costs per service user outcome. Further multi-year funding has been secured and although as noted above Restricted Funds are less than at the end of the previous year they remain at a healthy level. Also as noted above Unrestricted Funds have increased significantly.

In consequence, the Trustees are of the opinion that the Charity will be able to continue as a going concern into 2028 and beyond.

17. **RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS**

There were no related party transaction during the year.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

England & Wales - Charity number 1077287

Accounts

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

(Company Limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES REPORT

AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

COMPANY NO: 03423122
CHARITY NO : 1077287

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

TRUSTEES REPORT

AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

The Trustees present their report and the audited financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2023.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Trustees

Andrew Price	Vice-Chair
Malcolm Aickin	Treasurer
Thomas Brayford	
Patricia Charlesworth	
Susan E Childs	(resigned 28 November 2022)
Mary Julian	
Debra Schiman	
Bharat Siyani	
Matthew Baxter	(appointed 18 September 2023)

Company Secretary and Executive Director	Caroline Nelson
Company reg.no.	03423122
Charity reg.no.	1077287
Registered Office	CHOICE IN HACKNEY Defoe Block, Ground Floor 50 Hoxton Street London N1 6LP
Independent Examiner	Knox Cropper LLP 65 Leadenhall Street London EC3A 2AD
Bankers	Barclays Bank PLC 3-5 Kingsland High Street London E8 2JT

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

The Trustees, who are also the Directors of the charitable company for the purposes of the Companies Act present their combined directors' report and trustees' report, as required by company law, together with the financial statements of CHOICE IN HACKNEY ("CHOICE" or "the Charity") for the year ended 31st March 2023. The Trustees confirm that the trustees report and the financial statements of the Charity comply with current statutory requirements, the requirements of the Charity's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland ("FRS 1020").

Administration Details of the Charity, its Trustees and Advisors

Administration details relating to CHOICE are set out under Legal and Administrative Information, on page 1.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Charity is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Trustees are recruited from members of the Charity, ex-employees and from the wider community. They are elected and co-opted under the terms of the company's Articles of Association. Users are represented on the Board of Trustees. At the Annual General Meeting, the Board of Trustees is elected by the members of the Charity and serve from the close of that meeting until the close of the succeeding Annual General Meeting. The Board of Trustees consists of not less than 3 members and until otherwise determined by a General Meeting, not more than 12 members.

Trustees were given an induction to the work of CHOICE by the Executive Director and introduced to all staff members. The formal policies and procedures are reviewed annually.
The Management of the Charity is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees. Operational decisions are taken by the Executive Director and staff. Strategic decisions are made by the Board of Trustees in consultation with the Executive Director. The Board of Trustees meets at least 4 times a year and the Executive Director attends all meetings.

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and in particular, to those related to its operations and finances of the Charity, and are satisfied that systems and procedures are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks. A review of the risk assessment was carried out by members of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Director during the year.

Public Benefit

In reviewing the Charity's aims and objectives and in planning future activities, the Trustees refer to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit.

Objectives and Activities

CHOICE has the charitable objectives of working with disabled, Greater London residents by providing Independent Living Services including, but not limited to: Active Lifestyle, Advocacy, Befriending Plus / Volunteering, Disability Hate Crime and Training & Employment.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

The objectives of the Charity are:

a) To relieve disabled persons in Greater London who require assistance, helping to realise their full potential and lead fulfilling lives. In particular, by the provision of a service that assists such persons obtaining their full rights and privileges they are entitled to as citizens.

b) To advance the education of the general public as to the needs and interests of disabled people.

The Charity Commission granted CHOICE permission to operate across Greater London, which is reflected in CHOICE' Memorandum.

A selection of CHOICE IN HACKNEY staff members - from left to right

Front: Advocate, **Paula Smith** and Chief Executive Officer, **Caroline Nelson**
Back: Advocate & Trainer, **Lucia Bellini**; Advocacy Training & Employment Coordinator**, Haq Ismail**; Administrator and Volunteer Coordinator, **Paul Salt**; Hate Crime Advocate, **Felicia Tay** and Information Guidance & Advocacy Officer, **Colin Finch**

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance:
In the period under review, CHOICE promoted the following services to disabled Greater London residents aged 18 plus and their networks:

- Active Lifestyle
- Advocacy
- Befriending Plus / Volunteer
- Disability Hate Crime
- Training & Employment

a) **Active Lifestyle**:

CHOICE's Active Lifestyle service supports local disabled people in wellbeing activities to improve their overall physical and mental health whilst also reducing social isolation.

Starting its life in 2012, it has organised a variety of events over the years including: Boccia, golf workshops, kayaking at Hackney Reservoir, women's boxing, squash, tennis and Leyton Orient Football Club's Community Day.

The project's main activities include:

- Exercise sessions organised in conjunction with CHOICE's host organisation, Salvation Army Hoxton for face-to-face and/or online sessions, where service users can enjoy keep fit activities from the comfort of their homes.

- Social clubs (also from the Salvation Army or online) where disabled service users can bond over shared interests and experiences.

- Buddies / volunteers are provided to escort disabled people to local accessible gyms / recreational centres to support with navigating their way around the different equipment available.

Unfortunately, the project was unfunded during the period and CHOICE was unable to offer any activities. CHOICE is hopeful that with a concerted fundraising effort and the cooperation of local businesses, CHOICE, will be able to continue the work of this valuable project.

Last year, the Active Lifestyle project supported 40 disabled service users.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

b) Advocacy:
CHOICE advocates support our disabled service users to obtain the services needed to live an independent and dignified lifestyle in the community. The Advocate works in partnership with the disabled user to obtain his/her rights.

Community advocacy service:
CHOICE's community advocacy service is in two parts:

- Non-statutory advocacy - CHOICE supports disabled people with issue-based matters that fall outside of the advocacy commissioned under legislation. The type of support an advocate can provide includes one-to-one support to enable the disabled person to speak up for themselves.

  Examples include: support in obtaining accessible housing, making complaints, carrying out assessments, meeting educational needs and child protection matters for disabled parents etc.

- Statutory advocacy – Provided when a disabled person is legally entitled to access the support of an advocate under a particular area of legislation for example the Independent Care Act 2014. Care Act Advocacy is about giving the disabled person as much control possible over their life. It supports them to understand information, say what they want and, what they need.

  Examples include: undertaking Care Act assessments, Care & Support planning, Reviews and Safeguarding issues

During the year under review, **Hackney Council** started its tender process for its **Advocacy services contract** (both statutory and non-statutory elements), which was due to expire on 31st March 2023. Existing lead provider, The Advocacy Project (TAP) and other organisations were invited to compete to head-up the Advocacy Service consortium for a period of up to five-years. TAP had been the lead provider of this service since the financial year 2018-19, with CHOICE as a sub-contractor. Although TAP had placed a bid, Hackney Council's Cabinet Procurement and Insourcing Committee had met and awarded the Advocacy Services contract to a different provider in February 2023.

As the decision date and contract expiry were very close together, the committee decided to extend TAP's contract for a period of two-months (April-May 2023) to enable the newly appointed bidder to mobilise effectively, without disruption to service delivery. This gave CHOICE some time to finalise work on any of TAP's existing cases, which saw CHOICE advocates working around the clock in order to meet that deadline. However, this was not always possible as some advocacy matters (child protection, housing in particular) need several months, if not years to be brought to a satisfactory conclusion.

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

b) Advocacy continued:

This also had implications for the organisation in terms of CHOICE staffing and finances. Firstly, CHOICE advocates could be transferred over to the new provider to undertake Hackney's Advocacy Services under the provisions of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations ("TUPE"). Should this be the case, there were all types of considerations to be borne in mind especially whether the new provider's services would be "disability-friendly" and fully accessible for CHOICE staff and service users.

Suffice to say this decision affected CHOICE at all levels of the organisation: strategically, as emergency meetings were held by the Board of Trustees and Chief Executive Officer to discuss the implications of contract change, including forward planning. Also, meetings were held amongst other stakeholders including potential providers and new/existing network members to place a bid.

Current staff employed may be eligible for transfer to the new provider under TUPE. Many challenging conversations and ongoing concerns were held in relation to CHOICE's service users, who were accustomed to working with existing staff and programmes. All stakeholders have been informed of the change and some questioned the availability of existing service elements with the future provider.

In early April 2023, many of these concerns and questions were answered when CHOICE was contacted by the new Advocacy provider, Rethink Advocacy (Rethink) - a separate operating part of the national organisation: Rethink Mental Illness, which delivers advocacy services across England to people from all walks of life. Rethink informed us that as of 5th June 2023, it will take over the delivery of advocacy services from The Advocacy Project. The new model and service will:

- Provide high quality, culturally appropriate advocacy provision to individuals and groups across Hackney;

- Deliver advocacy alongside current community and charitable organisations, and provide funds for this to continue so local people get support from those they know best, and who know them; and

- Provide a development fund for local organisations to receive training in advocacy practice and the National Advocacy Qualification.

CHOICE is pleased to report that following various communications / meetings and in particular with representatives from CHOICE's Board of Trustees and the Chief Executive Officer meeting with Rethink's Associate Director of Advocacy Services, CHOICE is now sub-contracted to Rethink to provide community-based Advocacy Support Services within Hackney. This is for an initial period of one-year with the option to extend for a further period of one-year, up to a maximum of five-years. CHOICE looks forward to working with Rethink now and in future.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
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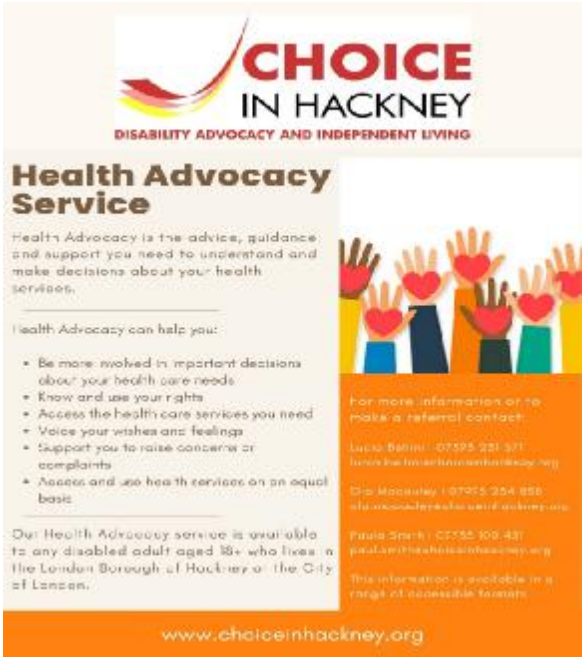
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

b) Advocacy continued:

Health Advocacy:
CHOICE has now adjusted to working within a three-year contract, which commenced in November 2021, after many years of working within an annual service level agreement thanks to funding from **Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**. This adjusted arrangement supports CHOICE to better manage its forward planning and allows the Trust to ensure they are making the best use of public funds.

Their funding goes towards CHOICE's health advocacy service, which has formed a vital part of CHOICE's service provision for many years. CHOICE is very pleased to continue to support local disabled people in the City of London and Hackney who have physical and/or sensory impairments with their health advocacy needs. The fundamental emphasis and focus of health advocacy is seeing things from the user's perspective, aiming to empower users to access and use health services on an informed and equitable basis. Thus shifting the unbalanced relationship between service users (particularly those from different impairment, ethnic and cultural backgrounds). CHOICE's advocacy role is to elicit the views, needs, expectations and concerns of its service users and to actively pursue and act in their best interests.

An advertising campaign for CHOICE's Health Advocacy service has started in the City of London and Hackney. CHOICE Advocates have been offered outreach opportunities within St Bartholomew's and St Leonard's Hospitals. The leaflet below is also displayed in community centres, General Practitioners, Local Authority offices, Housing Associations etc:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

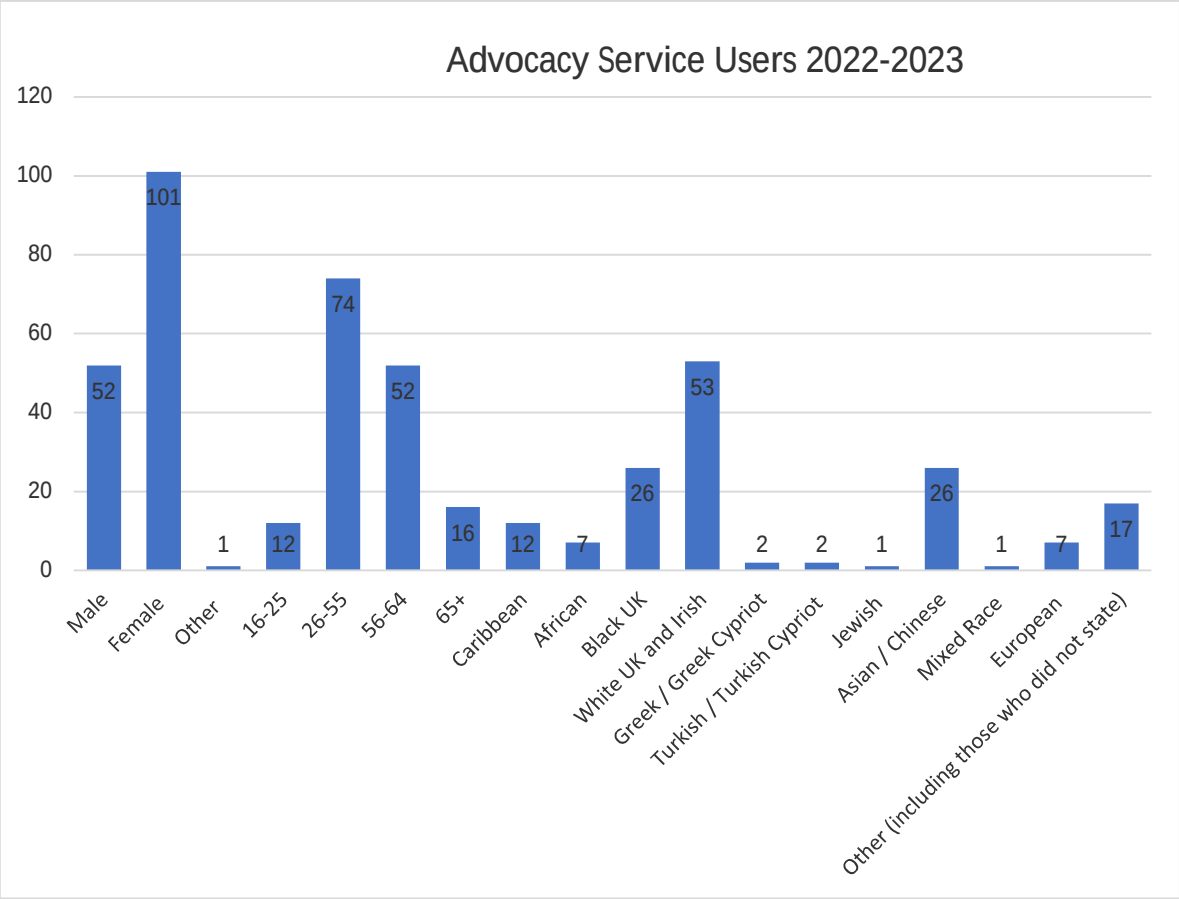
b) Advocacy continued:

During the year, CHOICE supported service users using a variety of methods including: telephone contacts, emails, face-to-face and online engagements.

Funding during this period allowed us to support a total of 154-disabled people (168 in 2021-2022), with their non-statutory, statutory and health advocacy matters – some of whom had multiple issues which included:

- health-related issues including, accessing medical services, communicating with health professionals regarding their treatment, and to make complaints;
- housing support, which included adaptations and repairs;
- physical and mental health / emotional wellbeing support;
- support around their domestic, family and personal challenges;
- statutory advocacy issues including Care Act assessments and safeguarding enquiries.

The following bar chart presents statistical data for the Advocacy Project:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) **Befriending Plus / Volunteer Project:**

CHOICE'S Befriending Plus / Volunteer project is a long-running service which goes some way to tackle the feelings of loneliness and social isolation that some disabled people experience. It is supported by volunteers in the office or within the community as follows:

- **Office volunteers:**
  Disabled and non-disabled volunteers gain office experience whilst supporting CHOICE in its core functions including CHOICE'S social media platforms / website, meeting fundraising aims, administration, design and marketing.

- **Befriending**:
  Volunteers regularly call service users to speak on any subject they like or escort them to local places of their choice. This reduces feelings of social isolation and encourages engagement with the local community.

- **Gardening**:
  Transforming disabled people's inaccessible green spaces into places they can conveniently take in the fresh air, exercise and enjoy time outdoors with friends and families.

Following the Coronavirus ("COVID-19") pandemic, the project was expanded, enabling disabled people to benefit from the following services thanks to the dedication of CHOICE volunteers:

- **A walking friends service:**
  Volunteers encourage service users to leave their homes, take in some exercise and enjoy the fresh air whilst maintaining social-distancing practices.

- **A shopping and medication drop-off service:**
  Volunteers purchase groceries and medication and deliver them to the door of the disabled service user.

It is always heartening to read about the successes that this project has experienced and the relationships that have been built upon. Here are just two quotes from CHOICE volunteers:

- *"Thank you for organising everything! It was a great day for everyone. The volunteers loved seeing the difference in the garden at the end of the day."* -AN

- *"Even though I'm moving, I want to stay in touch with Mark. He's become a part of my life now. I think our pairing was a resounding success*." -LS

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

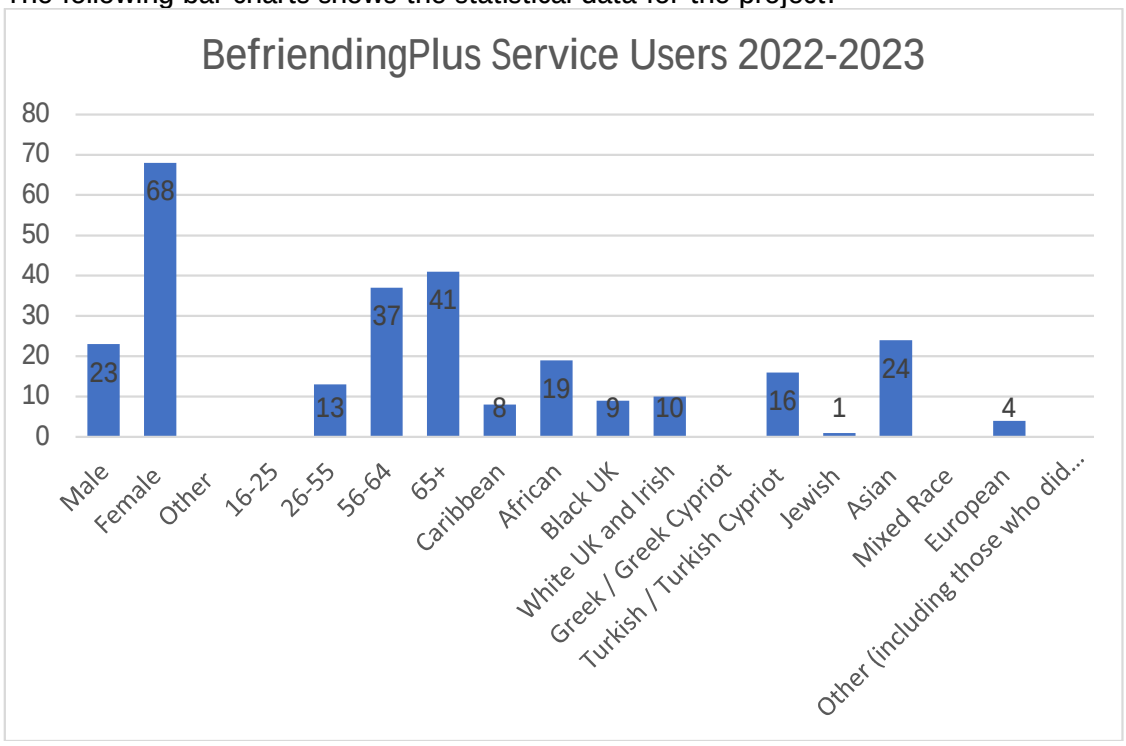
c) **Befriending Plus / Volunteer Project continued:**

CHOICE continues to offer a walking friends and befriending services to disabled people experiencing social isolation. CHOICE service users often seek contact with the world beyond their immediate circumstances (their families / communities or in lieu of both). CHOICE volunteers support them to leave their homes, take exercise, and engage with the services around them. Volunteers assist them to overcome disabling barriers and change their views of their own abilities.

Looking ahead, it's obvious that CHOICE has many challenges: with access to continued long-term funding for this project being one such challenge. CHOICE's Community Volunteer Officer role shall have an important part to play in managing this. Whilst CHOICE will do what it can to help procure funding for the project, we shall continue to deliver much-needed services to isolated disabled people in London on a smaller scale due to it being funded from CHOICE's shrinking reserves. As long as CHOICE has volunteers willing and able to contribute their time and energy, we will do what we can to make the most of that goodwill.

The Befriending Plus / Volunteer project supported the following people during the period: service users 91 (184 in 2021-22); and volunteers 93 (138 in 2021-22).

The following bar charts shows the statistical data for the project:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
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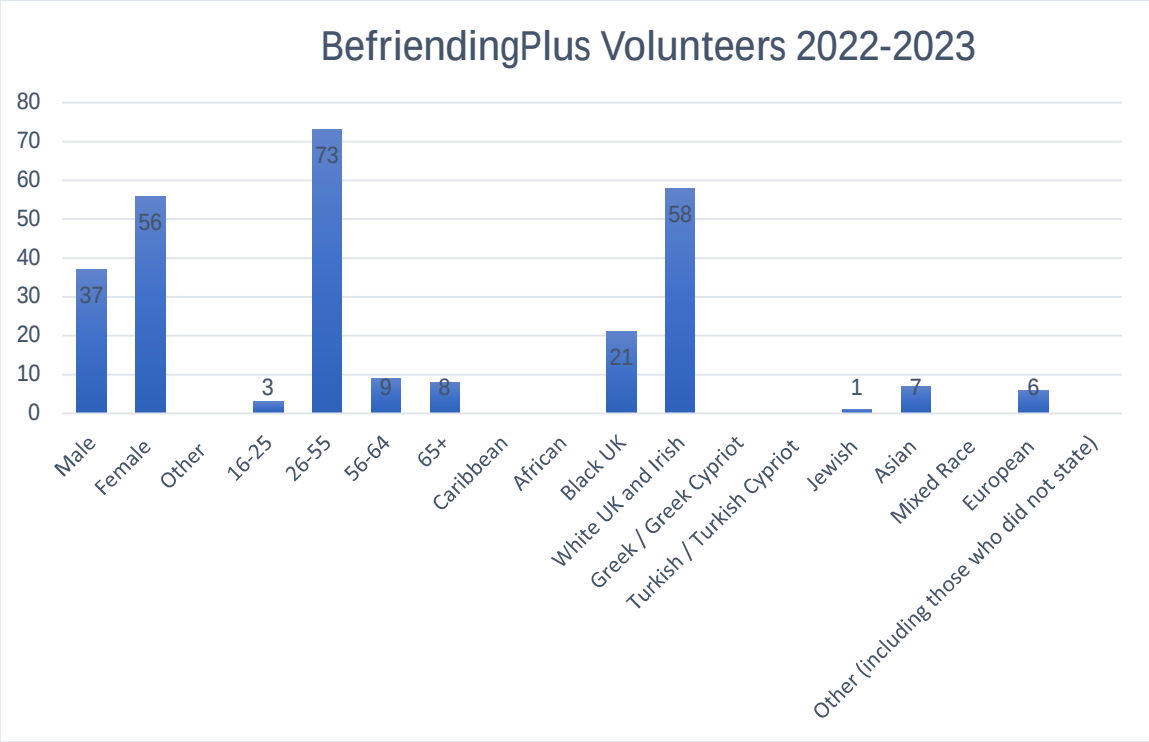
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) **Befriending Plus / Volunteer Project continued:**



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) **Disability Hate Crime:**

The organisation continues its role within a consortium funded by the Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime (MOPAC) entitled "Communities Against Hate" ("CATCH"). Thanks to the high standard of work delivered within the consortium, it is now in its seventh-year and has widened its network membership. Lead provider, "Galop" has successfully bid for a 2-year contract with the potential for an additional 2-year extension (4-years total).

The consortium works in partnership with a network of community organisations specialising in supporting people who have experienced a hate crime due to their protected characteristics i.e.: race / ethnicity, faith / religion, sexual orientation (including attacks based on homophobia and transphobia) and/or disability.

CATCH partners work to tackle hate crime, discrimination and abuse within their protected characteristic equality strands. Whilst we all have our own individual specialisms, network partners often come together to work inter-sectionally or make referrals to network organisations within the partnership. We also work very closely with the Metropolitan Police Service - the source of many referrals during the period.

There was an increased demand for the service during the period and thanks to funding from London Community Response Fund ("Wave 5"), we were pleased to be able employ another part-time Hate Crime Advocate to meet that demand for a limited period within the year.

CHOICE's Hate Crime Advocates will identify support needs of individuals and enable them to access other services and also:

- Assist with reporting incidents;
- Support individuals through criminal justice processes;
- Deliver outreach to communities impacted by hate crime to promote the service; and
- Share good practice internally within the partnership.

Our Hate Crime Advocates supported disabled people deal with the diverse negative impacts of being targets of disability hate crime. This includes coping mechanisms to deal with emotional stress / trauma, feeling socially excluded or isolated, having their homes taken over by criminal gangs (commonly known as "cuckooing"), and/or being financially or physically abused. The positive impact the service had on the individuals who accessed it is very encouraging; of those CHOICE received feedback from over the year:

- 100% were satisfied with the service;
- 69% experienced increased wellbeing;
- 85% had an increased ability to cope;
- 62% experienced feelings of safety;
- 94% felt more informed and empowered; and
- 95% felt supported around criminal justice.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

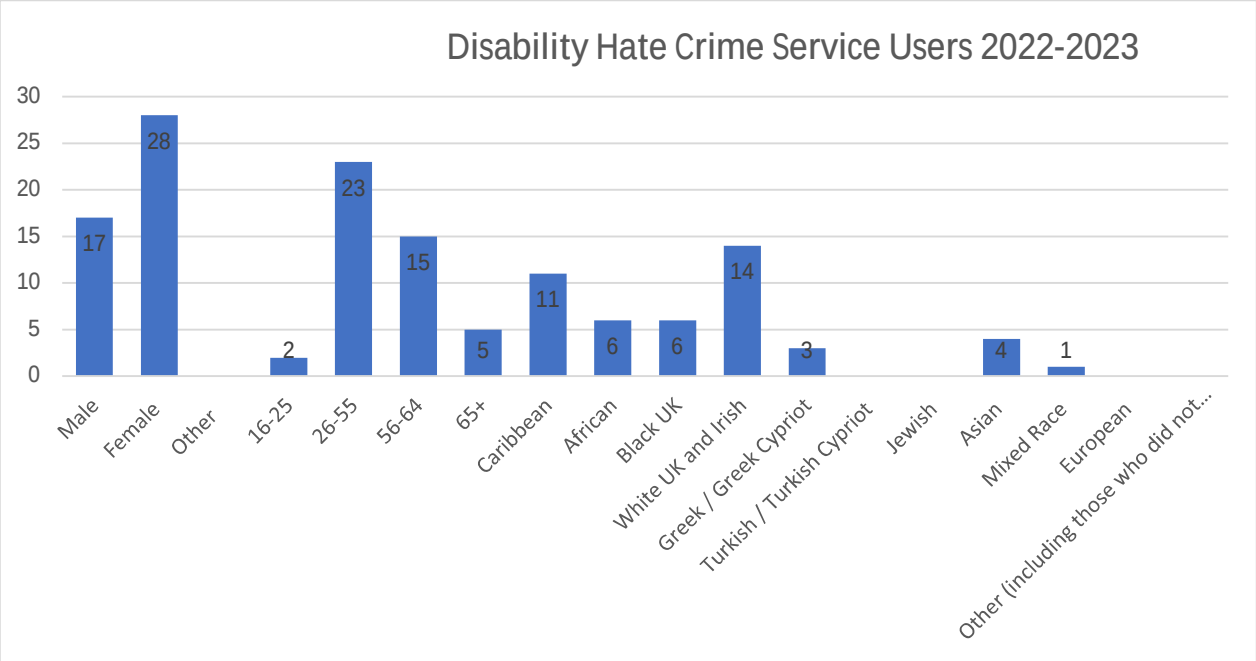
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) **Disability Hate Crime continued:**

Working in partnership with the disabled survivor, CHOICE's Hate Crime Advocates accompany them through the process of decision-making, safety planning, reporting, investigation and court. When such incidents were reported to the police they would work with CHOICE's service users to identify their needs, vulnerabilities and understand how they wished for the incident to be resolved. Where any additional support is identified (for example through social services), this was put into place and the worker could also provide accessible information about support from other agencies, including making internal referrals to CHOICE's Befriending service if social isolation was an issue.

It is concerning that the Home Office Official Statistics on Hate Crime in England & Wales during the year 2022-2023, notes there were approx. 40,000 hate crimes recorded in 2012-2013 however by 2022-2023 this had increased to just over 140,000. Disability Hate crimes recorded by the police in 2018-2019 amounted to 8,052 and by 2022-2023, it had jumped to 13,777[1]. This is a very worrying trend, which may be as a result of improvements made to supporting disabled survivors of hate crime due to organisations such as CHOICE working in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Service to facilitate better reporting or more chillingly that there is a general increase in hate crimes being directed towards disabled people.

During the year, CHOICE met the needs of 45 disabled people with their disability hate crime matters (39 in 2021-2022). The following bar chart presents data for the Hate Crime Project:



1 Source: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept:**

The Training & Employment Dept ("TED") provides disabled people with a fully accredited suite of training programmes made up of:

- Choices into Work training – 12-weeks classroom-based generic advocacy training followed by a 13-week work placement at CHOICE or host organisations, which was funded from our reserves during the period;
- Disability Hate Crime specialist training – 6-weeks classroom-based training followed by a 12-weeks work placement at CHOICE and host organisations;
- Disability & Domestic Violence specialist training – 6-weeks classroom-based training followed by a 12-weeks work placement at CHOICE and host organisations. Both specialist programmes received 3-years funding from Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales, which expired in February 2023.

Trainees from the above programmes can also engage in supplementary sessions of:

- a Job Club; Coaching and Confidence Building; and Mentoring schemes.

Further details of the above training programmes and supplementary sessions are shown below.

At the time of writing, Trustees are pleased to report that CHOICE's TED has been awarded three-year's funding from Henry Smith Charity – Improving Lives, which guarantees that CHOICE will be able to provide disabled people in Greater London the full complement of TED's training offer.

Choices into Work training:

This training programme is fully accredited and upon successful completion of all components (classroom-based element and the work placement), trainees are awarded a nationally recognised qualification (some for the first time) from CHOICE's accrediting body, Open College Network Credit 4 Learning.

CHOICE reverted back to delivering the training on a face-to-face venue-basis with the option of attending online via Zoom Video Conferencing for the few trainees who were unable to join in person. This facilitated direct and better engagement between peers (trainees and trainer), whilst also greatly reducing frustrations arising from technical issues.

Thanks to 26-weeks funding from South Hackney Parochial Charity in December 2022 CHOICE was able to enrol disabled residents of the South Hackney catchment area with a unique long-term opportunity to engage in peer-delivered general advocacy. Once enrolled, participants received a good working knowledge of the welfare/benefits system, the rights and entitlements of disabled people, advocacy and casework skills, and a work experience programme supported by extensive work coaching and mentoring support by disabled staff.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Choices into Work training continued:

CHOICE continues to offer a range of awards starting at Level 1 to Diploma Level 4, giving trainees real credibility and opening up new pathways for them as they embark on their new careers or take-up further education.

CHOICE is encouraged by trainee outcomes, which remained strong for the 34 trainees enrolled:

- 13 were supported into work (38%);
- 8 are undertaking voluntary work (23%); and
- 3 have enrolled into further- and higher-education (8%)

These figures represent an improvement on CHOICE's statistics, as there is 5% increase on average for facilitating trainees into work. When compared to the government's Restart Programme, which was launched in 2021 aimed at providing the long-term unemployed with 12-months of support at a cost £2.9 bn, CHOICE's success rates are much higher. The Restart Programme had a disappointingly low success rate of 7%[2], whereas CHOICE's Choices into Work programmes had a 38% success rate of securing jobs for unemployed disabled people over a significantly shorter period of time and for much less funding.

The remaining 31% of trainees are considering their options whilst also dealing with long-term illness, caring responsibilities or other urgent needs. CHOICE continues to engage with those unable to take up employment, education or volunteering.

In June 2022, CHOICE benefitted from an independent project evaluation report prepared by Consultant, Fiona Baird. This was a substantial piece of work that culminated in a glowing report of the Choices into Work programme that stated:

- *"Choices into Work continues to be the only peer-supported employment programme of its kind for disabled people in London. There is a high participant completion rate, and participants expressed high levels of satisfaction with it."*

At the time of writing, CHOICE is are pleased to have secured three-year's funding from Henry Smith Charity.

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2 Jayanetti, Chaminda "UK government's £2.9bn job search scheme has put only 7% of participants in work to date" The Guardian online, 5th June 2022) https://amp.theguardian.com/society/2022/jun/05/uk-governments-restart-scheme-fails-to-find-work-for-93-per-cent-of-people

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Choices into Work training continued:
During the period under review 34 people undertook the course (32 in 2021-2022).

Job Club:
This supplementary area of the Choices into Work project was funded from CHOICE reserves and South Hackney Parochial Charity.

Delivery model:
The sessions take the form of a seminar style presentation with discussion and role plays. Attendees were set assessments and received a great deal of feedback regarding their ongoing employment and self-development journeys.

Most of the delegates attended multiple online sessions and benefitted greatly from the sessions on a wide range of employment-related topics, delivered in an innovative and person-centred way. The sessions were guided by the attendees who requested specific sessions on networking, volunteering and self-employment opportunities. CHOICE encouraged its trainees to be involved in the sessions, reserving space specifically for trainee discussions of issues they have experienced. The opportunity to meet each other and benefit from each other's experiences was invaluable.

Topics:
These sessions benefited attendees immensely in an already deflated jobs market. In engaging and challenging sessions CHOICE has been able to deliver sessions on:

- confidence building;
- employment skills;
- disability issues in employment (including bullying and intersectionality);
- employment related benefits; and
- other key skills and techniques to finding and staying in work.

A total of 14 disabled people (32 in 2021-2022) engaged in Job Club sessions.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Coaching and confidence building:
CHOICE also delivered online one-to-one coaching sessions, which focussed on personal development and confidence building. This included preparing service users mentally and spiritually for finding and undertaking work. This involved challenging their own beliefs about themselves, and their capabilities. CHOICE was able to encourage self-reflection, a skills audit, and visualisation techniques to enable service users to plan for a future they wanted.

CHOICE's growing waiting list indicates that coaching is clearly a service disabled people want in their lives as the prospect of job hunting is very daunting when faced alone and without encouragement.

A total of 13 disabled people (22 in 2021-2022) engaged in coaching sessions during the period.

Outcomes:
The Choices into work suite of training programmes and supplementary sessions garnered some very impressive outcomes. In particular, over the 3-year period funded by Henry Smith Charity to June 2022:

- 92 (95.83%) of trainees demonstrated improved advocacy knowledge and skills, which raised their awareness;
- 94 (97.92%) of trainees reported improved confidence generally;
- 76 (79.17%) of trainees specifically indicated improved confidence looking for work;
- 62 (64.58%) of trainees demonstrated significant increased ability to advocate for themselves and others and could therefore better meet their needs; and
- 75 (78.13%) of trainees demonstrated a significantly improved understanding of disability and its context, allowing them to better manage their impairment(s).

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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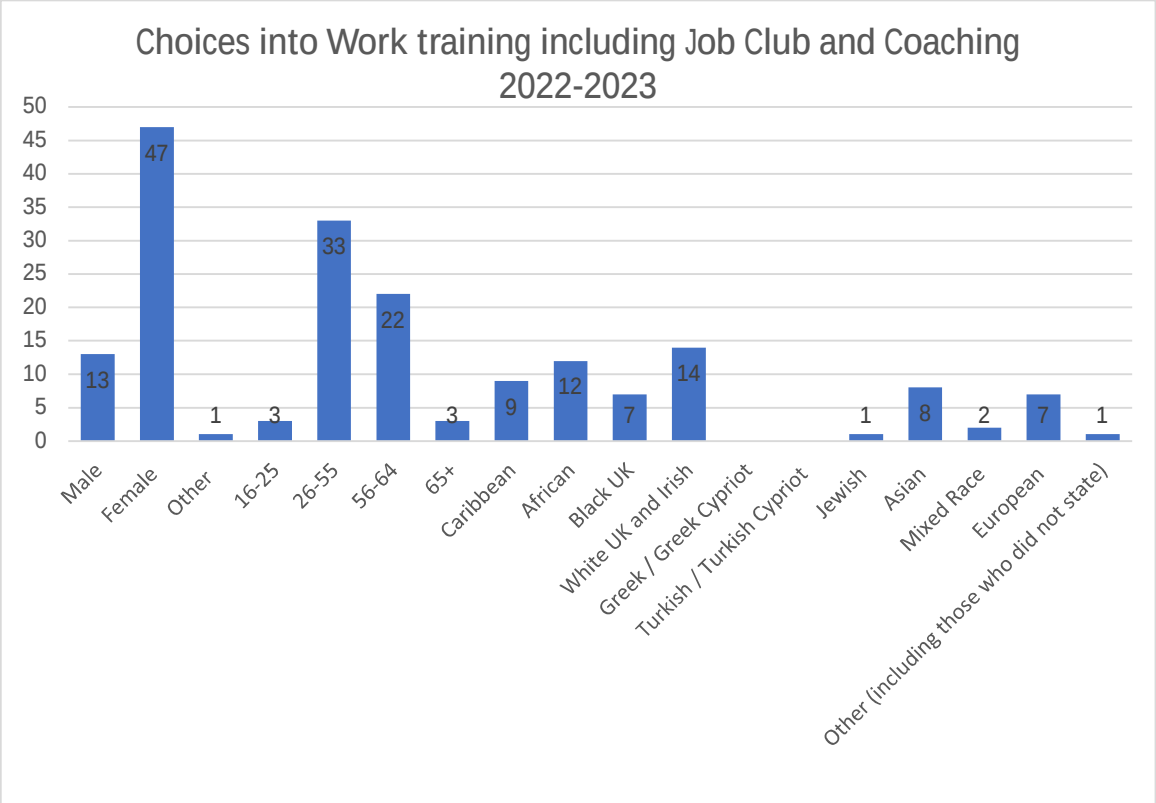
d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

A total of 61 trainees benefitted from the Choices into Work training programme, Job Club and Coaching sessions during the year as follows:

- Choices into Work trainees: 34 (32 in 2021-22)
- Job Club attendees: 14 (32 in 2021-22)
- Coaching trainees: 13 (22 in 2021-22)

The bar chart below shows trainee demographics:



Mentoring:

Thanks to funding secured during the year, CHOICE was able to offer trainees who successfully completed the classroom-based elements of the Choices into Work, Disability & Domestic Violence or Disability Hate Crime training courses the opportunity to take part in CHOICE's mentoring scheme. This is when they have the opportunity to put everything they learnt into practice as they familiarise themselves with the actual work of an Advocate during their work placement at CHOICE or one of CHOICE's host organisations.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Mentoring continued:

Trainees who undertook their work placement at CHOICE shadowed a fellow disabled Advocate who was employed as an experienced professional. They viewed the advocate's varied casework, understood how to apply the classroom-based elements of the course(s) to actual "live" cases and adopted the many difference approaches and disciplines that come with advocacy practice.

As with all areas of CHOICE's work, it continually evolves to meet the needs of CHOICE's service users; and the mentoring scheme is no exception. In addition to the work placement and shadowing, the Mentor also organised short online training sessions during the year on a number of issues that arose as part of their casework such as: Housing; The Care Act; Welfare Benefits; and client management.

All of the above was greatly received as it allowed trainees to enhance their learning and advocacy practice. At the time of writing, Trustees are pleased to confirm the mentoring scheme will continue into the next financial year, thanks to 3-year's funding from Henry Smith Charity.

7 trainees benefited from this work placement during the period (19 in 2021-2022) as shown by the bar chart below:

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Disability & Domestic Violence training:
Funding from Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales allowed us to run specialist training programmes during the year.

The course allowed disabled people to undertake specialist advocacy training accredited by the Open College Network Credit4Learning. The training is specialist because trainees are expected to come with some relevant experience or academic qualification (as the course is intensive).

Course content:
Each programme has 6-sessions designed to train a group of disabled people to become professional advocates, specialising in domestic violence. Training topics include:

- Introduction to domestic violence;
- Safety planning and risk assessments;
- Child protection processes;
- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC);
- Housing issues; and
- The civil and criminal courts.

The disability element made the course much more specialist as it is very rarely addressed – even within the disabled movement. This training therefore equipped trainees with the skills needed to better manage situations, bridge the gap within domestic violence and disability and examined in detail how the two can be related.

Availability of disability-related support services:
Over recent years, incidents of domestic violence had increased and so too had the demand for support services, particularly within mainstream organisations (which are often inaccessible for disabled people). As the disabled people CHOICE works with continue to face multiple barriers of discrimination in their lives, having these additional skills and knowledge assisted them to grow in confidence as they are now able to compete in the jobs market against non-disabled candidates.

Disabled trainees gained a great deal of experiences throughout the programme including:

- having access to a combination of support to increase their confidence;
- assisting them with requesting reasonable adjustments during their work placements;
- how to identify support available; and how to utilise it.

This also included making them aware that asking for support and making use of it is not a weakness.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

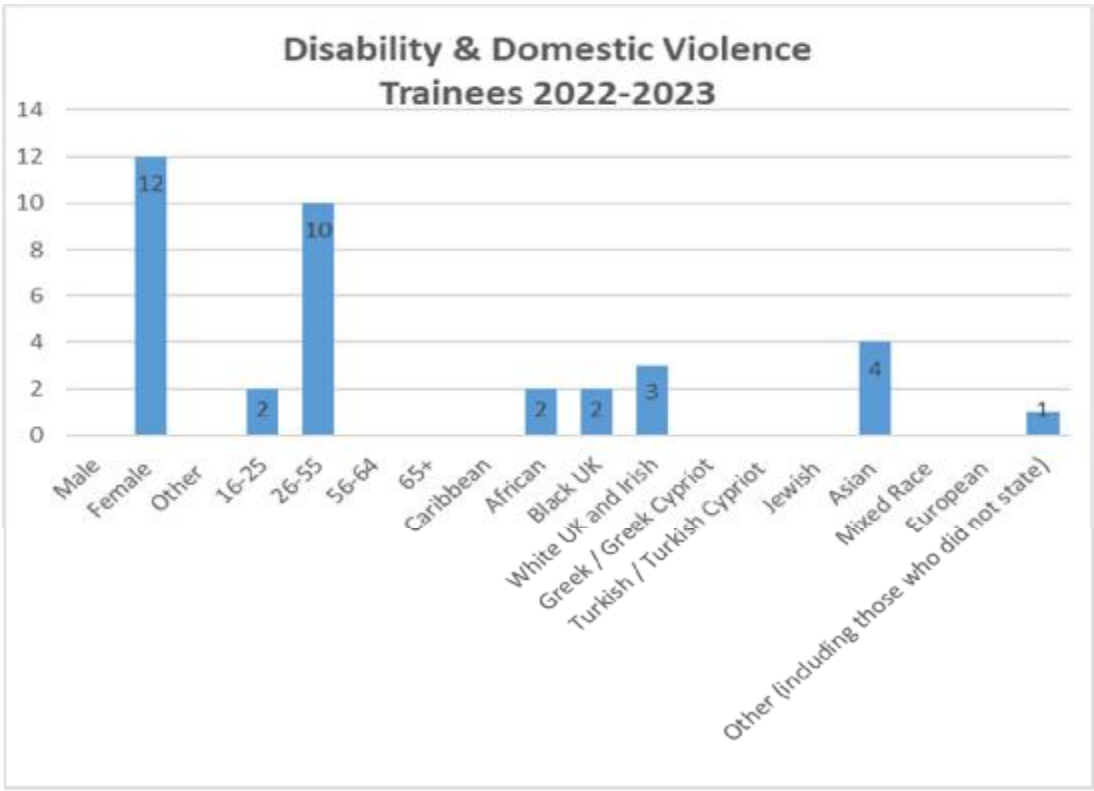
Disability & Domestic Violence training continued:
Successes during the year included:

- Six trainees obtaining employment as a direct result of the Disability & Domestic Violence course;

- Trainees having access to and utilising specific risk assessments that encompass particular risks to disabled survivors of domestic violence (and presenting them to colleagues in their places of work);

- Former trainees encouraging their non-disabled colleagues to gain a deeper understanding of the risks faced by some of their clients that were previously not addressed within their mainstream domestic violence organisations.

12 people undertook the Disability & Domestic Violence course in the year over 2-programmes (16 in 2021-2022). The following bar charts presents statistical data for the Disability & Domestic Violence trainees:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Disability Hate Crime training programme:
This specialist training programme was also funded by Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales. It allowed us to recruit and engage disabled people to undertake accredited disability-related training not carried out anywhere else in the UK. Trainees gained knowledge and experience firstly through 6-hybrid training sessions (with some being delivered on a face-to-face basis and others online via Zoom Video Conferencing). This was followed by a minimum of 12-weeks work placement at CHOICE and other host organisations, to advocate for themselves and disabled survivors of hate crime.

Casework:
This specialist knowledge was used to carry out casework, which included the following areas from the course:

- Representing clients in multi-agency meetings;
- Carrying out risk assessments;
- Safeguarding;
- Care Act assessments;
- Trauma-based approach;
- Complaints to agencies such as the police and housing;
- The roles of the different agencies and bodies i.e. Housing, anti-social behaviour teams;
- Supporting people through the criminal justice system – including reporting to the police and going to court.

Successes:
There were many breakthroughs and successes for CHOICE our trainees during the year including:

- The Disability & Hate Crime Trainer supporting a trainee who advocates on a freelance basis for disabled survivors of domestic violence. The trainee attended remote sessions where she was able to discuss her cases and share experiences with both the trainer and past trainees who had progressed to working or volunteering in the advocacy field;

- Five of the six participants expressed they were better equipped to support disabled survivors of hate crime in their current roles (i.e. within their paid employment in mainstream organisations or volunteering roles);

- Three trainees who completed the course told us they experienced hate crime themselves, however because of undertaking the course, they had developed the confidence and skills to effectively advocate for themselves and others;

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Disability Hate Crime training programme continued:

Successes continued:

- A trainee who had been unable to leave her house for years due to changes in her physical health, attended an in-person Hate Crime session. After successfully completing the course, she informed us she wanted to use her newly acquired skills, knowledge and passion to advocate for disabled survivors of hate crime.

- Another trainee had significant mental health issues, making it difficult for her to study or enter long-term employment. She struggled with an extreme lack of confidence and thought she would be unable to complete the coursework. With a lot of encouragement and by making reasonable adjustments, she was able to successfully complete the course and sourced a work placement that will assist her to achieve her employment goal.

- Trainees who obtained well-paid employment will continue to be supported by us to ensure they retain their jobs and guarantee sustainability.

- All trainees stated the work placements assisted them to gain invaluable experience of the world of work in an office environment, where they learnt about work ethics, dress-codes, team playing etc., which all contributed to upskilling them or enhancing their resumés. This also gave them the opportunity to begin to understand and request reasonable adjustments.

- Additionally, trainees benefited from being able to receive references via their work placement, which they would not have otherwise received due to prolonged absences from work.

At least 75% of all trainees across both specialist training programmes (Disability & Domestic Violence and Disability Hate Crime) expressed they felt more confident working with disabled survivors of hate crime or domestic violence as a direct result of undertaking either of the training programmes and a work placement.

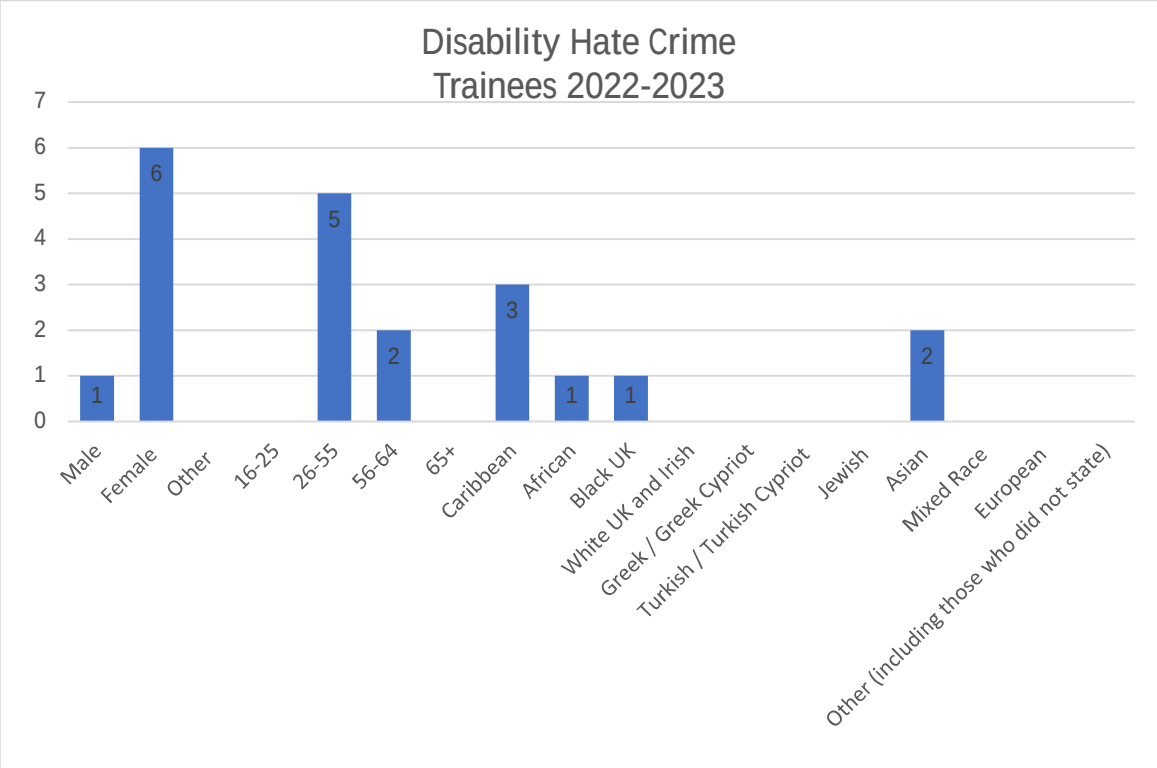
CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Disability Hate Crime training programme continued:

The following bar chart presents the statistical data for CHOICE's second intake of 7 Disability Hate Crime trainees (8 in 2021-2022):



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

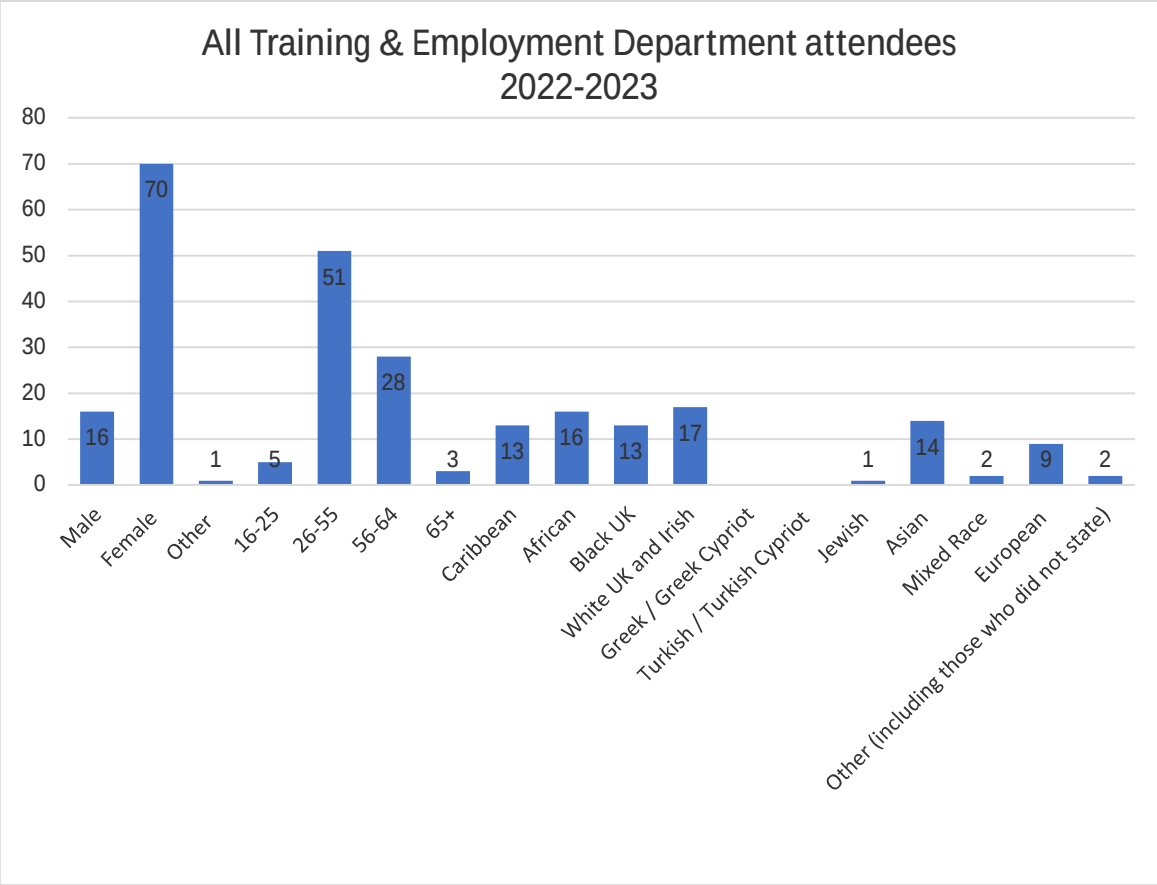
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

During the period under review the Training & Employment Dept carried out the following:

- 3 Choices into Work programmes, engaging 34-trainees;
- 2 Disability & Domestic Violence programmes, engaging 12-trainees;
- 1 Disability Hate Crime programme, engaging 7-trainees; plus
- Coaching (13-trainees), Mentoring (7-trainees) and a Job Club (14-trainees).

A total of 87 individuals benefited from the services available within the Training & Employment Dept (147 in 2021-2022). Trainees' statistical data is shown below:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **New developments:**
CHOICE is continually developing and introducing new ways to enhance its service offer. Trustees are pleased to report the following achievements, which lay testimony to this:

1. **Effective data capture:**
Prior to receiving part-funding from the Sylvia Waddilove Foundation UK (part of Pothecary Witham Weld Solicitors) in the 2021-22 financial year, the organisation stored and recalled data using various methods including Access, Excel and Word. With no uniform database, using the data in an effective way became cumbersome and time-consuming. CHOICE has now streamlined all of CHOICE's data into one Client Relationship Management (CRM) system, Charity Log.

The CRM allows us to:

- Build on the quality of the services CHOICE provides to its beneficiaries and their customer satisfaction levels;
- Effectively map each beneficiaries' journey;
- Quickly fill any identified gaps and develop efficient marketing strategies to attract more beneficiaries from hard-to-reach areas;
- Recall data across different activities, produce reports, successfully monitor service take-up/delivery and avoid duplication of time and data.

The above areas supports us with:

- Case and time-management – beneficiaries are quickly processed from referral stage to case closure with key dates being recorded and reminders set, reducing paperwork and missed appointments;

- Monitoring and evaluation – all data is analysed qualitatively to ensure beneficiaries' needs are met, they have satisfactory outcomes and to measure the impact the services have had on them. Quantitatively, to reach out to more people.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **New developments continued:**

1. **Effective data capture continued:**

After CHOICE's staff team undertook training sessions in groups and on a one-to-one basis, there have already been noticeable improvements to them being able to quickly access data with increased efficiency, saving time and avoiding duplicate requests for information from beneficiaries.

As information is saved in one location, data is securely stored and actioned appropriately. Reports can also be created to analyse service delivery, satisfaction and identify unmet needs. This will allow CHOICE to accurately record and target donors who can support us grow and become more sustainable.

2. **Monitoring & Evaluation of services:**

The Board of Trustees had requested improvements be made to how CHOICE monitors and evaluates services, particularly in light of the recent purchase of the CRM database, Charity Log, which will be utilised to support us with this task.

The consultant, Jason Pollard of Community Impact CIC was engaged to work in partnership with us to develop:

- a set of working impact outcomes and measurement indicators that capture the aims and objectives of each service;
- evaluation methods for each service; and
- CHOICE IN HACKNEY's evaluation strategy for 2023-24.

The three types of data CHOICE will get from its services are:

- Data on deliverables (the outputs);
- Engagement data (satisfaction surveys etc); and
- Impact (what difference did the service make).

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **New developments continued:**

2. **Monitoring & Evaluation of services continued:**
The approach developed here is to align impact reporting to a set of outcome measures and bring all three data types into a single reporting framework. Jason found CHOICE's existing seven **outcomes** are as outlined within the draft Outcomes Framework he prepared below:

All of CHOICE's services can 'fit' into one or more of the above seven outcomes reflecting the areas services expect to have an impact. These are described below as impact outcomes for each of CHOICE's services:

Advocacy:
Increased 'Awareness/rights' of services available as service users are informed/guided to make decisions and obtain their rights.
'Voice and empowerment': to speak up/challenge decisions.
'(being part of a) Community': having equality to access support/services.
'Independent Living': as service user remains safely in their home, making decisions and taking control of their day-to-day lives including accessing financial support.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **New developments continued:**

2. **Monitoring & Evaluation of services continued:**

Befriending Plus / Volunteer & Active Lifestyle:
'Reduced Isolation' through 'Community Participation': attending social events and forming new relationships.
'Improved Wellbeing' will occur as service users manage anxiety/stress, improve their quality of life/physical fitness and self-reflect to overcome beliefs about themselves.

Training & Employment Dept:
Employability & Skills: results in 'Increased Confidence' to enter the workforce as mentoring and coaching offered provides confidence to use workplace skills in practice. This will also result in increased job-retention.

Good progress has been made in finalising this work to ensure the CRM, Charity Log and all engagement data aligns with CHOICE's aim of capturing the impact its services are having on service users. This has involved Jason, Trustees, the Chief Executive Officer and the wider staff team joining workshops.

CHOICE looks forward to providing an update on this work in the next financial year's report.

3. **Business Planning**:

Thanks to funder, Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales' Enhance programme, CHOICE received consultancy support to develop CHOICE's Strategic Plan with consultant, Hilary Barnard.

As a Disabled People's User-Led Organisation, CHOICE welcomes user involvement from amongst the disabled people it supports at every level of the organisation. CHOICE was very pleased to have engaged the Board, Chief Executive Officer, staff, volunteers, service users and other stakeholders in a series of workshops where they could add their valuable contributions to the development of CHOICE's strategic plan for the next 5-years.

Some of the areas stakeholders worked on included:

- Updating CHOICE's Vision, Values and Strategic Aims; and

- Adding a "Definition of Disabled People".

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **New developments continued:**

3. **Business Planning continued:**
The Board was particularly pleased to have all made significant contributions to the plan. CHOICE is pleased to report that at the time of writing, CHOICE's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan has been finalised and available for perusal upon request.

4. **New premises:**

CHOICE has been located at its existing premises within New City College's Hackney Campus (NCC) since 2010-11, having previously occupied office space within St Leonard's Hospital courtesy of Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (The Trust).

The Trust however surrendered its Lease with NCC on 31st August 2017 to re-locate elsewhere.

As with many organisations, COVID-19 negatively impacted CHOICE's finances to the extent that the Charity was forced to reduce our office space by giving up a meeting room to cut down on costs. This was particularly difficult and forced us to limit staff teams to only attending the office on specific days in order to accommodate social-distancing and client-confidentiality.

As a disability-related organisation, CHOICE prides itself on meeting the access needs of its disabled service users, staff, Trustees and volunteers. However, NCC came to the decision post-pandemic that it could no longer allow us access through the Hoxton Street entrance. This meant CHOICE staff and visitors had to enter and exit the campus via the Falkirk Street entrance (along NCC's staff and student population). This included a signing in and out process that was inaccessible for those who are visually impaired; there was also a long walk (about 100 metres) from the entrance to the CHOICE office across a busy courtyard, which was often teaming with students and difficult for disabled people to navigate. These were only some of the issues.

Unfortunately, despite negotiations, CHOICE had to accept the only way to resolve this situation was to move premises.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **New developments continued:**

4. **New premises continued:**

After years of talks and negotiations, Trustees are pleased to announce CHOICE has secured new accessible offices within the London Borough of Hackney that meets its needs. CHOICE will be joining other voluntary and community sector organisations in January 2024 within a newly refurbished hub based on the ground floor of the Marie Lloyd Day Centre on Queensbridge Road. The new venue is well served by public transport with Overground stations and buses stopping nearby.

Photo of the Marie Lloyd Day Centre at 329 Queensbridge Road, E8 3LA on the corner of Jacaranda Grove.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **New developments continued:**

5. **New Project:**

Thanks to funding received from City Bridge Trust, the funding arm of The City of London Corporation's charity, Bridge House Estates (1035628), CHOICE was awarded 5-year's funding towards its **Information, Guidance & Advocacy (IGA) service**.

CHOICE's experienced IGA Officer has been in post since June 2023 and trains volunteers to jointly provide the service virtually/in person through partnership working with disabled people supporting with:

- Breaking down information that someone with i.e. learning difficulties has received: explaining/ensuring they understand the content, provide solutions, meet deadlines and support to make informed decisions.

- Form-filling for essential disability-related items i.e. washing machine for a disabled person who is incontinent/on low income.

- Provision of information via text etc to promote and increase uptake of needed services and to encourage users to make cost-savings from providers with workers negotiating on their behalf for favourable terms.

- Provide non-statutory advocacy.

The IGA project will allow us to meet CHOICE's aim of supporting disabled people in a holistic way and complement existing service provision. For example, supporting a disabled person to maximise their income with a successful welfare benefit claim or making an application for accessible transport with its form-filling service.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

f) **Funders:**
In the year under review, CHOICE received funding from:

1. Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust – to provide health advocacy to disabled residents of Hackney and the City of London aged 18 plus.

2. London Borough of Hackney via The Advocacy Project (TAP) to provide:
   i) non-statutory advocacy service to disabled and vulnerable Hackney adults who are known to Adult Social Care teams, un-befriended, unable to speak up for themselves and require support with a specific advocacy issue; and

   ii) statutory advocacy service to disabled Hackney residents who have care/support needs, substantial difficulty in being involved in the relevant processes and have no appropriate unpaid individual to support them.

3. Henry Smith Charity Improving Lives – part-funding towards the Choices into Work project (part of the Training & Employment Dept), which provides classroom-based advocacy training, work placements and job search skills. Additional coaching support is also funded.

4. South Hackney Parochial Charity – towards the Choices into Work project which provides classroom-based advocacy training, work placements, job search skills and coaching for disabled people within the funder's catchment area.

5. Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales - to provide specialist accredited training in hate crime and/or disability and domestic violence with extended work placements allowing trainees to gain in-depth knowledge of their chosen specialism.

6. Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime – to provide disability hate crime advocacy to disabled people who live or work in Hackney and surrounding boroughs as part of the Communities Against Hate (CATCH) consortium.

7. London Community Response Fund (Wave 5) – for a contribution towards core costs and the provision of Hate Crime services.

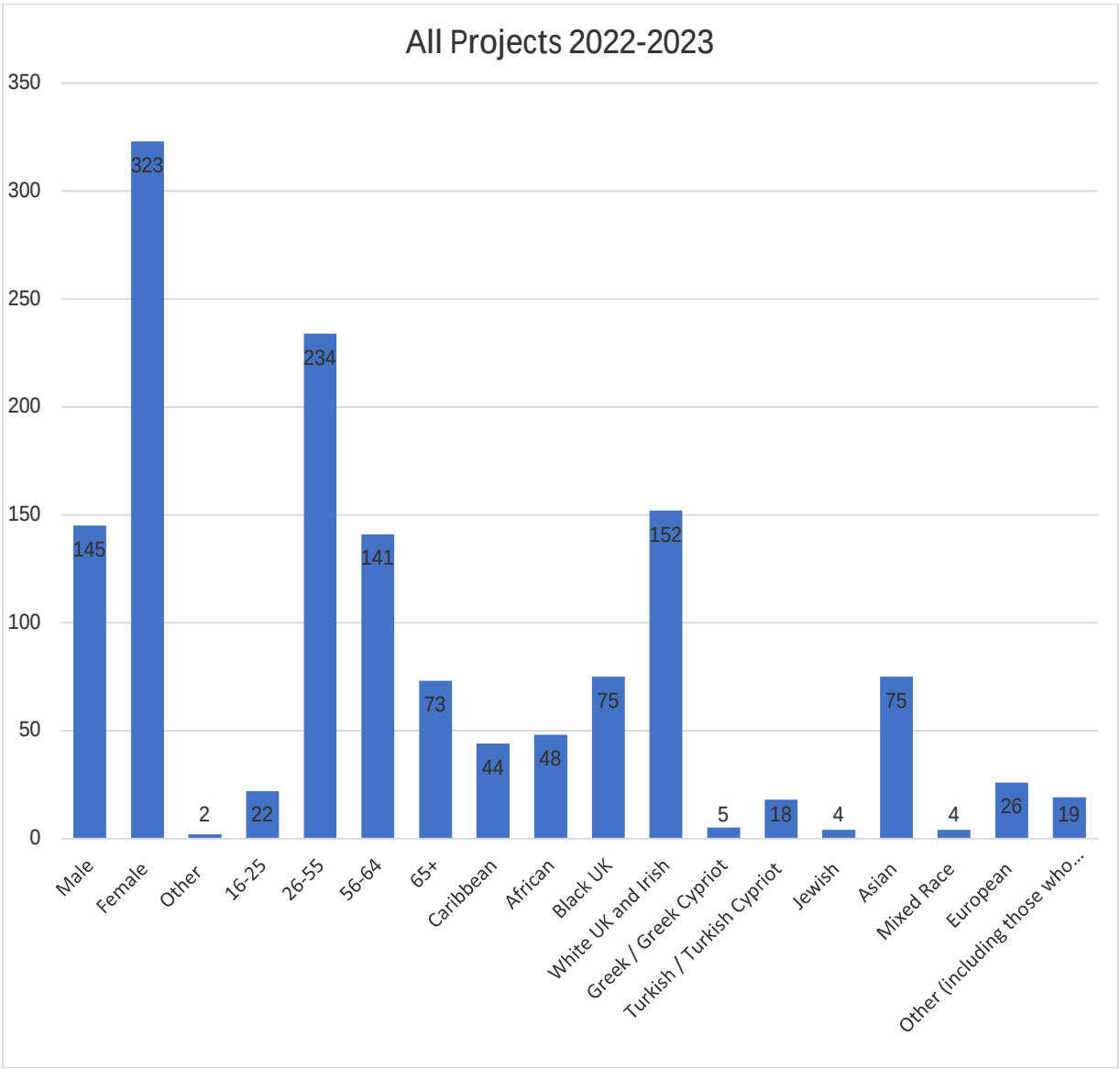
8. G&E Pollitzer Charitable Settlement – as a contribution towards CHOICE's core costs.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

g) **Funders continued:**

The level of funding in the year allowed CHOICE to support a total of 470 people (716 in 2021-2022). This is lower than in the previous financial year due some projects (Active Lifestyle, Befriending Plus / Volunteer, Choices into Work) being unfunded for some or all of the year under review. As a consequence, only a limited service was offered and funded through CHOICE reserves in order to continue to support disabled people who are in the most need. Service user demographics for all projects is as follows:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

f) **Partnership Working:**

Partnership working allows us to reach out to more disabled people. CHOICE aims to raise awareness of the services it provides within an expanded community. This will secure the rights of disabled people as full citizens, improve their quality of life and promote an inclusive society where disabled people can participate fully and equally. CHOICE is pleased to continually expand and strengthen the network of organisations who are open to reciprocal working, which encourages sharing a lived experience of disability, knowledge, training opportunities, services, a loyal customer base as well as joining together to strengthen consortium-based funding applications. CHOICE's network of organisations includes, but not limited to:

1. Alliance for Inclusive Education ("ALLFIE") – have provided us with co-training opportunities to schools on the needs of children and young adults who attend special educational needs (SEND) establishments;

2. Communities Against Hate ("CATCH") – this consortium led by the Gay London Police Monitoring Group ("GALOP") regularly make referrals into CHOICE's disability hate Crime service. CHOICE also carries out joint-working with partner organisations Real based in Tower Hamlets and Stay Safe East;

3. Disability Action in Haringey and Islington – co-hosted an event with CHOICE across three London boroughs (Hackney, Haringey and Islington), to mark the United Nations' International Day of Disabled People in 2022. CHOICE, disability-related partners and local councillors came together to mark the day with presentations on our work and achievements within the community. Their staff were invited to undertake the "Choices into Work" training course and they reciprocated by inviting us to join partnership bids;

4. Hackney Employment Hub – this organisation has provided us with both accessible training venues in the past for the classroom-based element of the Choices into Work project and trainees wanting to upskill and improve their employment prospects by undertaking the course;

5. Inclusion London – this pan-London disability-related organisation provides CHOICE with a range of training programmes to build our skills, knowledge and sustainability. CHOICE engages in funding bids and respond to requests for support in their policy work. More recently, CHOICE joined a consortium made up of disabled people's organisations to improve CHOICE's communications strategies by reframing disability-related narratives.

6. The Advocacy Project (TAP) – as the previous lead organisation for both statutory and non-statutory advocacy, which is funded by London Borough of Hackney, TAP regularly made referrals into the service and offered CHOICE advocates training opportunities throughout the year.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Financial Review:
The COVID-19 pandemic seems to be over and the charity's operations are returning to a more typical cycle of activity. For all the challenges it brought, it has left us a stronger and better positioned organisation. The results of the year's operations are set out in the attached Financial Statements.

Total incoming resources amounted to £341,417 (2022: £271,871) and total resources expended were £229,753 (2022: £220,111). This resulted in a surplus on the year of £111,664 (2022: £51,760). There was a deficit for the year on the unrestricted funds of £46,042 (2022: surplus £53,217). The majority of the Restricted Funds held at the end of the previous year were expended on the projects for which they were intended as set out in Note 12 of the financial statements. Further restricted funds have been raised for ongoing activities and there was a surplus on the year of £157,706 (2022: deficit £1,457).

Risk:
Last year, CHOICE reported that over-reliance on the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was the most significant risk the charity faced. Steps have been taken to reduce this reliance and to provide administrative support to the CEO. These have been successful and CHOICE is looking to develop and recruit staff to take on the management of specific day-to-day operations in order to allow the CEO to concentrate on the management of the whole organisation.

In past years CHOICE also noted the dependence on securing income for the short-term support of activities was a significant challenge. In the year under review CHOICE, as noted above, secured some multi-year funding for projects. Thus there has been successful mitigation of these two risks.

The Board of Trustees are continuing to make use of grant-funded consultants to identify structural changes to increase the capacity for organisational and service growth so the charity can maintain sufficient funding to provide for the needs of its service users.

The charity was successful through the pandemic in part through the increased use of Information Communications Technology, which enabled work to continue. Many of these changes are here to stay: CHOICE is for example moving away from paper records. In consequence, the risks of cyber-attack and the need for electronic data security have increased. The Trustees believe that reasonable data security measures are in place but continue to examine further steps to enhance protections.

CHOICE remains committed to the ideals of a Disabled People's User-Led Organisation ("DPULO"). As noted previously, this presents its own risks in a period of financial austerity. CHOICE continues to adapt business models and funding bids to articulate the added value created by employment of disabled staff. CHOICE will work with others such as Inclusion London, to campaign for Access to Work to cover full costs.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

Reserves Policy:
The Charity sets aside funds, as unrestricted reserves, to meet future anticipated or contingent expenditure, in particular to cover staffing costs such as sickness, redundancy, to develop new activities and to ensure the continuity of services through difficult financial periods. The Board of Trustees, after review, decided that the Charity should aim for a level of the "free reserves", of between 3 and 9 months recurrent expenditure, which equates to approximately £58,000 - £175,000.

As in previous years CHOICE made use of Reserves to maintain existing and to develop new services. CHOICE continued to develop new services and, as described elsewhere in the report, attracted new long term funding to support these activities. As a result, the tangible assets ("free reserves") have decreased and at the year-end were marginally below the desired level and amounted to £47,615 (2022: £93,657).

GOING CONCERN
The Trustees actively foster relations with existing funders and seek additional funding sources emphasising the value for money in terms of historic costs per service user outcome. Although the level of 'free reserves' has fallen over the year as noted above some multi-year funding has been secured and as a result the restricted reserve has significantly increased. In consequence, the Trustees are of the opinion that the Charity will be able to continue as a going concern into 2026 and beyond.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees (who are also the directors of Choice in Hackney 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), including Financial Reporting Standard 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland".

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 information of which the charitable company's examiners are unaware; and
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant information and to establish that the examiners are aware of that information.

The independent examiner, Knox Cropper LLP, 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.

APPROVAL

This report was approved by the Board of Directors and Trustees on 13th December 2023 and signed on their behalf by:

.....
Andrew Price (Vice Chair)

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

TO THE MEMBERS OF CHOICE IN HACKNEY

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Choice in Hackney for the period ended 31 March 2023.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charitable company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act'). You are satisfied that the accounts of the Company are not required by charity or company law to be audited and have chosen instead to have an independent examination.

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the Company's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since the Company's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I can confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a registered member of ICAEW which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Richard Billinghurst
Knox Cropper LLP
Chartered Accountants
65-68 Leadenhall Street, London, EC3A 2AD

Date: 14/12/2023

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
(INCORPORATING THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

	Notes	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2022 £
INCOME FROM:							
Grants and donations	2(a)	266,313	10,806	277,119	140,622	61,808	202,430
Charitable activities	2(b)	-	64,165	64,165	-	68,485	68,485
Investments		-	118	118	-	7	7
Other income		-	15	15	-	949	949
Total		266,313	75,104	341,417	140,622	131,249	271,871
EXPENDITURE ON:							
Raising funds	3	-	9,581	9,581	-	6,630	6,630
Charitable activities	3	106,607	113,565	220,172	142,079	71,402	213,481
Total		106,607	123,146	229,753	142,079	78,032	220,111
Net income/(expenditure)		159,706	(48,042)	111,664	(1,457)	53,217	51,760
Transfers between funds		(2,000)	2,000	-	-	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		157,706	(46,042)	111,664	(1,457)	53,217	51,760
Balances brought forward at 1 April		39,193	93,657	132,850	40,650	40,440	81,090
BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31 MARCH		196,899	47,615	244,514	39,193	93,657	132,850

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31st MARCH 2023

	Notes	2023		2022	
		£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible Assets	7		-		-
Intangible Assets	8		4,170		-
			4,170		-
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	9	188,548		60,460	
Cash at Bank and in hand		62,512		85,933	
		251,060		146,393	
CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year	10	(10,716)		(13,543)	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			240,344		132,850
NET ASSETS			244,514		132,850
FUNDS					
Restricted Funds	12		196,899		39,193
Unrestricted Funds					
Designated Funds			-		-
General Fund	11		47,615		93,657
			244,514		132,850

The Company is exempt from the requirements relating to preparing audited accounts in accordance with Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006. The members have not required the Company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for:

a) ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and;

b) preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of each financial year and of its profit or loss for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the company.

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 13th December 2023 and signed on behalf of the board

Vice-Chair: Andrew Price

Treasurer: Malcolm Aickin

Registered Company Number: 03423122
Registered Charity Number: 1077287

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

a. Basis of Preparation of Accounts

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), 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.

The presentation currency of the financial statements is Pound Sterling (£).

b. Company Status

CHOICE IN HACKNEY is a company limited by guarantee. In the event of the Charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the Charity.

c. Fund Accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the objects of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements. Statutory grants which are given as contributions towards the Charity's core services are treated as unrestricted.

d. Incoming resources

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.

e. Resources expended

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been included under expenses categories that aggregate all costs for allocation to activities. Governance costs include the costs of servicing meetings of the Board of Trustees, audit and strategic planning.

f. Tangible and Intangible Fixed Assets and Depreciation

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the costs of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on:
Furniture/Fittings: 25% straight line basis
Office Equipment: 25% straight line basis

Intangible assets are stated at cost less amortisation. Assets are amortised once brought into use. Amortisation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost less estimated residual value of each asset over its expected useful life, as follows:
CRM system: 20% straight line basis

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

g. **Allocation of Overhead and Support Costs**
Overhead and support costs have been allocated between charitable activities and other expenditure on the basis of staff time. The allocation of overhead and support costs is analysed in note 3.

h. **Operating Leases**
Rentals payable under operating leases are charged to the statement of financial activities as they fall due over the term of the lease.

2(a). **INCOMING RESOURCES FROM GENERATED FUNDS**
- **Grants received**

	Restricted Funds £	2023 Un-Restricted Funds £	Total £	2022 Total £
The Henry Smith Charity	209,900	-	209,900	69,100
Lloyds Bank Foundation	24,800	2,250	27,050	24,800
CATCH Mobilisation	22,500	-	22,500	22,352
South Hackney Parochial	9,113	-	9,113	4,000
Hackney Parochial Charities	-	-	-	5,580
London Community Response Fund	-	-	-	49,549
City & Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group	-	-	-	14,787
Inclusion London	-	2,875	2,875	-
Hackney Council FO	-	225	225	-
Alliance for Inclusive Education		300	300	
Other income and Donations	-	5,156	5,156	3,735
DWP Resource Management	-	-	-	8,527
	266,313	10,806	277,119	202,430

2(b). **INCOMING RESOURCES FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES**
- Contracts for services and performance related grants

	Restricted Funds £	2023 Un-Restricted Funds £	Total £	2022 Total £
Homerton University Hospital – Advocacy	-	47,431	47,431	46,481
The Advocacy Project – Advocacy LB of Waltham Forest	-	16,734	16,734	22,004
	-	64,165	64,165	68,485

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

3. ANALYSIS OF RESOURCES EXPENDED

	Raising Funds	Charitable Activities	Total 2023	Total 2022
Unrestricted	£	£	£	£
Staff costs	9,581	86,233	95,814	66,298
Staff training	-	269	269	-
Accountancy	-	926	926	783
Independent examination fee	-	1,220	1,220	575
Rent		7,193	7,193	4,500
Other Costs	-	15,979	15,979	5,504
Legal & Professional Fees	-	1,745	1,745	372
	9,581	113,565	123,146	78,032
Restricted				
Staff costs	-	82,860	82,860	107,235
Staff training	-	150	150	90
Accountancy	-	1,630	1,630	1,748
Auditors Remuneration	-	1,630	1,630	1,675
Rent	-	13,550	13,550	13,811
Other Costs	-	5,442	5,442	14,945
Legal & Professional Fees	-	1,345	1,345	2,575
	-	106,607	106,607	142,079
	9,581	220,172	229,753	220,111

Staff costs have been allocated to the above expenditure heads on the basis of estimated staff time spent on the activities. Support costs and governance costs are included in the above analysis. Governance costs amounted to £18,000 (2022: £18,000).

4. STAFF NUMBERS AND COSTS

	2023 £	2022 £
Salaries	167,578	162,307
Social security costs	7,786	8,142
Employer pension	3,310	3,084
Redundancy costs	-	-
	178,674	173,533

The average number of employees during the year was 10 (2022:9).
No employee earned more than £60,000 during the year under review (2022: none).
The remuneration of senior management amounted to £51,379 (2022: £51,063).

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

5. TRUSTEES REMUNERATION

During the year, Trustees received reimbursement of expenses amounting to NIL (2021: NIL).

No trustee received any remuneration other than disclosed in these accounts.

6. TAXATION

CHOICE is a registered charity and is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income and capital gains received to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

7. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Furniture £	Office Equipment £	Total £
Cost			
At 1st April 2022	2,316	23,964	26,280
Additions	-	-	-
At 31st March 2023	-	-	-
Depreciation			
At 1st April 2022	2,316	23,964	26,280
Charged for the year	-	-	-
At 31st March 2023	-	-	-
Net Book Value			
At 31st March 2023	-	-	-
At 31st March 2022	-	-	-

8. INTANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	CRM System £
Cost	
At 1st April 2022	-
Additions	4,812
At 31st March 2023	4,812
Depreciation	
At 1st April 2022	-
Charged for the year	642
At 31st March 2023	642
Net Book Value	
At 31st March 2023	4,170
At 31st March 2022	-

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

9. **DEBTORS**

	2023 £	2022 £
Grant debtors	10,168	42,082
Prepayments and other debtors	3,480	18,378
Accrued income	174,900	-
	188,548	60,460

10. **CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within this year**

PAYE	3,160	4,912
Accruals and other creditors	7,556	8,631
	10,716	13,543

11. **UNRESTRICTED FUNDS**

	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
General Fund	93,657	75,104	(123,146)	2,000	47,615
Total Unrestricted Funds	93,657	75,104	(123,146)	2,000	47,615

PRIOR YEAR	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
General Fund	40,440	131,249	(78,032)	-	93,657
Total Unrestricted Funds	40,440	131,249	(78,032)	-	93,657

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

12. **RESTRICTED FUNDS**

	Brought Forward	Incoming Resources	Resources Expended	Transfers	Carried Forward
	£	£	£	£	£
Disability LIB	499	-	-	-	499
Advocacy, Training and Employment	36,694	243,813	(84,107)	-	196,400
Hate Crime	-	22,500	(22,500)	-	-
CRM System Project	2,000	-	-	(2,000)	-
Active Lifestyle	-	-	-	-	-
Total Restricted Funds	39,193	266,313	(106,607)	(2,000)	196,899

PRIOR YEAR	Brought Forward	Incoming Resources	Resources Expended	Transfers	Carried Forward
	£	£	£	£	£
Disability LIB	499	-	-	-	499
Advocacy, Training and Employment	40,151	93,900	(97,357)	-	36,694
Hate Crime	-	22,352	(22,352)	-	-
CRM System Project	-	2,000	-		2,000
Active Lifestyle	-	22,370	(22,370)	-	-
Total Restricted Funds	40,650	140,622	(142,079)	-	39,193

Transfer – the transfer to unrestricted fund represents restricted costs capitalised during the financial year.

Disability LIB – this was a one-off grant from Disability LIB towards disabled people's communication support, such as translation and interpretation costs.

Advocacy, Training and Employment (now known as the Choices into Work) - this represents amounts received towards the Choices into Work Project to train disabled people to enable them to find meaningful employment in advocacy or other related fields. This project also offers coaching, confidence building and mentoring.

Disability Hate Crime Project – this represents funding received from the Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC). CHOICE operates within the "Community Alliance To Combat Hate" (CATCH) consortium to support disabled survivors of hate crime that take place within London and surrounding boroughs.

Client Relationship Management (CRM) system project – part-funding from The Sylvia Waddilove Foundation UK via Pothecary Witham Weld Solicitors allowed us to purchase the CRM system, Charity Log to efficiently streamline data across all projects and services.

Active Lifestyle – this is funding towards our Active Lifestyle project, which included low-impact exercise sessions as well as group activities all taken out online from the comfort of the service users homes via Zoom Video Conferencing to improve health and wellbeing.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

13. FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

At the 31st March 2023 the Charity had commitments under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

Amounts payable:	2023 £	2022 £
Within one year	1,053	948
Between two and five years	-	-
After five years	-	-
	1,053	948

In addition to the above, the Charity has a licence agreement for its office premises for an annual rent of £21,000. The licence is reviewed every September.

14. CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

There were no capital commitments at 31st March 2023 (2022: Nil).

15. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

There were no contingent liabilities at 31st March 2023 (2022: Nil).

16. NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Fixed Assets £	Cash at Bank and in Hand £	Debtors £	Current Liabilities £	Total £
Unrestricted	4,170	51,689	2,472	(10,716)	47,615
Restricted	-	10,823	186,076	-	196,899
Total	4,170	62,512	188,548	(10,716)	244,514

PRIOR YEAR	Fixed Assets £	Cash at Bank and in Hand £	Debtors £	Current Liabilities £	Total £
Unrestricted	-	57,916	49,284	(13,543)	93,657
Restricted	-	28,017	11,176	-	39,193
Total	-	85,933	60,460	(13,543)	132,850

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023

16. **GOING CONCERN**

The Trustees actively foster relations with existing funders and seek additional funding sources emphasising the value for money in terms of historic costs per service user outcome. Although the level of 'free reserves' has fallen over the year as noted above some multi-year funding has been secured and as a result the restricted reserve has significantly increased. In consequence, the Trustees are of the opinion that the Charity will be able to continue as a going concern into 2026 and beyond.

17. **RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS**

There were no related party transaction during the year.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

England & Wales - Charity number 1077287

Accounts

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

(Company Limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES REPORT

AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

COMPANY NO: 03423122
CHARITY NO : 1077287

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

TRUSTEES REPORT

AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

The Trustees present their report and the audited financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2022.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Trustees

Sandra Rennie	Chair (resigned on 19th January 2022)
Andrew Price	Vice-Chair
Malcolm Aickin	Treasurer
Thomas Brayford	(appointed on 1st April 2022)
Patricia Charlesworth	
Susan E Childs	
Mary Julian	
Debra Schiman	
Bharat Siyani	

Advisor	Alex Rook
Company Secretary and Executive Director	Caroline Nelson
Company reg.no.	03423122
Charity reg.no.	1077287
Registered Office	CHOICE IN HACKNEY Defoe Block, Ground Floor 50 Hoxton Street London N1 6LP
Auditors	Knox Cropper LLP 65 Leadenhall Street London EC3A 2AD
Bankers	Barclays Bank PLC 3-5 Kingsland High Street London E8 2JT

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

The trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of the Companies Act) present their combined directors' report and trustees' report, as required by company law, together with the audited financial statements of Choice in Hackney (the Charity) for the year ended 31 March 2022. The trustees confirm that the trustees' report and financial statements of the Charity comply with the current statutory requirements, the requirements of the Charity's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommend Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

Administration Details of the Charity, its Trustees and Advisors
Administration details relating to CHOICE are set out under Legal and Administrative Information, on page 1.

Structure, Governance and Management
The Charity is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Trustees are recruited from members of the Charity, ex-employees and from the wider community. They are elected and co-opted under the terms of the company's Articles of Association. Users are represented on the Board of Trustees. At the Annual General Meeting, the Board of Trustees is elected by the members of the Charity and serves from the close of that meeting until the close of the succeeding Annual General Meeting. The Board of Trustees consists of not less than 3 members and until otherwise determined by a General Meeting, not more than 12 members.

The Trustees were given an induction to the work of CHOICE by the Executive Director and introduced to all staff members. The formal policies and procedures are reviewed annually.
The Management of the Charity is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees. Operational decisions are taken by the Executive Director and staff. Strategic decisions are made by the Board of Trustees in consultation with the Executive Director. The Board of Trustees meets at least 4 times a year and the Executive Director normally attends all meetings.

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and in particular, to those related to its operations and finances of the Charity, and are satisfied that systems and procedures are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks. A review of the risk assessment was carried out by members of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Director during the year.

Public Benefit
In reviewing the Charity's aims and objectives and in planning future activities, the Trustees refer to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit.

Objectives and Activities
CHOICE has the charitable objects of working with disabled, Greater London residents by providing Independent Living Services such as: Active Lifestyle, Advocacy, Befriending Plus / Volunteering, Disability Hate Crime and Training & Employment.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

The objects of the Charity are:

a) To relieve disabled persons in Greater London who require assistance to realise their full potential and lead fulfilling lives. In particular, by the provision of a service that assists such persons to obtain their full rights and privileges as citizens.

b) To advance the education of the general public as to the needs and interests of disabled people. From July 2008, The Charity Commission has allowed CHOICE to operate across Greater London and the company's Memorandum has been changed accordingly.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance:
In the period under review, CHOICE promoted the following services to disabled Greater London residents aged 18 plus and their networks:

- Active Lifestyle
- Advocacy
- Disability Hate Crime
- Befriending Plus / Volunteering
- Training & Employment

a) **Active Lifestyle and Befriending Plus / Volunteering:**

During the year we combined our Active Lifestyle with its sister project, Befriending Plus / Volunteering in order to encourage maximum take-up of their services. Thanks to part-funding from CMS Social Impact Fund, Hackney Giving's CCG Coronavirus Crisis & Recovery Programme, Hackney Parochial Charities and South Hackney Parochial Charity, we engaged local disabled people in activities which greatly improved their overall physical and mental health. Almost all of our beneficiaries (both volunteers and service users) reported a greater feeling of wellbeing and physical fitness after participating in our programmes.

Activities:
In particular, we delivered:

- 12 online exercise sessions via Zoom Video Conferencing where 39 service users could enjoy keep fit activities from the comfort of their homes. Activities included low impact seated Solo-Salsa (or SOSA for short) where attendees engage in coordinated dance moves with the aid of maracas to Latin rhythms; Clubbercise sessions – recreating a club atmosphere with disco lights and music; Relax & Refresh sessions for gentle stretching and breathing exercises plus general exercise sessions with trained and accredited coaches.

- 36 online social clubs which allowed 112 disabled service users to bond over shared interests and experiences. This included sessions on art and culture i.e. a virtual gallery tour and talk hosted by the National Gallery and virtual tours around cities, as well as location guessing games for attendees.

- A walking friends service where volunteers encourage service users to leave their homes, take exercise and enjoy the fresh air.

- A volunteer-led gardening service: transforming disabled people's inaccessible green spaces into places they can conveniently take in the fresh air, exercise in private and enjoy time outdoors with their families.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

a) Active Lifestyle and Befriending Plus / Volunteering continued:

Activities continued:

- Befriending services to further reduce any feelings of social isolation and encourage engagement with the outside world and the local community. Volunteers regularly called service users to speak on any subject they like.

- A shopping and medication drop-off service for disabled people, where items were purchased and delivered to their door by a volunteer. In some cases, the volunteer would accompany the service user on local shopping trips to allow the disabled person to get out and about locally, interact and engage with others in their neighbourhood.

Promotional leaflet:

The leaflet outlines:

- *the services offered by the projects together with*
- *an image of a volunteer and service user enjoying a day in the park; and*
- *participants enjoying a seated online exercise session.*

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

a) Active Lifestyle and Befriending Plus / Volunteering continued:

The projects had many positive impacts, which mainly revolved around improvements to mental and physical wellbeing, and reduced feelings of isolation (both from other people and services).

Activities:
Most participants felt that because the exercise sessions, social groups, and befriending were delivered online or via the telephone, they were fully accessible to them. Our gardening service allowed them to access their green outdoor spaces to take in fresh air (alone or in company). Also, thanks to funding, they were very grateful the services were free. In particular:

- The online exercise sessions had a tremendous impact on our service users who felt the physical fitness sessions were enjoyable and beneficial, but also they created an opportunity to socialise, and gave them something to look forward to.

- The befriending service and social groups provided a way for service users to meet on a regular basis, and make connections to combat isolation. This positively impacted their mental and physical health with some commenting the social club gave the opportunity to communicate openly and affectionately with new friends.

- The walking friends service benefited the physical fitness and mental wellbeing of service users and volunteers (some of whom were also disabled people). All participants of this activity benefited from having someone to keep them motivated to go on local walks.

- As the Coronavirus pandemic made it difficult and frightening for our service users to leave their homes, our gardening service had provided them with an accessible, green space in their back gardens, where they could take in fresh air alone or with company. This made a real difference to some local disabled people being able to enjoy an active lifestyle (as opposed to being in complete isolation).

- Service users reported our Befriending service gave them a sense of connection and improved their general outlook. Due to these regular engagements with volunteers, some disabled people reported they were more likely to take better care of their own wellbeing, and i.e. engage in some gentle exercise.

- The shopping and medication drop-off service reduced the stress and anxiety levels of service users as they no longer had to struggle to mobilise themselves to go to shops / pharmacists in order to take their medication at the appropriate time or eat well.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

a) Active Lifestyle and Befriending Plus / Volunteering continued:

Added benefits of activities:
It is understood that adults with strong social connections have reduced risk of contracting health issues (e.g. depression, high blood pressure, an unhealthy body mass index). Our activities assisted service users to maintain their physical and mental health and, in many cases, manage their impairments better. These services greatly reduced the stress experienced by our disabled service users particularly during lockdown, and increased their awareness of activities in their local area.

Overcoming barriers:
The greatest barriers imposed on the service were by the fluctuating Coronavirus lockdown rules, but in every case we were able to adapt the service and continue our valuable work with our service users.

Longer term impacts:
Some of the longer term impacts of this funded work includes:

- The relationships between service users and volunteers continuing beyond the funded period with minimal support from CHOICE until we receive further funding;
- Service users and volunteers expanding their social circles via contacts made through the social club, where they can continue to meet and motivate each other to live their best life and consequently reduce any feelings of isolation;
- A recent survey showed 82% of service users reported they enjoyed the online exercise sessions and 91% reported having better physical or mental wellbeing as a result of these sessions;
- Some of the techniques and exercises utilised in the online exercise classes will continue to be practiced so that service users can experience the health benefits of taking regular, gentle exercise and share these benefits with their communities.

We are very grateful for the funding we received as it has allowed us to not only support a substantially increased number of service users but also to think differently about the services we are able to offer, and how we might further support the lifestyles of our disabled service users in the future now that Coronavirus has become an endemic as opposed to the initial pandemic. This is because being engaged in such activities has had a massive positive impact on the health and wellbeing of local disabled people who were able to engage in activities that allowed them to meet new people, stay active and healthy as well as combat much of the stresses that were around during i.e. lockdowns. We are hopeful that these benefits will continue well into the future for disabled people.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

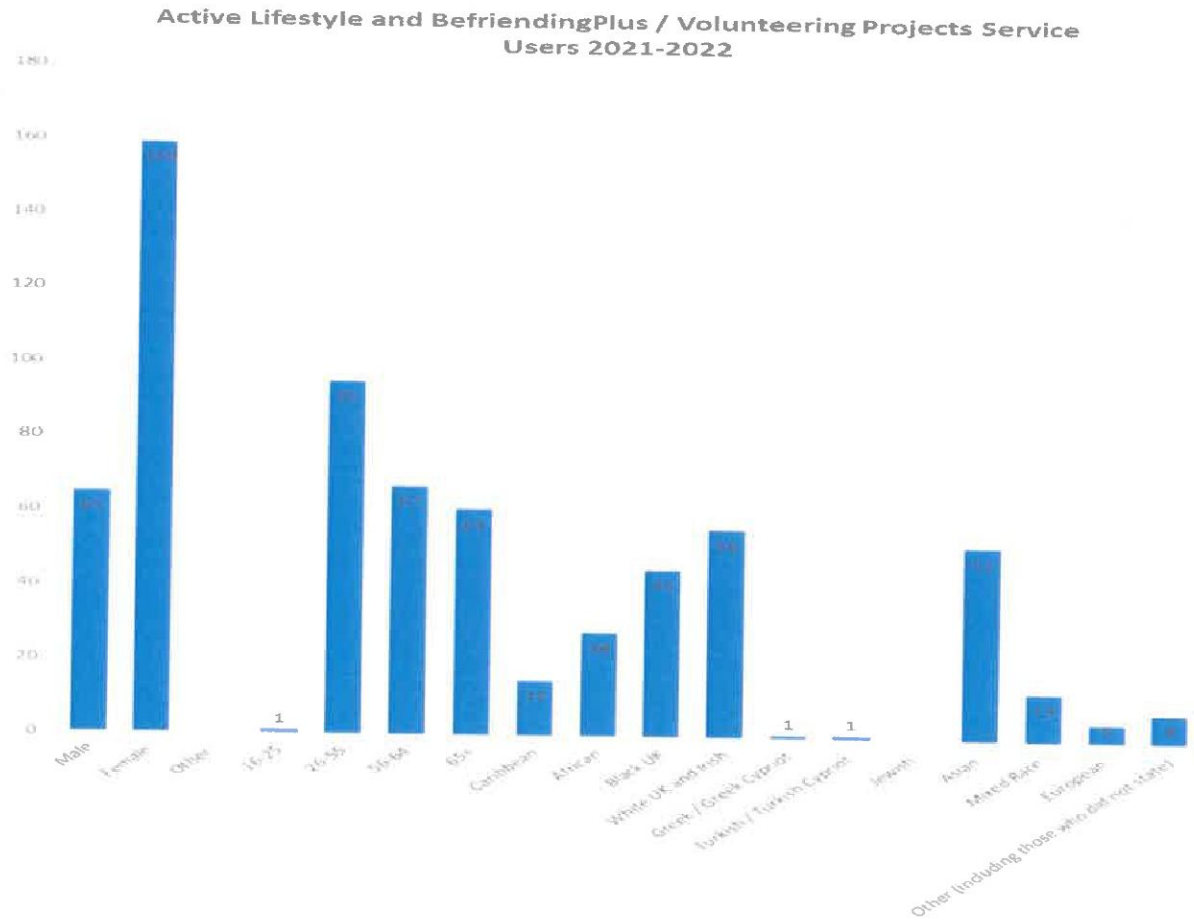
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

a) Active Lifestyle and Befriending Plus / Volunteering continued:

Longer term impacts continued:
The current financial constraints that have affected many individuals which will be particularly felt by disabled people and they will also need for there to be equity of access to services that are free, affordable and local so that they can continue to improve their mental and physical wellbeing into the future.

The Active Lifestyle and Befriending Plus projects supported the following people during the period: Active Lifestyle's service users were 40 (38 in 2020-2021); Befriending Plus service users were 184 (136 in 2020-21); and Befriending Plus volunteers totalled 138 (137 in 2020-21).

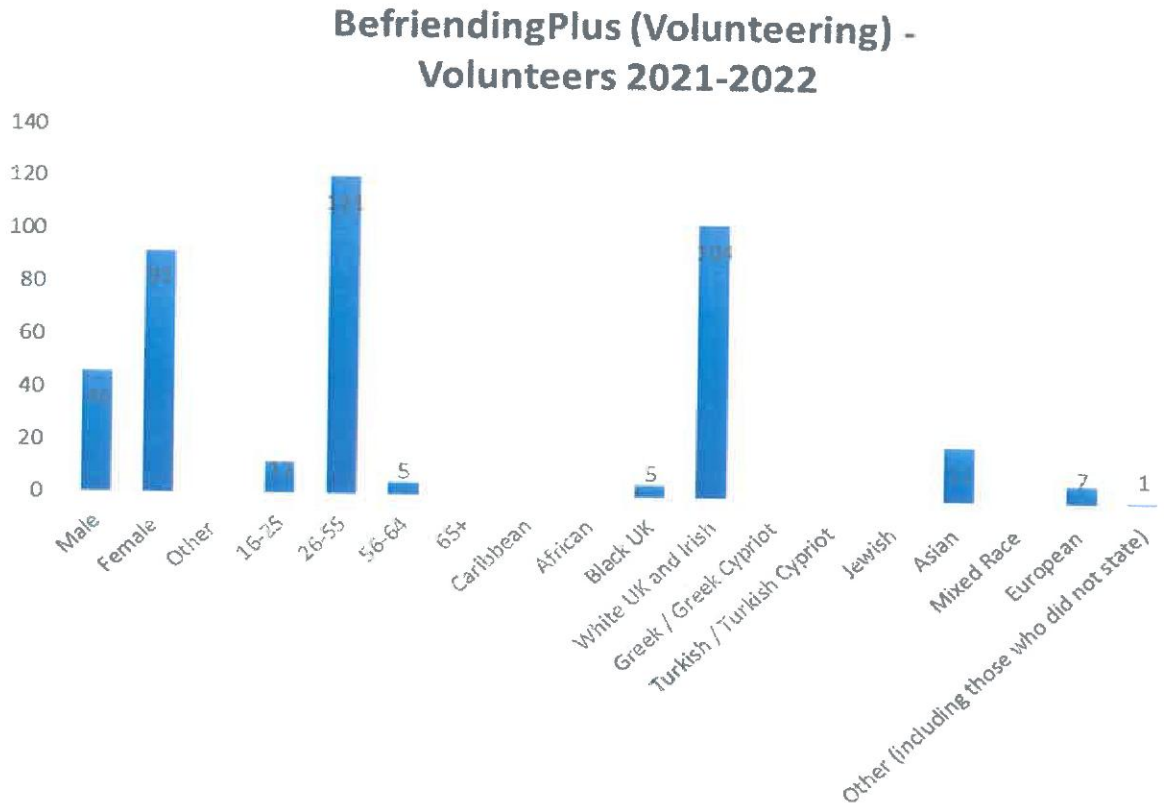
The following bar charts combines the statistical data for both the Active Lifestyle and Befriending Plus / Volunteering Projects:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

a) Active Lifestyle and Befriending Plus / Volunteering continued:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

b) Advocacy:

CHOICE advocates support our disabled service users to obtain the services needed to live an independent and dignified lifestyle in the community. The Advocate works in 'partnership' with the disabled user to obtain his/her rights.

We are pleased to report that CHOICE remains part of a strong network of local community organisations, who operate within London Borough of Hackney's advocacy service, which has The Advocacy Project (TAP) as the lead provider. However, this is the fifth and final year of the existing contractual arrangements between London Borough of Hackney and TAP. Since its inception in the 2018-2019 financial year, the network was assigned 614 non-statutory advocacy issues. Even at that time, 614 spread across all of Hackney's 275,000 residents was inadequate particularly when we consider that each resident could have 2 or more issues. However, in the previous financial year, this was drastically reduced to 275 issues that could be shared across all partner organisations to make way for an increase in statutory advocacy provision (which has an even more stringent eligibility criteria and is not suitable for many of our existing service users).

This substantial reduction has affected our advocates' ability to effectively support our service users whilst also meeting funder requirements. At the time of writing, we can confirm that Hackney Council has started its tender process for the financial year 2023-2024. We are very concerned to note that the anticipated outputs for non-statutory advocacy will have reduced even further to 250 issues across the whole of Hackney and by the final year (2027-2028), it will have reduced again very drastically to a mere 100 issues, which can in no way sustain even a fraction of the Hackney residents who will need non-statutory advocacy support. This is not beneficial to our service users and as such, we will continue to raise awareness amongst potential funders that there is a shortfall of need that is not being met by the statutory authority in the hope that they will fill this gap and fund a desperately needed non-statutory advocacy service (which is no longer seen as a statutory duty).

During the period under review, our Advocates supported service users to target services that enabled them to enhance their quality of life whilst also meeting their needs. In order to fit within the non-statutory eligibility criteria, this meant we could only work with disabled people who:

- Were located within or came under the responsibility of The London Borough of Hackney;
- Were vulnerable, unable to speak up for themselves, unsupported; and
- Required support with a specific eligible advocacy issue.

Also, our funder Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust informed us that our existing annual service level agreement required updating in line with the Trust's need to ensure they were making the best use of public funds. Their funding goes towards our health advocacy service, which has formed a vital part of CHOICE's service provision for many years. We are very pleased to inform you that after successfully undertaking the Trust's bidding process, we were awarded with a 3-year contract and can continue to support local disabled people in the City of London and Hackney with their health advocacy needs.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

b) Advocacy continued:

An advertising campaign has already been started in these two London boroughs and we hope to welcome more disabled people to take up the health advocacy service. Specifically, this will engage our advocates in:

- relaying the options and choices available to the service user regarding health services; and
- attending health appointments with them where necessary to ensure they are fully engaged in processes.

This helps to shift the unbalanced relationship between service users (particularly those from different impairment, ethnic and cultural backgrounds). Health advocacy aims to empower users to access health services on an informed and equitable basis.

Thanks to short-term funding from the National Emergencies Trust: Disabled People's Organisations (DPO) COVID-19 Fund, which expired in June 2021, our Advocates were able to provide a more joined-up holistic service to many of our service users. This funded work included, amongst other things:

- 10 Personal Independence Payments (PIP) applications;
- 2 PIP assessments;
- 1 PIP tribunal;
- 2 benefit applications for Housing Benefit and Council Tax;
- 4 Grant applications for household items;
- 2 Blue Badge applications; and
- 2 Housing Discretionary Payment forms being completed.

This funder became the "go-to" resource where service users did not meet another of our funder's eligibility criteria. In so doing, there was a noticeable improvement in service user outcomes, particularly for those who approached us in crisis. They did not have to go to a new organisation where their access needs were not understood; but they continued to receive support from us who they were already comfortable and familiar with. This was extremely important for service users whose mental health issues and communications difficulties were exacerbated during the pandemic – without our intervention, their circumstances would have become substantially worse.

Funding during this period allowed us to support 168-disabled people (224 in 2020-2021), some of whom had multiple issues which included:

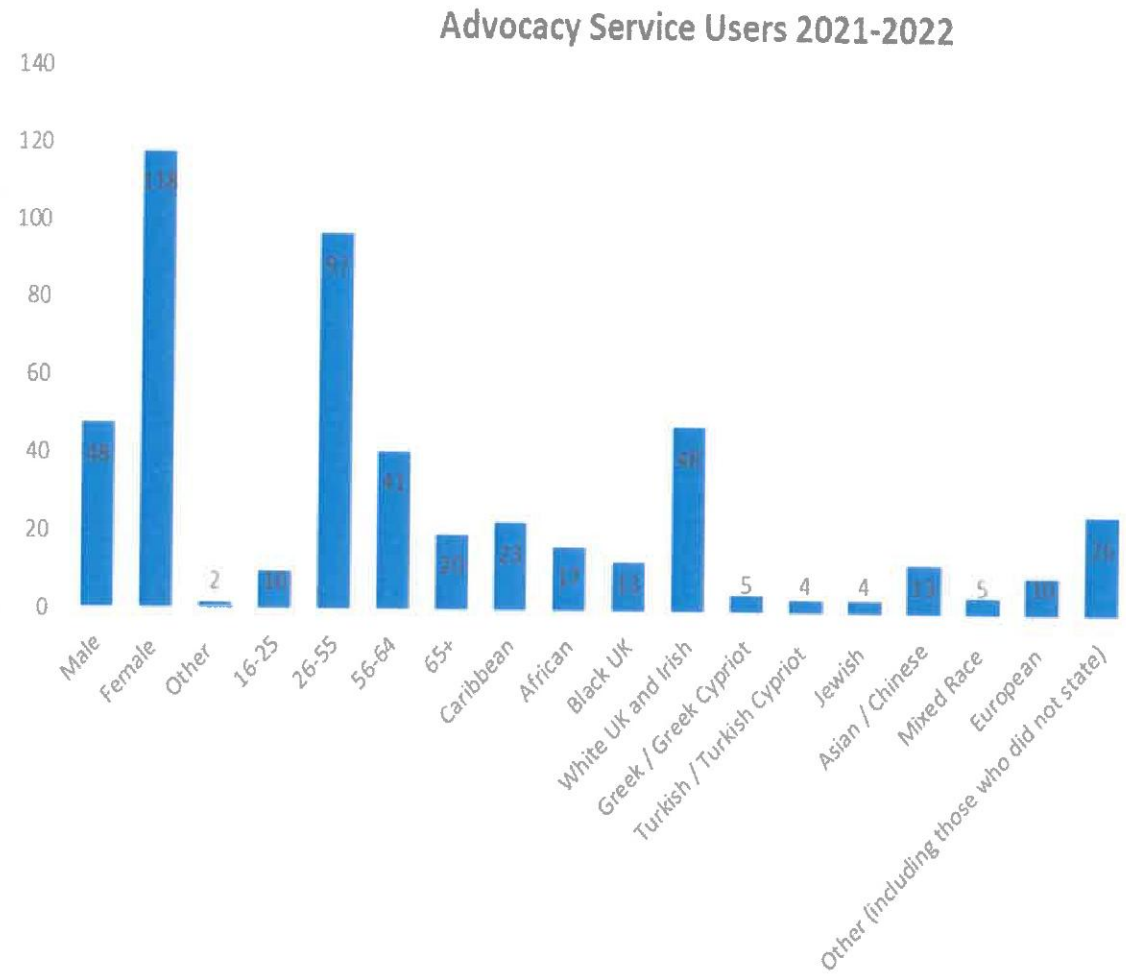
- 47 health-related issues including accessing medical services;
- 33 needed housing support, which included adaptations / repairs;
- 15 had a range of welfare benefit applications;
- 7 statutory advocacy issues including safeguarding enquiries;
- 2 employment related issues.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

b) Advocacy continued:

The following bar chart presents statistical data for the Advocacy Project:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) **Disability Hate Crime:**
The organisation continues its role within a consortium funded by the Mayor's Office for Policing And Crime (MOPAC) entitled "Communities Against Hate" (CATCH), which recently revamped its logo:

catch
Communities Against Hate

The consortium is now in its fifth year. At the time of writing, it successfully bid for a 2-year contract with potential for an additional 2-year extension (4-years total). We would like to extend our gratitude to the lead provider, Galop for all their hard work in bringing this bid into fruition.

The consortium works in partnership with a network of community organisations specialising in supporting people who have experienced a hate crime due to their: race, faith / religion, sexual orientation (including attacks based on homophobia and transphobia) and/or disability.

CATCH partners work to tackle hate crime, discrimination and abuse within their protected characteristic equality strands. Whilst we all have our own individual specialisms, we often come together to work inter-sectionally or make referrals to network organisations within the partnership. We also work very closely with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) - the source of many referrals during the period.

Our hate crime advocates will identify the support needs of individuals and enable them to access other services and also:

- Assist with reporting incidents;
- Support individuals through criminal justice processes;
- Deliver outreach to communities impacted by hate crime to promote the service; and
- Share good practice internally within the partnership.

Thanks to part-funding from London Community Response Fund (Wave 5), we were able to recruit an additional part-time hate crime worker towards end of the financial year to support disabled people deal with the diverse negative impacts of being targets of disability hate crime. This includes coping mechanisms to deal with emotional stress / trauma, feeling socially excluded or isolated, having their homes taken over by criminal gangs (commonly known as "cuckooing"), and/or being financially or physically abused.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) **Disability Hate Crime continued:**

Our workers developed techniques to offer a confidential service to the disabled survivor which included accompanying them through the process of decision-making, safety planning, reporting, investigation and court. When such incidents were reported to the police they would work with our service users to identify their needs, vulnerabilities and understand how they wished for the incident to be resolved. Where any additional support is identified (for example through social services), this was put into place and the worker could also provide accessible information about support from other agencies (including making referrals to our Befriending service if they felt isolated).

The Coronavirus pandemic brought with it many more incidents of hate crime. Whilst the disability strand was the primary motivation of incidents being reported, more time was spent on multiple service users issues. It is very worrying that our advocates reported a significant rise in service users also needing support with the following:

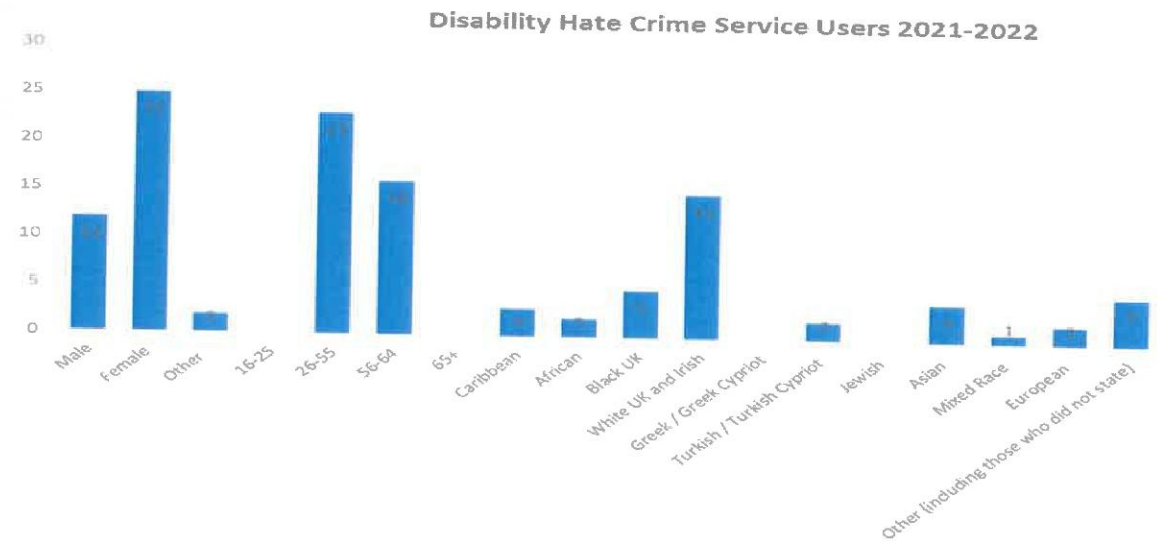
- Anti-social behaviour; Bullying; Harassment; Racism; Verbal abuse; and Violence.

Additional support was also provided to service users to allow them to adjust to the service being moved online to ensure their access needs were met. Our catchment area was also extended to areas outside of Hackney and surrounding boroughs and included:

- Hammersmith & Fulham; Hillingdon; Kingston South West.

We were pleased to be able to meet the needs of 39 disabled people with their disability hate crime matters (34 in 2020-2021).

The following bar chart presents statistical data for the Hate Crime Project:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept:**

The Training & Employment Dept (or TED as it is more commonly known), continued to benefit from three year's funding from Henry Smith Charity – Improving Lives programme, which is due to expire in June 2022 and three year's funding from Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales, expiring in February 2023. We are also grateful for the one-year's funding from Henry Smith Charity Community Match Challenge, which is a COVID-19 related grant.

Our offer now includes a fully accredited suite of training programmes and supplementary support offers that includes programmes of Choices into Work; Disability & Domestic Violence; and Disability Hate Crime. Supplementary support which trainees can dip into includes Coaching and Confidence Building; Job Club; and Mentoring schemes.

Choices into Work training:

This programme started its life as a standalone training course, which offered disabled people classroom-based training on i.e. advocacy principles; and a work placement at CHOICE IN HACKNEY (CHOICE) and other host organisations. There was also ongoing support such as regular emails with job opportunities and telephone support from the project Coordinator.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

A selection of trainees during a classroom-based training session Project Coordinator, Haq Ismail is standing (and pointing at the overhead projector)

Today, this humble programme has developed into a fully accredited course and upon successful completion of all components, trainees are awarded a national recognised qualification (some for the first time) from our accrediting body, Open College Network Credit 4 Learning. We also have the flexibility to offer a range of awards starting at Level 1 to Diploma Level 4. This offers our trainees real credibility and opens up new pathways for them as they embark on their new careers or take up further education.

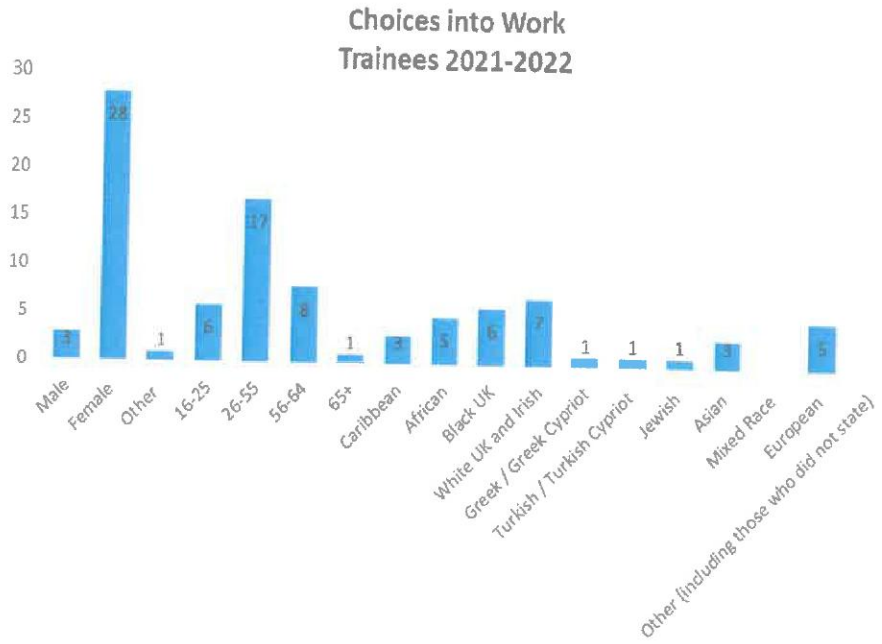
CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Choices into Work training continued:
We were pleased to be able to continue to offer this service throughout the pandemic by shifting both elements (training and work placement) from venue-based delivery methods to online in particular, utilising Zoom Video Conferencing.

During the period under review 32 people undertook the course (32 in 2020-2021) and their demographics are outlined below:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**
Disability & Domestic Violence training:
During lockdown, the number of incidents of domestic violence rose and it was very appropriate and timely that we were able to source funding from Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales to run one of two specialist programmes during the year (the other being Disability Hate Crime training).

The course allowed disabled people to undertake specialist advocacy training accredited by the Open College Network Credit4Learning. The training is specialist because trainees are expected to come with some relevant experience or academic qualification (as the course is intensive).

Course content:
Each programme has 6-sessions designed to train a group of disabled people to become professional advocates, specialising in domestic violence.

Training topics include:
- Introduction to domestic violence;
- Safety planning and risk assessments;
- Child protection processes;
- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC);
- Housing issues; and
- The civil and criminal courts.

It has been challenging to engage trainees for 6 hours at a time utilising online platform, Zoom Video Conferencing. This also made it difficult for the trainer to effectively support trainees if or when they are triggered by some of the sensitive material being presented (as some are survivors of hate crime or domestic violence).

We are pleased to report that:
- trainees received exclusive and specialist resources such as the Disability and Domestic Violence Risk Assessment;

- 6 disabled people who attended the Disability & Domestic Violence course whilst also being employed within domestic violence agencies, are now qualified Disability & Domestic Violence workers;

- 1 trainee who worked in a mainstream domestic violence organisation, has been able to give a presentation to her colleagues on how to work specifically with disabled survivors of domestic violence;

- 1 trainee volunteers at the Witness Protection Service and carried out a presentation to her colleagues on how to work with disabled survivors of domestic violence.

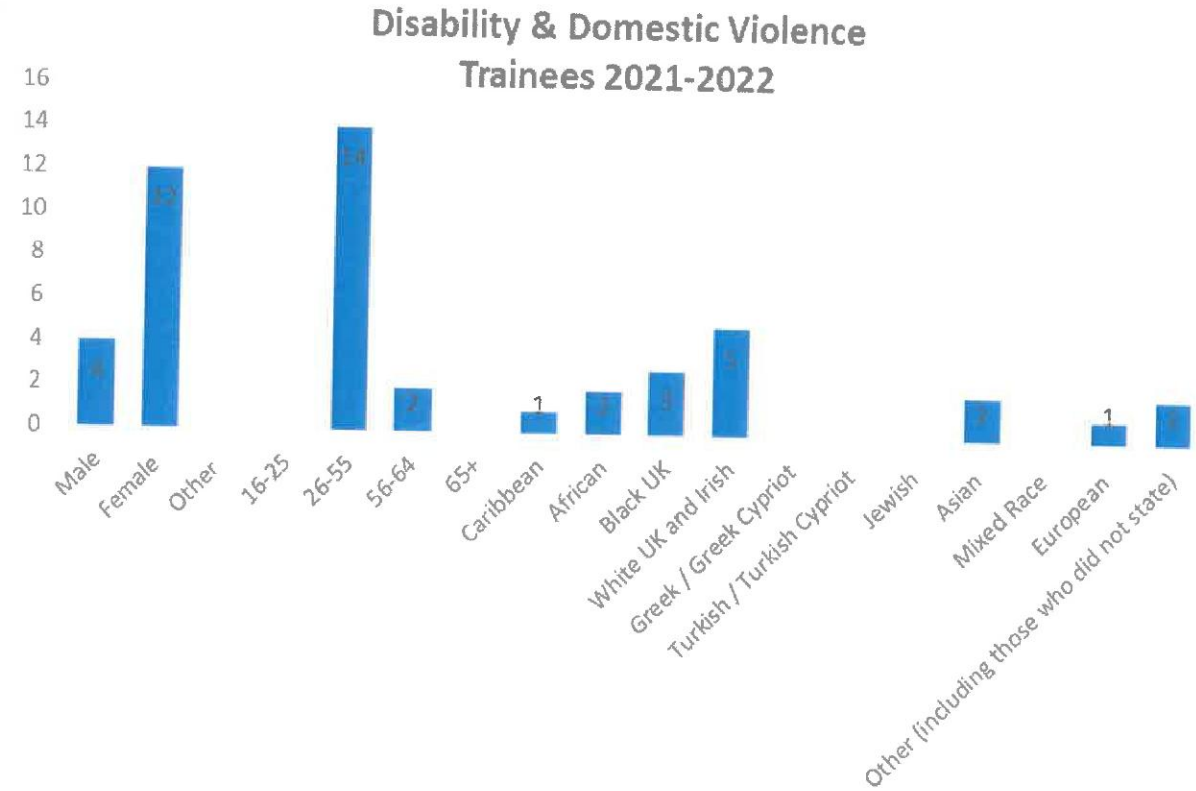
CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Disability & Domestic Violence training continued:
16 people undertook the Disability & Domestic Violence course in the year, which was spread over 2-programmes (10 in 2020-2021).

The following bar charts presents statistical data for the Disability & Domestic Violence trainees:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Disability Hate Crime training programme:
After a delayed start to this training programme, which was due to the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic, we are pleased to share the following:

- An experienced Hate Crime Trainer was recruited after the third recruitment round;
- the Level 4 (Diploma) syllabus was prepared and approved by accrediting body Open College Network Credit4Learning;
- we successfully recruited and engaged disabled people to undertake high quality, accredited specialist disability-related training that is not carried out anywhere else in the UK where they gained knowledge and experience through their work placements, to advocate for themselves and disabled survivors of hate crime;
- 1 of our trainees has been able to use this knowledge to deliver specialist training herself on trauma and has linked this to the Social Model of Disability (which she became aware of as a result of undertaking our training).

These examples demonstrate that this training is being cascaded down throughout different organisations so that more professionals will be equipped to support disabled survivors of hate crime. In addition, we have been empowering our trainees, many of whom are survivors themselves, to have the skills and tools to advocate for themselves and others. Some trainees also took on cases during their work placements using the knowledge they gained from the course to good effect.

Casework:
This specialist knowledge was used to carry out casework, which included the following areas from the course:

- Representing clients in multi-agency meetings, carrying out risk assessments, safeguarding, Care Act assessments, trauma-based approach, complaints to agencies such as the police and housing, the roles of the different agencies and bodies i.e. housing, anti-social behaviour teams, supporting people through the criminal justice system – including reporting to the police and going to court.

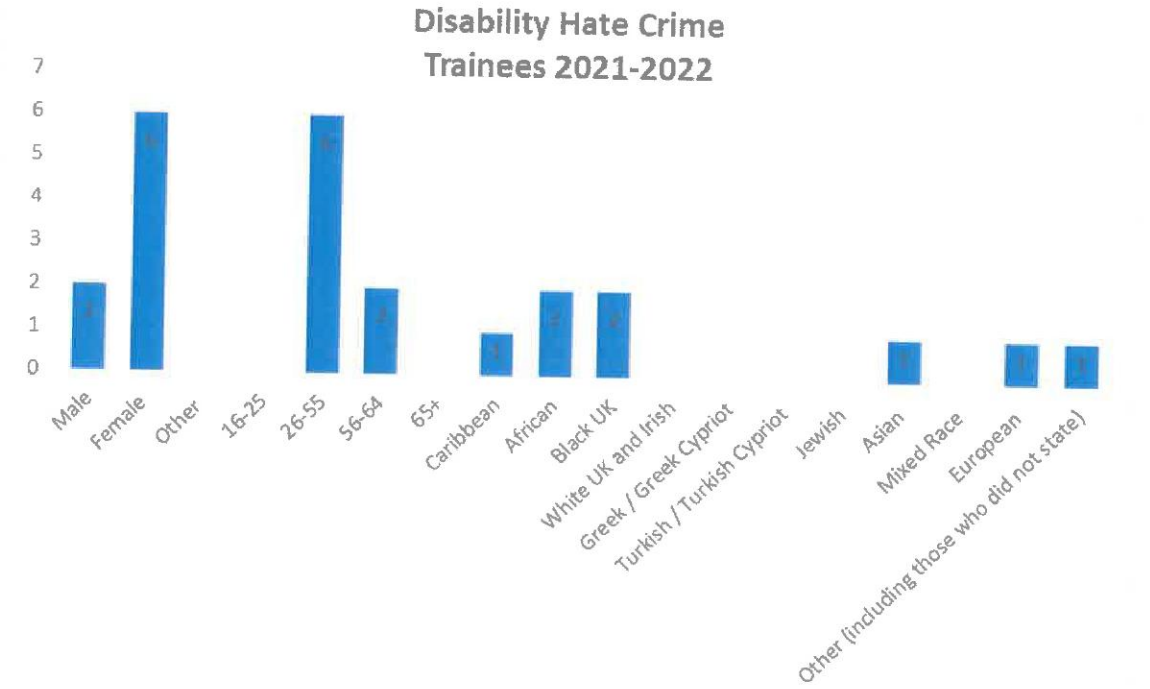
Successes:
We are pleased to report that two former trainees, who successfully completed the Disability Hate Crime training course, went on to obtain well-paid jobs as Hate Crime Advocates: one at Equalities Redbridge and the other at CHOICE. These examples demonstrate the positive impact that can come from engaging on these specialist courses.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Disability Hate Crime training programme continued:
The following bar chart presents the statistical data for our first intake of 8 Disability Hate Crime trainees:



Job Club:
Thanks to 1-year's funding from the Henry Smith Charity – Community Match Challenge, we were able to expand our offer to include a Job Club as part of our training offer.

Delivery model:
Most of the delegates attended multiple sessions and benefitted greatly from the sessions on a wide range of employment-related topics, delivered in an innovative and person-centred way. Our sessions were guided by the attendees who requested specific sessions on networking, volunteering and self-employment opportunities. We encouraged our trainees to be involved in the sessions, reserving space specifically for trainee discussions of issues they have experienced. The opportunity to meet each other and benefit from each other's experiences was invaluable.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Job Club continued:

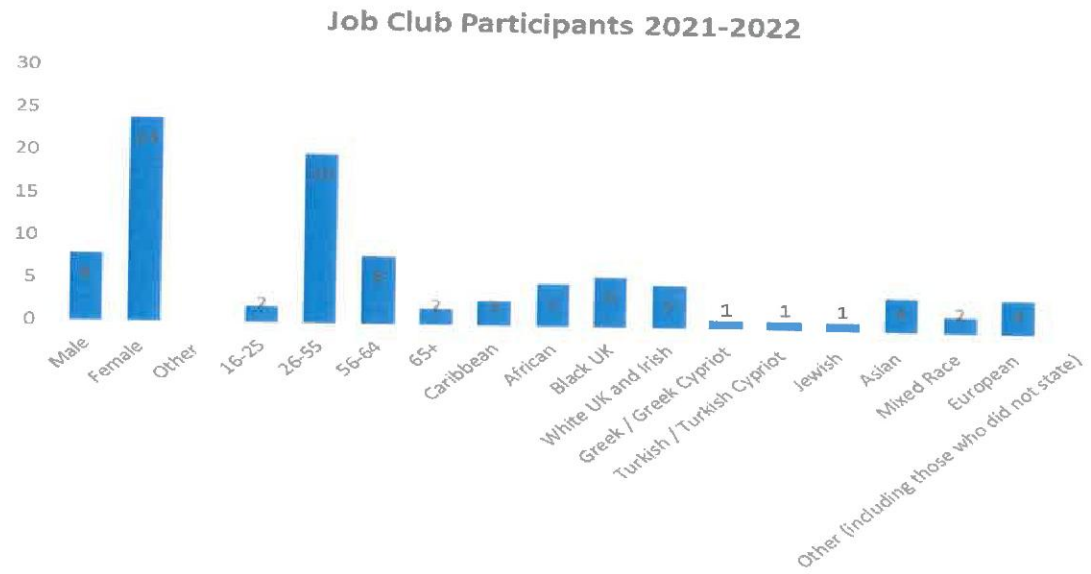
Topics:
Sessions were held twice a month, which benefited our attendees immensely in an already deflated jobs market. In engaging and challenging sessions we have been able to deliver sessions on:

- confidence building; employment skills; disability issues in employment (including bullying and intersectionality); employment related benefits; and other key skills and techniques to finding and staying in work.

The sessions take the form of a seminar style presentation with discussion and role plays. Attendees were set assessments and received a great deal of feedback regarding their ongoing employment and self-development journeys.

Information Communications Technology:
We also provided equipment to trainees, which many of them lacked. Lending laptops and smart phones to them and advising them on their use really empowered them. This is particularly because technology became essential to engagement with the world of employment during lockdowns when they were utilised during periods of development for our service users, ensuring that they emerged to the re-opening jobs market with fresh skills and confidence.

A total of 32 disabled people (15 in 2020-2021) engaged in sessions arranged by the Job Club during the period as shown in the bar chart below:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Coaching and confidence building:

We also delivered one-to-one coaching sessions, which focussed on personal development and confidence building. Due to lockdowns, these sessions were also delivered online via Zoom Video Conferencing. This included preparing our service users mentally and spiritually for finding and undertaking work. This involved challenging their own beliefs about themselves, and their capabilities within the debilitating environment that COVID-19 brought with it. We were able to encourage self-reflection, skills audits, and visualisation techniques to enable our service users to plan for a future they wanted.

Whilst the overall aim for job coaching is to find employment, this proved an issue during lockdown, as some trainees were experiencing mental health issues due to being isolated. Consequently, the funding allowed us to merge wellbeing with employability sessions, which proved very popular as it allowed attendees to identify their needs, prioritise their mental health, and make positive decisions about their lifestyle.

We did not expect the sheer amount of demand for coaching. We were able to coach 7 people at a time and soon found our waiting list growing considerably. So much so that by February 2022, we were still working through that list. This is clearly a service that people want in their lives as the prospect of job hunting is very daunting when faced alone and without encouragement. We will now be able to pursue further funding for this project with a greater understanding of the considerable interest in this service.

A total of 22 disabled people (11 in 2020-2021) engaged in coaching sessions during the period and their statistical data is shown below:

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Coaching and confidence building continued:
Confidence building sessions, which included motivation techniques, meditation, and self-improvement were massively beneficial to our trainees who have reported improved confidence and ability in outcomes such as finding work, which is reflected in the high rate of employment amongst our trainees (even amidst a deflated jobs-market).

A total of 18 disabled people engaged in confidence building sessions during the period as shown by the bar chart below:

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Mentoring:
The mentoring aspect of our Choices into Work course is very valuable. This allows trainees who have undertaken the classroom-based element of the course to engage in the actual work of a Disability Rights Advocate. This happens during their work placement – which is either at CHOICE or host organisations. For those who undertook their work placement at CHOICE, trainees were given the opportunity to shadow a fellow disabled person who is employed as an experienced professional, where they can view the advocate's work and the difference they are making: it is revelatory to our beneficiaries.

19 of our trainees benefited from this work placement during the period (17 in 2020-2021) and had undertaken valuable case work as shown by the bar chart below:

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

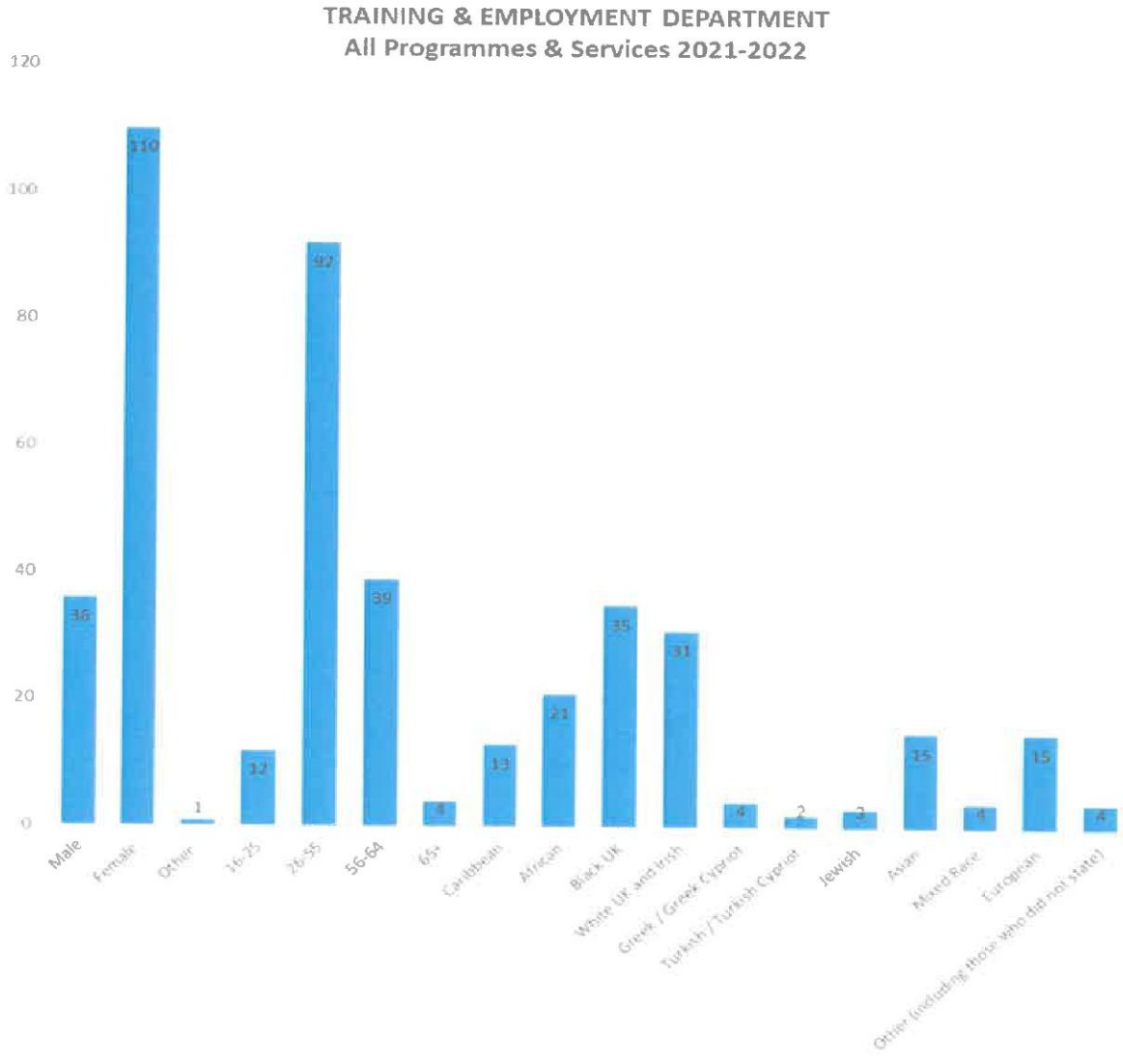
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

During the period under review the Training & Employment Dept carried out the following:

- 3 Choices into Work programmes, engaging 32-trainees;
- 2 Disability & Domestic Violence programmes, engaging 16 trainees;
- 1 Disability Hate Crime programme, engaging 8 trainees; and
- Additional Coaching, Confidence Building, Mentoring session and a Job Club.

A total of 147 individuals benefited from the services available within the Training & Employment Dept (82 in 2020-2021). Trainees' statistical data is shown below:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **Funders:**
In the year under review, CHOICE received funding from:

1. Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust – to provide health advocacy to disabled residents of Hackney and the City of London aged 18 plus.

2. London Borough of Hackney via The Advocacy Project (TAP) to provide:

   i) non-statutory advocacy service to disabled and vulnerable Hackney adults who are known to Adult Social Care teams, un-befriended, unable to speak up for themselves and require support with a specific advocacy issue; and

   ii) statutory advocacy service to disabled Hackney residents who have care/support needs, substantial difficulty in being involved in the relevant processes and have no appropriate unpaid individual to support them.

3. National Emergencies Trust – Disabled People's Organisations COVID-19 Fund - to provide supplementary Advocacy services to disabled people during the pandemic.

4. Henry Smith Charity Improving Lives – part-funding towards the Choices into Work project (part of the Training & Employment Dept), which provides classroom-based advocacy training, work placements and job search skills. Additional coaching support is also funded.

5. Henry Smith Charity Community Match Challenge – to provide a Job-Club, which includes mentoring and coaching support to disabled people wanting to find work.

6. Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales - to provide specialist accredited training in hate crime and/or disability and domestic violence with extended work placements allowing trainees to gain in-depth knowledge of their chosen specialism.

7. London Community Response Fund (Wave 5) distributed by City Bridge Trust – for a mixture of a contribution towards salaries for the Chief Executive Officer and Hate Crime / Domestic Violence advocacy service and the shortfall of the organisational overheads not covered by other project grants.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **Funders continued:**

8. Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime – to provide disability hate crime advocacy to disabled people who live or work in Hackney and surrounding boroughs as part of the Communities Against Hate (CATCH) consortium.

9. Mayor of London's Culture & Community Spaces at Risk in association with Locality – towards our rent arrears, which built up during the pandemic and ensuing lockdown.

10. Hackney Parochial Charities – to provide an Active Lifestyle and Befriending Plus / Volunteering service in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for disabled people within the funder's catchment area.

11. Hackney Giving's City & Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group – to provide crisis and recovery support to disabled residents of Hackney and the City of London who engage in our Active Lifestyle Project.

12. CMS Social Impact Fund – part-funding towards the Active Lifestyle and Befriending Plus / Volunteering service.

13. South Hackney Parochial Charity – part-funding towards the Active Lifestyle service during the pandemic for disabled people within the funder's catchment area.

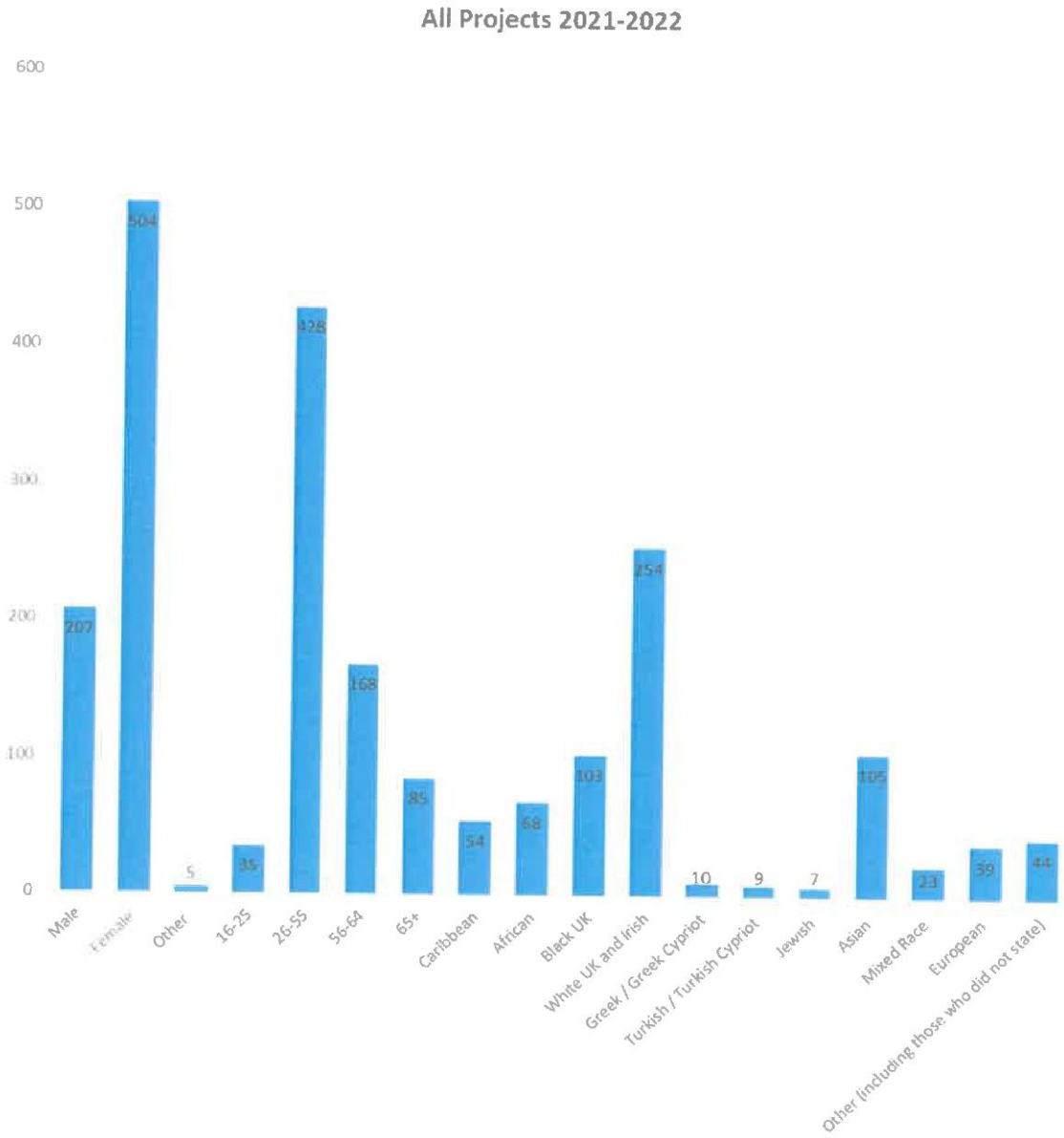
14. The Sylvia Waddilove Foundation UK via Pothecary Witham Weld Solicitors – part-funding towards a Client Relationship Management (CRM) system to efficiently streamline data across all projects and services.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **Funders continued:**
The level of funding in the year allowed CHOICE to support a total of 716 disabled people (661 in 2020-2021).

The breakdown of service users supported for all projects is as follows:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

f) **Partnership Working:**

Partnership working allows us to reach out to more disabled people. We aim to raise awareness of the services that we provide within an expanded community. This will secure the rights of disabled people as full citizens, improve their quality of life and promote an inclusive society where disabled people can participate fully and equally. We are pleased to continually expand and strengthen our network of organisations who are open to reciprocal working, which encourages sharing a lived experience of disability, knowledge, training opportunities, services, a loyal customer base as well as joining together to strengthen consortium-based funding applications.

Our network of organisations includes (but is not limited to):

i) Department for Work & Pensions – provided our Choices into Work project with some guest speakers during the classroom-based element of the course on topics such as Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments. The benefit of this is that trainees receive up to date information direct from the source on benefit entitlements for themselves and also for the disabled people who they will be advocating for;

ii) Hackney Employment Hub – this organisation has provided us with both accessible training venues in the past for the classroom-based element of the Choices into Work project and trainees wanting to upskill and improve their employment prospects by undertaking the course;

iii) Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE) – have provided us with co-training opportunities to schools on the needs of children and young adults who attend special educational needs (SEND) establishments;

iv) Community Against Hate (CATCH) – this consortium led by the Gay London Police Monitoring Group (GALOP) regularly make referrals into our disability hate crime service. We also carry out joint-working with partner organisations Real Tower Hamlets and Stay Safe East.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

f) **Partnership Working continued:**

v) Salvation Army, Hoxton – as well as providing an accessible venue for our Active Lifestyle Project's weekly Coffee Club sessions, we also share service users who engage in seated exercise sessions to improve the health and wellbeing of disabled people.

vi) Inclusion London – this pan-London disability-related organisation provides us with a range of training programmes to build our skills, knowledge and sustainability. We also engage in funding bids and respond to requests for support in their policy work.

vii) The Advocacy Project (TAP) – as the lead organisation for both statutory and non-statutory advocacy, which is funded by London Borough of Hackney, TAP regularly make referrals into the service and offer our advocates training opportunities throughout the year.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Financial Review:
In both of the last two years the Financial Review has noted the way the COVID 19 pandemic changed the needs of our service users and detailed our changed ways of working in response. While hoping it is now a thing of the past the pandemic's effects continued for the whole of the year under review. However, as reported last year, the pandemic continued to create new areas of work and opportunities for funding.

The results of the year's operations are set out in the attached Financial Statements. Total incoming resources amounted to £271,871 (2021: £301,958) and total resources expended were £220,111 (2021: £255,255). This resulted in a surplus on the year of £51,760 (2021: £46,703). There was a surplus for the year on the unrestricted funds of £53,217 (2021: surplus £20,132). The majority of the Restricted Funds held at the end of the previous year were expended on the projects for which they were intended as set out in Note 11 of the financial statements. Although further restricted funds have been raised for ongoing activities, they are slightly less than in the previous year and so there was a small restricted funds deficit of £1,457 (2021: surplus £26,571).

Risk:
As noted last year the most significant risk faced by the Charity lies in the reliance on the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for both administration and management of service delivery. The Board of Trustees are testing ways to provide greater administrative support for the CEO and are making use of grant funded consultants to identify structural changes to increase the capacity for organisational and service growth so that the charity can maintain sufficient funding to provide for the needs of its service users.

CHOICE remains committed to the ideals of a Disability User Led Organisation. As noted previously this presents its own risks in a period of financial austerity. We continue to adapt our business models and funding bids to articulate the added value created by employment of disabled staff. We will work with others such as Inclusion London, to campaign for Access to Work to cover full costs.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

Reserves Policy:
The Charity sets aside funds, as unrestricted reserves, to meet future anticipated or contingent expenditure, in particular to cover staffing costs such as sickness, redundancy, to develop new activities and to ensure the continuity of services through difficult financial periods. The Board of Trustees, after review, decided that the Charity should aim for a level of the "free reserves", of between 3 and 9 months recurrent expenditure, which equates to approximately £50,000 - £150,000.

As in previous years we have made use of Reserves to maintain existing and to develop new services. We have continued to develop new services, as described elsewhere in the report and attracted new funding to support these activities. As a result, the tangible assets ("free reserves") have increased and at the year-end amounted to £93,657 (2021: £40,440). This is now within the desired range and the Trustees congratulate the staff on the success of their hard work and dedication to the Charity through the COVID-19 pandemic.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees (who are also the directors of Choice in Hackney 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), including Financial Reporting Standard 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland".

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:

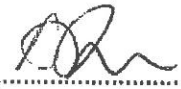
- there is no relevant information of which the charitable company's examiners are unaware; and
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant information and to establish that the examiners are aware of that information.

The independent examiner, Knox Cropper LLP, 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.

APPROVAL

This report was approved by the Board of Directors and Trustees on 7th November 2022 and signed on their behalf by:



.....

Andrew Price (Vice Chair)

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

TO THE MEMBERS OF CHOICE IN HACKNEY

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Choice in Hackney for the period ended 31 March 2022.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charitable company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act'). You are satisfied that the accounts of the Company are not required by charity or company law to be audited and have chosen instead to have an independent examination.

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the Company's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since the Company's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I can confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a registered member of ICAEW which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Richard Billinghurst
Knox Cropper LLP
Chartered Accountants
65-68 Leadenhall Street, London, EC3A 2AD

Date: 14 November 2022

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCORPORATING THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

	Notes	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2022 £	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2021 £
INCOME FROM:							
Grants and donations	2(a)	140,622	61,808	202,430	180,096	39,236	219,332
Charitable activities	2(b)	-	68,485	68,485	1,250	80,997	82,247
Other trading activities		-	-	-	-	-	-
Investments		-	7	7	-	12	12
Other income		-	949	949	-	367	367
Total		140,622	131,249	271,871	181,346	120,612	301,958
EXPENDITURE ON:							
Raising funds	3	-	6,630	6,630	-	7,717	7,717
Charitable activities	3	142,079	71,402	213,481	154,775	92,763	247,538
Total		142,079	78,032	220,111	154,775	100,480	255,255
Net income/(expenditure)		(1,457)	53,217	51,760	26,571	20,132	46,703
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		(1,457)	53,217	51,760	26,571	20,132	46,703
Balances brought forward at 1 April		40,650	40,440	81,090	14,079	20,308	34,387
BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31 MARCH		39,193	93,657	132,850	40,650	40,440	81,090

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31st MARCH 2022

	Notes	2022 £	2022 £	2021 £	2021 £
FIXED ASSETS	7		-		-
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	8	60,460		49,147	
Cash at Bank and In hand		85,933		61,044	
		146,393		110,191	
CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year	9	(13,543)		(29,101)	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			132,850		81,090
NET ASSETS			132,850		81,090
FUNDS					
Restricted Funds	11		39,193		40,650
Unrestricted Funds					
Designated Funds			-		-
General Fund	10		93,657		40,440
			132,850		81,090

The Company is exempt from the requirements relating to preparing audited accounts in accordance with Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006. The members have not required the Company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for:

a) ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and;

b) preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of each financial year and of its profit or loss for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the company.

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 7th November 2022 and signed on behalf of the board

Vice-Chair: Andrew Price

Treasurer: Malcolm Aickin

Registered Company Number: 03423122
Registered Charity Number: 1077287

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

a. Basis of Preparation of Accounts

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), 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.

The presentation currency of the financial statements is Pound Sterling (£).

b. Company Status

CHOICE IN HACKNEY is a company limited by guarantee. In the event of the Charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the Charity.

c. Fund Accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the objects of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements. Statutory grants which are given as contributions towards the Charity's core services are treated as unrestricted.

d. Incoming resources

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.

e. Resources expended

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been included under expenses categories that aggregate all costs for allocation to activities. Governance costs include the costs of servicing meetings of the Board of Trustees, audit and strategic planning.

f. Tangible Fixed Assets and Depreciation

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the costs of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on:
Furniture/Fittings: 25% straight line basis
Office Equipment: 25% straight line basis

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

g. **Allocation of Overhead and Support Costs**
Overhead and support costs have been allocated between charitable activities and other expenditure on the basis of staff time. The allocation of overhead and support costs is analysed in note 3.

h. **Operating Leases**
Rentals payable under operating leases are charged to the statement of financial activities as they fall due over the term of the lease.

2(a). **INCOMING RESOURCES FROM GENERATED FUNDS**
- Grants received

	Restricted Funds £	2022 Un-Restricted Funds £	Total £	2021 Total £
The Henry Smith Charity	69,100	-	69,100	93,300
Lloyds Bank Foundation	24,800	-	24,800	7,545
CATCH Mobilisation	22,352	-	22,352	22,204
South Hackney Parochial	4,000	-	4,000	2,500
Hackney Parochial Charities	5,580	-	5,580	2,500
Access to Work	-	-	-	18,998
London Community Response Fund	-	49,549	49,549	19,703
National Lottery	-	-	-	19,464
City & Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group	12,790	1,997	14,787	12,880
National Emergency Fund	-	-	-	5,990
The Mayor's Community Spaces	-	-	-	13,600
Beneficiaries income	-	-	-	431
Other income and Donations	2,000	1,735	3,735	217
DWP Resource Management	-	8,527	8,527	-
	140,622	61,808	202,430	219,332

2(b). **INCOMING RESOURCES FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES**
- Contracts for services and performance related grants

	Restricted Funds £	2022 Un-Restricted Funds £	Total £	2021 Total £
Homerton University Hospital – Advocacy	-	46,481	46,481	45,802
The Advocacy Project – Advocacy	-	22,004	22,004	33,515
LB of Waltham Forest				1,680
APDA - Advocacy	-	-	-	1,250
London Council – Advocacy	-	-	-	
		68,485	68,485	82,247

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

3. ANALYSIS OF RESOURCES EXPENDED

	Raising Funds	Charitable Activities	Total 2022	Total 2021
Unrestricted	£	£	£	£
Staff costs	6,630	59,668	66,298	77,170
Staff training	-	-	-	20
Accountancy	-	783	783	350
Independent examination fee	-	575	575	300
Rent		4,500	4,500	13,600
Other Costs	-	5,504	5,504	8,618
Legal & Professional Fees	-	372	372	422
	6,630	71,402	78,032	100,480
Restricted				
Staff costs	-	107,235	107,235	104,968
Staff training	-	90	90	100
Accountancy	-	1,748	1,748	1,950
Auditors Remuneration	-	1,675	1,675	2,670
Rent	-	13,811	13,811	8,089
Other Costs	-	14,945	14,945	31,664
Legal & Professional Fees	-	2,575	2,575	5,334
	-	142,079	142,079	154,775
	6,630	213,481	220,111	255,255

Staff costs have been allocated to the above expenditure heads on the basis of estimated staff time spent on the activities. Support costs and governance costs are included in the above analysis. Governance costs amounted to £18,000 (2021: £16,555).

4. STAFF NUMBERS AND COSTS

	2022 £	2021 £
Salaries	162,307	170,577
Social security costs	8,142	8,330
Employer pension	3,084	3,231
Redundancy costs	-	-
	173,533	182,138

The average number of employees during the year was 9 (2021:10).
No employee earned more than £60,000 during the year under review (2021: none).
The remuneration of senior management amounted to £51,063 (2021: £47,656).

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

5. TRUSTEES REMUNERATION

During the year, Trustees received reimbursement of expenses amounting to NIL (2021: NIL).

No trustee received any remuneration other than disclosed in these accounts.

6. TAXATION

CHOICE is a registered charity and is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income and capital gains received to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

7. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Furniture £	Office Equipment £	Total £
Cost			
At 1st April 2021	2,316	23,964	26,280
Additions	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31st March 2022	2,316	23,964	26,280
Depreciation			
At 1st April 2021	2,316	23,964	26,280
Charged for the year	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31st March 2022	2,316	23,964	26,280
Net Book Value			
At 31st March 2022	-	-	-
At 31st March 2021	-	-	-

8. DEBTORS

	2022 £	2021 £
Grant debtors	42,082	46,261
Prepayments and other debtors	18,378	2,886
	60,460	49,147

9. CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within this year

PAYE	4,912	3,860
Deferred income	-	-
Accruals and other creditors	8,631	25,241
	13,543	29,101

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

10. UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
General Fund	40,440	131,249	(78,032)	-	93,657
Total Unrestricted Funds	40,440	131,249	(78,032)	-	93,657

PRIOR YEAR

	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
General Fund	20,308	120,612	(100,480)	-	40,440
Total Unrestricted Funds	20,308	120,612	(100,480)	-	40,440

11. RESTRICTED FUNDS

	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
Disability LIB	499	-	-	-	499
Advocacy, Training and Employment	40,151	93,900	(97,357)	-	36,694
Hate Crime	-	22,352	(22,352)	-	-
CRM System Project	-	2,000	-	-	2,000
Active Lifestyle		22,370	(22,370)	-	-
Total Restricted Funds	40,650	140,622	142,079	-	39,193

PRIOR YEAR

	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
Disability LIB	499	-		-	499
Advocacy, Training and Employment	13,580	102,095	(75,524)	-	40,151
Disability Crime Project (MOPAC)	-	22,204	(22,204)	-	-
Volunteering		5,000	(5,000)	-	-
Active Lifestyle		52,047	(52,047)	-	-
Total Restricted Funds	14,079	181,346	(154,775)	-	40,650

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

11. RESTRICTED FUNDS (continued)

Restricted funds carried forward relate to on-going projects and are available to be expended in 2022/23.

Disability LIB – this was a one-off grant from Disability LIB towards disabled people's communication support, such as translation and interpretation costs.

Advocacy, Training and Employment (now known as the Choices into Work) - this represents amounts received towards the Choices into Work Project to train disabled people to enable them to find meaningful employment in advocacy or other related fields. This project also offers coaching, confidence building and mentoring.

Disability Hate Crime Project – this represents funding received from the Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC). CHOICE operates within the "Community Alliance To Combat Hate" (CATCH) consortium to support disabled survivors of hate crime that take place within London and surrounding boroughs.

Volunteering – this represents amounts received towards the newly expanded Befriending Plus / Volunteering Project. In addition to its staple of reducing disabled people's feeling of social isolation by connecting service users with likeminded volunteers for Befriending, this service also offered socially distanced gardening, shopping / medication drop-off and walking friends services as well as providing remote volunteering opportunities for disabled and non-disabled people to develop their administrative skills.

Client Relationship Management (CRM) system project – part-funding from The Sylvia Waddilove Foundation UK via Pothecary Witham Weld Solicitors allowed us to purchase the CRM system, Charity Log to efficiently streamline data across all projects and services.

Active Lifestyle – this is funding towards our Active Lifestyle project, which included low-impact exercise sessions as well as group activities all taken out online from the comfort of the service users homes via Zoom Video Conferencing to improve health and wellbeing.

12. FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

At the 31st March 2022 the Charity had commitments under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

Amounts payable:	2022 £	2021 £
Within one year	948	1,264
Between two and five years	-	948
After five years	-	-
	948	2,212

In addition to the above, the Charity has a licence agreement for its office premises for an annual rent of £20,000. The licence is reviewed every September.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2022

13. CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

There were no capital commitments at 31st March 2022 (2021: Nil).

14. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

There were no contingent liabilities at 31st March 2022 (2021: Nil).

15. NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Fixed Assets £	Cash at Bank and in Hand £	Debtors £	Current Liabilities £	Total £
Unrestricted	-	57,916	49,284	(13,543)	93,657
Restricted	-	28,017	11,176	-	39,193
Total	-	85,933	60,460	(13,543)	132,850

PRIOR YEAR	Fixed Assets £	Cash at Bank and in Hand £	Debtors £	Current Liabilities £	Total £
Unrestricted	-	30,315	39,226	(29,101)	40,440
Restricted	-	30,729	9,921	-	40,650
Total	-	61,044	49,147	(29,101)	81,090

16. GOING CONCERN

In common with many smaller charities, CHOICE is dependent upon securing income to ensure it can continue to further its charitable objectives as a going concern into the future. The Trustees actively foster relations with existing funders and seek additional funding sources. While the COVID-19 pandemic made operations more difficult, it also provided opportunities to expand our work and develop new sources of funding. Given the increased level of reserves that has arisen as a result of this approach and the value for money in terms of historic costs per service user outcome, the Trustees are of the opinion that the Charity will be able to continue as a going concern into 2024 and beyond.

17. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

There were no related party transaction during the year.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

England & Wales - Charity number 1077287

Accounts

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

(Company Limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES REPORT

AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

COMPANY NO: 03423122
CHARITY NO : 1077287

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

TRUSTEES REPORT

AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

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CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

The Trustees present their report and the financial statements for the year ended 31st March 2021.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Trustees

Sandra Rennie	Chair
Andrew Price	Vice-Chair
Malcolm Aickin	Treasurer
Patricia Charlesworth	
Susan E Childs	
Geoffrey Chilkes	- resigned 16th March 2021
Richard Gray	- resigned 21st May 2021
Mary Julian	
Debra Schiman	
Bharat Siyani	

Advisor	Alex Rook
Company Secretary and Executive Director	Caroline Nelson
Company reg.no.	03423122
Charity reg.no.	1077287
Registered Office	CHOICE IN HACKNEY Defoe Block, Ground Floor 50 Hoxton Street London N1 6LP
Independent Examiner	Knox Cropper LLP 65 Leadenhall Street London EC3A 2AD
Bankers	Barclays Bank PLC 3-5 Kingsland High Street London E8 2JT

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

The trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of the Companies Act) present their combined directors' report and trustees' report, as required by company law, together with the financial statements of Choice in Hackney (the Charity) for the year ended 31 March 2021. The trustees confirm that the trustees' report and financial statements of the Charity comply with the current statutory requirements, the requirements of the Charity's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommend Practice (SORP) "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

Administration Details of the Charity, its Trustees and Advisors

Administration details relating to CHOICE are set out under Legal and Administrative Information, on page 1.

Structure, Governance and Management

The Charity is a company limited by guarantee and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association.

Trustees are recruited from members of the Charity, ex-employees and from the wider community. They are elected and co-opted under the terms of the company's Articles of Association. Users are represented on the Board of Trustees. At the Annual General Meeting, the Board of Trustees is elected by the members of the Charity and serves from the close of that meeting until the close of the succeeding Annual General Meeting. The Board of Trustees consists of not less than 3 members and until otherwise determined by a General Meeting, not more than 12 members.

The Trustees were given an induction to the work of CHOICE by the Executive Director and introduced to all staff members. The formal policies and procedures are reviewed annually.
The Management of the Charity is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees. Operational decisions are taken by the Executive Director and staff. Strategic decisions are made by the Board of Trustees in consultation with the Executive Director. The Board of Trustees meets at least 4 times a year and the Executive Director normally attends all meetings.

The Trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and in particular, to those related to its operations and finances of the Charity, and are satisfied that systems and procedures are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks. A review of the risk assessment was carried out by members of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Director during the year.

Public Benefit

In reviewing the Charity's aims and objectives and in planning future activities, the Trustees refer to the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit.

Objectives and Activities

CHOICE has the charitable objects of working with disabled, Greater London residents by providing Independent Living Services such as: Active Lifestyle, Advocacy, Befriending Plus / Volunteering, Disability Hate Crime and Training & Employment.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

The objects of the Charity are:

a) To relieve disabled persons in Greater London who require assistance to realise their full potential and lead fulfilling lives. In particular, by the provision of a service that assists such persons to obtain their full rights and privileges as citizens.

b) To advance the education of the general public as to the needs and interests of disabled people. From July 2008, The Charity Commission has allowed CHOICE to operate across Greater London and the company's Memorandum has been changed accordingly.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance:
In the period under review, CHOICE promoted the following services to disabled Greater London residents aged 18 plus and their networks:

- Active Lifestyle
- Advocacy
- Disability Hate Crime
- Befriending Plus / Volunteering
- Training & Employment

We achieved this by providing the following services:

a) **Active Lifestyle**:
This project was able to support more disabled people during the period thanks to short-term COVID-19-focussed funding received from City & Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group (Crisis & Recovery Grant), Wave 3 of the London Community Response Fund COVID-19 Fund and National Lottery Community Response Fund, all of which was shared with its sister project – Befriending Plus / Volunteering.

The Coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdown halted any activities being organised from our usual venue of the Salvation Army, Hoxton and face-to-face meetings were also suspended to prevent infection / transmission rates. This meant that our Community Volunteer Officers had to find new platforms to host our weekly Coffee Club, and exercise classes, as they were both very popular activities and during lockdown, became even more important for our service users to engage in some type of social activities for their wellbeing.

Consequently, both services were moved to the online platform, Zoom Video Conferencing. Our Coffee Club became the Online Social Group and 15 sessions were held during the period October 2020 to May 2021. One of the unseen benefits of this group was that it provided a way for service users who would ordinarily have had difficulty travelling to our venue-based Coffee Club sessions, to be able to participant in much needed social interactions from the comfort of their home. It also allowed us to host different activities such as virtual tours which was a new experience for us and really enjoyable for all. 8 online exercise classes were held during the same period, which also allowed us to reach more service users who would not have been able to travel to gyms or parks for exercise and was fully accessible to disabled people who have a range of impairments.

Many of our service users were already isolated before lockdown and faced even greater challenges during the height of the pandemic. Providing opportunities for them to connect with other disabled people was therefore invaluable to their overall health and wellbeing. Below are highlights from the survey carried out during the year:

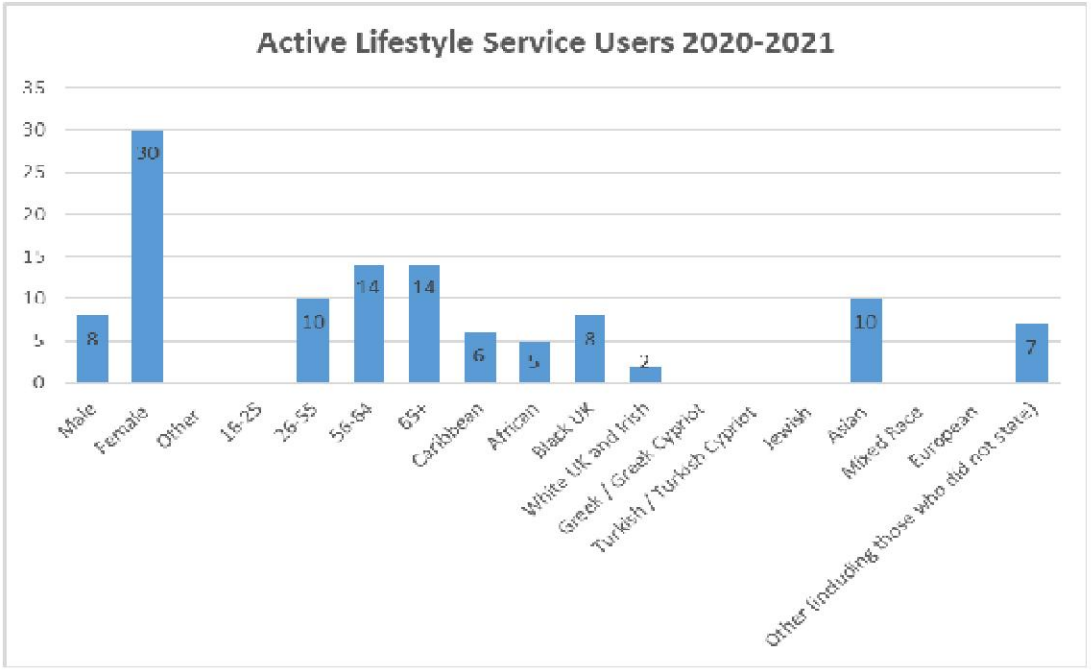
- 77% of our service users had enjoyed the sessions;
- 75% reported improved wellbeing;
- 82% had renewed confidence; and
- 80% felt less isolated as a result of utilising our services.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

a) **Active Lifestyle continued**:
The following photographs show Active Lifestyle service users (frames 1 and 2) enjoying one of the project's activities: online seated exercise sessions. They are following the instructor who is shown in frame 3 as she guides them through some gentle, low-impact exercise from the safety of their homes during the COVID-19 lockdown.

38 disabled people (15 in 2019-2020) enjoyed online activities arranged by the project and reported improved physical and mental wellbeing. The following bar chart presents statistical data for the project:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

b) **Advocacy**:

We are pleased to have received continued funding from London Borough of Hackney via the lead provider, The Advocacy Project for our non-statutory and statutory advocacy services. We are now in our third year of these services providing much needed advocacy to disabled Hackney residents. We are also grateful to long-term funder Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust for supporting us with our health-related advocacy service.

This year has been a challenging one for our Advocacy service. The Coronavirus outbreak, which resulted in a lockdown period of several months, significantly and adversely effected our disabled service users. The impact of the pandemic resulted in an increase in service users' needs and a higher demand for Advocacy services. This was particularly the case for those requiring support around mental health, accessing services, housing and for some of our service users with Learning Disabilities, support with child protection matters.

The majority of our services users developed higher support needs as their issues are very complex. This increased complexity meant we experienced an increase in the number of service users who very quickly, became impatient. It's been difficult to manage the expectations of service users who generally want their situations resolved quickly, which is very often unrealistic. Not only were Advocates managing expectations, but also behaviours as on occasion service users became abusive towards them. It was made clear however, that this practice would not be tolerated and our staff would do everything they could to continue to support them (on the proviso that there was mutual respect).

This was made much worse by the London Borough of Hackney experiencing a severe Cyber-attack in October 2020. The consequences of the attack have continued to be detrimental to service users, severely impacting their quality of life. Core Departments such as Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, plus the result of service users' assessments and other information have been irrecoverable. The Housing Department have been impacted as they are unable to record residents onto the Housing Register and no-one can bid for properties. Children & Families Department's Child Protection assessments have been "deleted" and social workers haven't been able to retrieve service users' information, nor could reassessments take place.

The home should be a sanctuary for us all particularly as we were all forced to spend so much time there during the lockdown. Unfortunately, there was a significant increase in cases relating to inadequate housing. For example, the lack of properties which were suitable for disabled residence due to inadequate or no adaptations, the landlord not adhering to maintenance issues or responding slowly to complaints. All of these issues resulted in our service users becoming very frustrated. Additionally, we are receiving a very low number of statutory referrals which we attribute, in part, to social workers' not understanding the criteria for when they should refer service users for advocacy support (i.e. within the remit of the Care Act).

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

b) **Advocacy continued**:

We are acutely aware that during this period, remote working presented significant challenges for some of our service users. Particularly, at the height of the pandemic, when many local services were closed and/or shifted to online delivery methods - it was extremely important to us that our service remained accessible. However, external factors proved more problematic. In particular, many of our service users complained that public health information and government guidance were inaccessible, ambiguous and too detailed for them.

For example, since March 2020 some surgeries moved their face-to-face operations to the online platform - 'Ask My GP'. This requires the user to have Internet access and the ability to complete a contact form, detailing the sensitive information they need the GP's support with. This caused difficulties for many disabled people as they:

- May not be able to read and write English;
- May have Learning Disabilities and have issues communicating their health needs;
- May have a visual impairment making it almost impossible to navigate their way around an online service;
- Don't have access to devices that can connect to the Internet; and
- Even if they have a device, they may not have the technological skills to be able to do this.

There was no equity of access under this scheme for the vulnerable adults we support as the Ask My GP service acted as a barrier to them receiving services and treatments so desperately needed during the pandemic. As a result of our advocacy interventions, we were able to book appointments online for our service users and supported them with any Information Communications Technology as necessary. Everything was fully explained in ways that were accessible and better for them to understand.

We were pleased during the period under review to have received short-term COVID-19 focussed funding from the National Emergencies Trust Disabled People's Organisation COVID-19 Fund. This funding allowed us to focus on emergency responses such as Welfare Benefits, and access to medical and social care as well employment support i.e. negotiating with employers to allow their disabled employees adequate time to shield and negotiating with Access to Work for equipment grants to facilitate home-working. We also supported more disabled people to access benefits as due to the pandemic, they were not able to access mainstream services. We assisted disabled people who were homeless to access support, as well as those who were left without personal care due to a breakdown in their care package.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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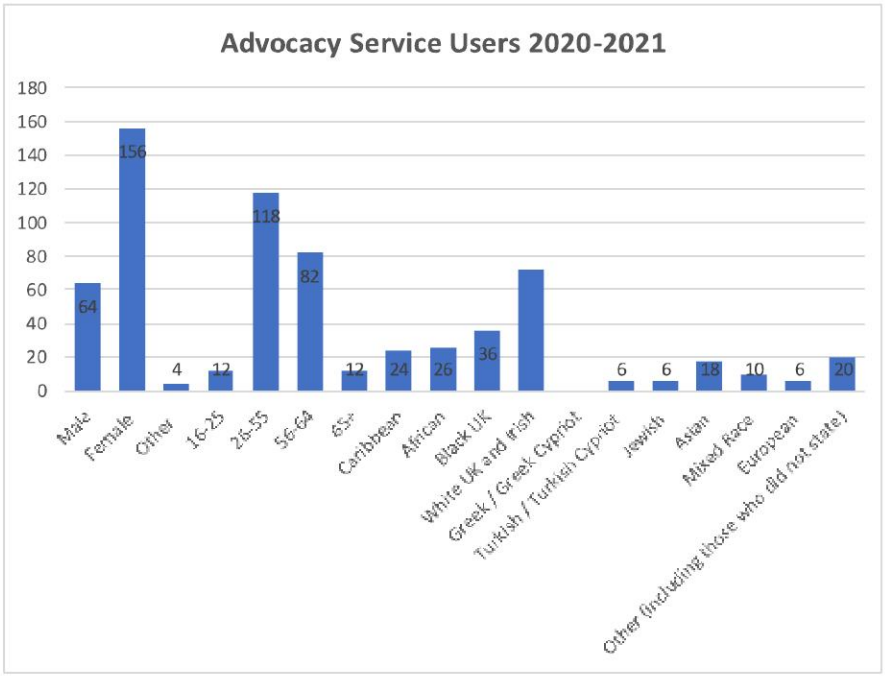
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

b) **Advocacy continued**:

On the whole, we have enjoyed advocating for service users, particularly when we were able to gain positive outcomes for them. Many of them have shown appreciation for the support they've received from the Advocacy team, despite the lengthy time it takes to get a response i.e. from their Landlord and Adult Social Services.

Funding during this period allowed us to support 224 disabled people (306 in 2019-2020) with a range of Advocacy services including: welfare benefits applications, Care Packages, Health-related issues including accessing medical services. Although there is a reduction in the number of disabled people being support during the period, compared to the previous financial year, the nature of the work became much more time intensive and therefore our Advocates were able to dedicate more time to each service user, who often had multiple issues ensuring their needs were met during this very challenging period. For example, for one funder we supported 107 disabled people who had between them 190 separate issues.

The following bar chart presents statistical data for the Advocacy Project:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) **Befriending Plus / Volunteering Project**:
The project has never experienced challenges and opportunities like those posed in the last year during the height of the Coronavirus pandemic. There have been a lot of changes however its core goal of supporting disabled Hackney residents remains the same.

Expanded service:
The Befriending Plus / Volunteering Project was able to greatly expand its size and capability this year as a response to the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. This was due to the high number of volunteers who were able to volunteer due to being furloughed and funding shared by its sister project - Active Lifestyle. We are also grateful to have received short-term funding from Hackney Parochial Charities and South Hackney Parochial Charity during the period.

With many services overwhelmed, closed or inaccessible, our voluntary services became invaluable to the community. However, our existing service which had previously consisted of Befriending, Gardening and Administration roles, would need to be adapted to fit this new landscape to include social distancing to reduce infection rates. Each of these volunteering roles had to be made COVID-safe in order to continue to provide our desperately needed services.

Shopping volunteers:
To meet the difficulties that many disabled people faced with obtaining shopping or medication, a Shopping Volunteer role was created. Our newly recruited volunteers would then go on to successfully support disabled people by collecting their shopping and/or medication, which was delivered to the service user's door. Our shopping service continued to be very beneficial, receiving a steady number of referrals throughout the period.

Befriending Plus:
Reducing isolation for disabled people has been the traditional target of the project, and in particular, our Befriending Plus service designed to connect service users with likeminded volunteers. The lockdown created a unique challenge, as it was now unsafe for our volunteers to meet with their service users face-to-face. Popular meeting places (i.e. in the home, restaurants, community centres) were now closed or restricted. To facilitate this change, all new and existing Befriending Plus relationships became remote, taking place via phone calls or with newly implemented online platform - Zoom Video Conferencing.

Walking friends:
A Walking Volunteer role was also developed to address the needs of service users whose usual routines and activities were disrupted due to i.e. the need to accommodate social distancing. This new service gave them a healthy activity and a volunteer to have a friendly chat with whilst also taking in some fresh air.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) **Befriending Plus / Volunteering continued**:

Walking friends continued:

A service user
(and her dog)
take in some fresh air in a local park.

The volunteer accompanied them
from a safe social distance
(and took this very dramatic picture!)

Lockdown presented even greater challenges for disabled residents who were already isolated. Providing opportunities for them to connect with volunteers proved invaluable. Many reported improved wellbeing and outlook thanks to the efforts of our extraordinary volunteers, who had also identified risks which helped safeguard our vulnerable clients.

Our Gardening service became even more important, as many service users relied on the outdoor spaces closest to them for recreation and exercise – their back garden. Our gardening volunteers got to work ensuring gardens were accessible with no face-to-face contact between them and the service users to accommodate social distancing: alternative entrances were used to the back garden (avoiding walking through the service user's home) and they wore Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). They excelled themselves and performed extraordinary feats of horticulture, transforming overgrown spaces into gardens of which residents can feel proud.

The picture on the left shows the service user's inaccessible, overgrown and cluttered garden. The picture on the left shows the service user's garden after our volunteer gardener had cleared it of all clutter, removed all the weeds and prepared the soil before laying the lawn, making the outdoor space accessible and a more pleasant and inviting area.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) **Befriending Plus / Volunteering continued**:

Administrative Volunteers:
Our previously office-based Administrative Volunteers also moved to remote working during lockdown. They have provided much needed support with correspondence, research and other tasks required by the shift to working virtually, which was challenging for the staff team and the support our volunteers provided has been essential.

Social Media Volunteers:
The Befriending Plus / Volunteering Project has also continued to shape our social media presence and with the help of our skilled social media volunteers, have greatly expanded our reach online. This will assist with ongoing fundraising efforts, which shall be a priority throughout the next period.

Referrals:
We now receive referrals from social services, the NHS, and numerous organisations throughout Hackney and the City, all of whom have really appreciated the success we have achieved with the individuals they have referred to us. This demonstrates that the value of our work is being appreciated by people beyond those we are supporting. The pandemic was a real challenge for our organisation and the community, but the strength that we've discovered as a result suggests a bright future for the project.

Feedback:
We are very heartened by the positive feedback received from both our service users and volunteers during the COVID-19 lockdown, which includes the following:

- "I am not sure how I would have gotten through the lockdown without my shopping volunteer";
- "It's been lovely to have help with my garden, and to have some companionship when everything stopped"; and from a volunteer –
- "I really enjoyed the work and look forward to doing more!"

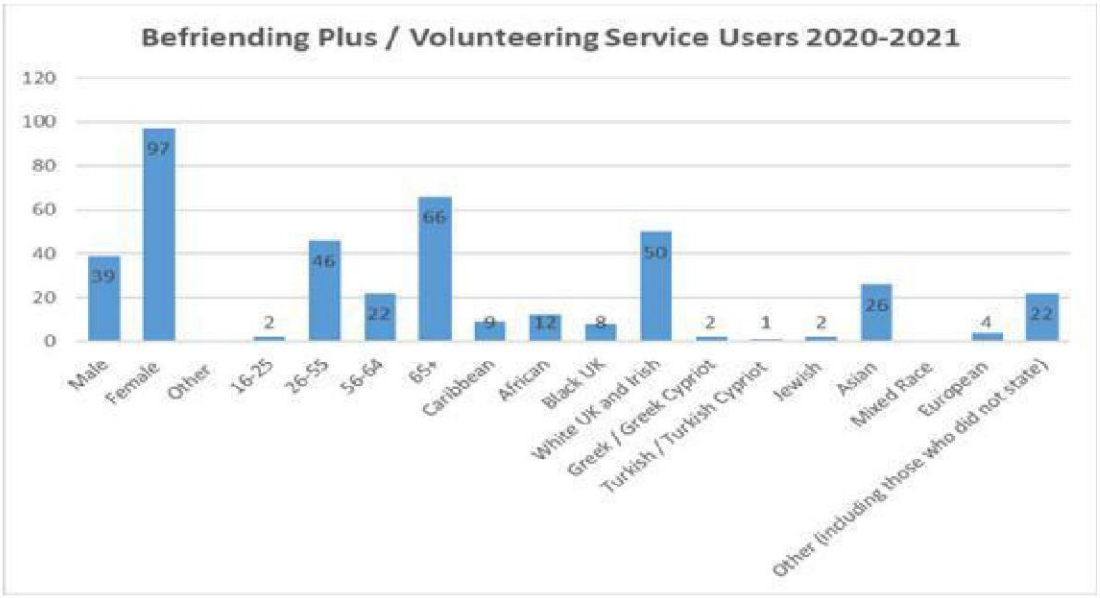
We are grateful for all of the 137 volunteers (45 in 2019-2020) who joined us during the last year to support 136 service users (46 in 2019-2020).

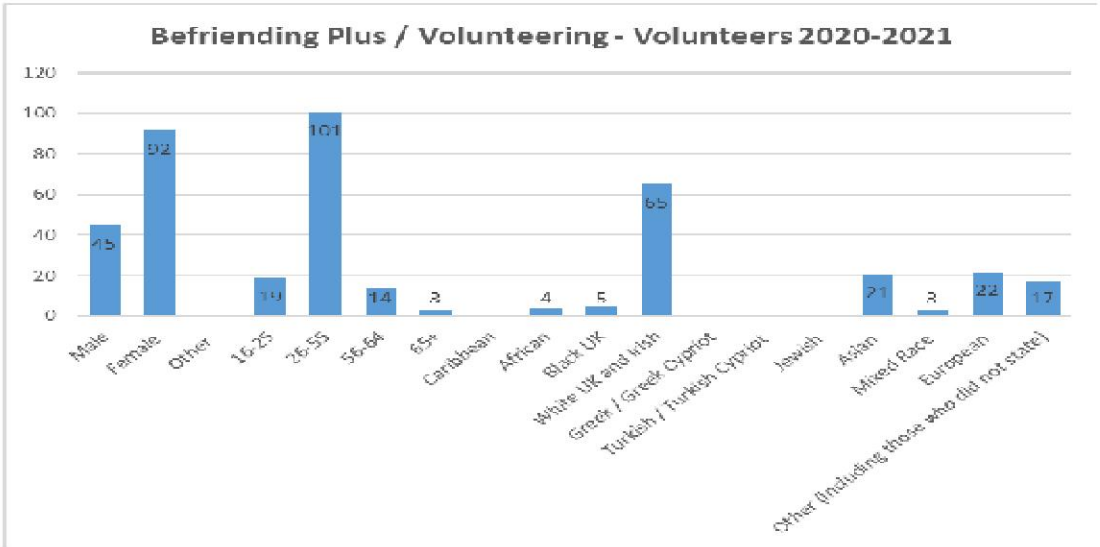
CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) **Befriending Plus / Volunteering continued**:

The following bar charts presents statistical data for the Befriending Plus / Volunteering Project:





CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Disability Hate Crime:**

The organisation continues its role within a consortium funded by the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) entitled "Community Alliance To Combat Hate" (CATCH). This advocacy hate crime project is now in its sixth year working in partnership with a network of community organisations specialising in supporting people who have experienced a hate crime due to their: race, faith / religion, sexual orientation (including attacks based on homophobia and transphobia) and/or disability.

CATCH partners work to tackle hate crime, discrimination and abuse within the protected characteristic equality strands. Whilst we all have our own individual specialisms, we often come together to work inter-sectionally or make referrals to network organisations within the partnership. We also work very closely with the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and they have also been the source of many referrals during the period.

Our hate crime advocates will identify the support needs of individuals and enable them to access other services and also:

- Assist with reporting incidents;
- Support individuals through criminal justice processes;
- Deliver outreach to communities impacted by hate crime to promote the service; and
- Share good practice internally within the partnership.

Disability hate crime during the period rose steadily with many of our service users reporting that lockdown increased hostilities – being shouted at to remain inside the home where they belonged, pushed and shoved out of the way during panic buying sessions were just a few of the incidents that we offered support with during the period under review. More worryingly, we also gave support to survivors of hate crime and/or domestic violence where perpetrators are neighbours or within the home (where they were told to remain). We were pleased to be able to bring this service online in order to quickly meet demand.

At the time of writing, we can inform you that our funder, MOPAC and the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) have invited CHOICE IN HACKNEY (as a stakeholder) to engage in a new, independent Hate Crime Stakeholder Reference Group. The group will act as a voice for the hate crime sector and work with MOPAC and MPS governance structures to help shape how they meet the challenge of hate crime in London. These types of engagements have proved very rewarding in the past and we look forward to playing our part in tackling hate crime in London going forward.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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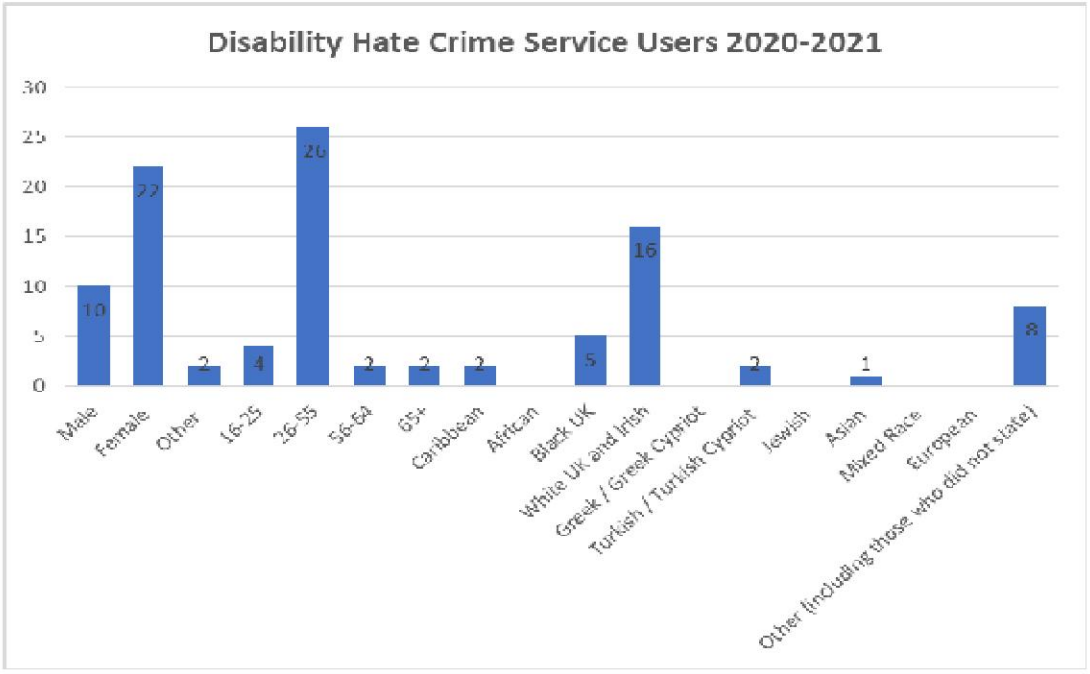
Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

d) **Disability Hate Crime continued:**

We are also very pleased to be able to inform you that after a tendering process, our existing partnership has been awarded a new contract with MOPAC for 2-years with the potential for an additional 2-year extension from 1st October 2021. Existing funding allowed us to support 34 disabled people (36 in 2019-2020).

Although this figure is lower than the previous year, there was more time spent on multiple service users issues during the pandemic, which was partly due to the service being moved online and additional support being provided to accommodate service users impairments in relation to ensuring their access needs were also met. Our catchment area was extended to include working with disabled people in Hillingdon and Surrey to name but a few locations. As these areas are very far from our base in Hackney, substantial travel time was also a contributing factor to the reduced numbers. There is also a waiting list for this service. At the time of writing, we successfully applied for funding from London Community Response Fund – Wave 5, which will support us to recruit an additional part-time hate crime worker to meet demand.

The following bar chart presents statistical data for the Hate Crime Project:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **Training & Employment Department:**

The Training & Employment Dept (TED) has grown considerably this year in spite of the uniquely difficult circumstances that the Coronavirus pandemic brought with it. Thanks to three-year's funding (July 2019 – June 2022) from the Henry Smith Charity, the core project, Choices into Work (formerly known as the Advocacy Training & Employment course), has not only grown in capacity and capability, but is now supplemented with new training courses and programmes due to an additional one-year's COVID-19-related funding received from the Henry Smith Charity – Community Match Challenge. We are better suited than ever to support disabled people into meaningful work.

Choices into Work programme:

The pandemic and resulting lockdown completely changed the training course. We were no longer able to host trainees in a training venue, nor facilitate physical placements from the CHOICE office. This had the potential to end all of our activities. Instead, we successfully transitioned the project to a digital platform and in so doing made the course accessible to a wide range of trainees from around the United Kingdom. This includes those who would have been unable to travel to a venue (particularly one located in London). We've also been able to accommodate more placements virtually at CHOICE, ensuring none of our trainees missed out on the full experience of the Choices into Work course.

The solution is not perfect however, and we have experienced new issues around accessibility such as the provision of training materials being delivered online. We are able to accommodate these access issues by providing printed material (slides etc) to those trainees who require them.

Despite the challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic, we are pleased to report that the course has once again exceeded its targets and supported another 32 disabled people on their journey into work, 11 of whom have now gained employment. The continued popularity of the course and its enduring success demonstrates the great need for it amongst disabled people. At the time of writing, restrictions are being lifted, and it is hoped that we shall be able to adopt a blended approach to training that will allow us to deliver the training via both face-to-face and virtual methods - reaching more disabled people than ever.

We have also successfully gained accreditation at Level 4 of the National Qualifications Framework, from our accreditors, Open College Network Credit4Learning. This involved us in designing new modules, units, and assessment frameworks. This allows us to award qualifying trainees with a new standard of certificate – Diploma level, which reflects their capabilities. Level 4 candidates represent the most accomplished of our trainees and the certificate shall assist them to find work.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
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FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

The coaching programme continued with our Work Experience Coach providing invaluable coaching to our trainees and beneficiaries and the Advocacy Training & Employment Coordinator, engaged some trainees in Confidence Building sessions. We are very pleased to be able to continue to offer these services to those trainees most in need of them as we have seen the way the coaching service transforms lives with the application of patience, understanding and encouragement.

Another great success of the last year has been the start of the Job Club – held three times a month, with several sessions held throughout each month. Some of the topics of these sessions have focussed on practical advice on disability employment issues. We've covered everything from finding and applying for work to challenging discrimination in the workplace and supporting clients with challenging behaviour. We now have over 20 presentations on numerous topics that can be utilised for future training.

In the next year we plan to deliver our 40th Choices into Work course. It's been an eventful and challenging year, but the project has grown considerably and is now better placed than ever to tackle the complex issues that prevent disabled people from finding meaningful employment. We are in the process of becoming a One Stop Shop for the employment needs of disabled people in London and beyond.

We are pleased to report the following achievements of former trainees over the period:

- 11 trainees gained employment / self-employment;
- 11 trainees are undertaking Volunteering / Placement roles;
- 5 withdrew due to health issues;
- 3 trainees have gone on to further education; and
- 2 trainees are exploring their options.

The following highlights the survey results undertaken in the year:

- 27 trainees confirmed they had increased confidence;
- 26 had gained the ability to look for work;
- 30 trainees gained new skills;
- 30 trainees had improved their awareness of disability; and
- 26 had improved their welling.

Some of the positive feedback we received from trainees during the period includes:

- "This course has been fascinating and I am so grateful it has given me focus";

- *"Following the training, I am ready to get into the professional experience with their Coaching, weekly Job Club and Mentoring schemes"*

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Job Coaching:
Thanks to additional one-year's COVID-19-related funding received from the Henry Smith Charity – Community Match Challenge we were able to expand our training offer to include coaching sessions with our Work Experience Coach. These sessions included providing disabled people with employability coaching, combined with wellbeing sessions which resulted in a holistic approach to job-hunting that would enhance their perspective of themselves. It also challenged them both professionally and personally: empowering them to make adjustments in their lives to meet their goals. This dynamic approach had a very positive impact on attendees and some of their positive feedback can be found later on in this report.

Our current coaching system offers 6 one-to-one sessions for every individual in need of employability coaching. Sessions include: job search, interview preparation, confidence building, job retention, self-employment, wellbeing and general career development. Each session includes components such as time management, how to cultivate existing skills, goal setting and changing mindsets to progress on the employability ladder. Due to the lockdown, these sessions were held via the phone, email and for the most part on Zoom Video Conferencing.

The overall aim for job coaching is to find employment, which is the best outcome. The most satisfying outcomes are witnessing improvements in attendees productivity and being motivated to adapt a new mindset that will make their employability journey less stressful and more enjoyable. Part of job seeker coaching also requires, CV update sessions and confidence building, which every attendee received during the period.

Due to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and the UK-wide lockdown, a decision was made to merge wellbeing with employability sessions because some trainees were experiencing mental health issues due to being isolated. These wellbeing sessions proved very popular as it allowed attendees to identify their needs, prioritise their mental health, and make positive decisions about their lifestyle. During the 6 sessions, 3 attendees were advised to seek counselling and access support within their employment to help them feel valued and appreciated.

Feedback:
We are very proud to have received the following feedback:

- *"I am willing to work with your Work Experience Coach, after her presentation during the Choices into Work course"*
- *"She did a great job with me!"*
- *"She helped me to implement positive changes and she motivates me"*
- *"I have a new business plan to refer to and I have learned how to set up a timeline with steps and actions to follow through"*
- *"I have got a new job and start in November – I couldn't have done it without you and our chats – you have been brilliant!"*

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Job Club:
Thanks to funding that arrived late in the year (December 2020), we were able to support an additional 15 disabled people with a Job Club. These sessions provided an arena for disabled people to engage in facilitated group sessions, which had an emphasis on safety, confidentiality and respect.

Sessions were held at least 3 times a month and improved opportunities for those being coached to meet each other, network, share resources and learn from each other to awaken dormant skills and knowledge. Popular sessions have been on topics such as: Professional development; Managing wellbeing within the workplace; Working in the third sector; and How to get the most out of volunteering. The sessions feature seminars, activities, guided discussions, role-plays, and guest speakers and are fully customised to suit the attendees needs.

We have also been able to offer one-to-one coaching from our Job Coach and/or Advocacy Training & Employment Co-ordinator. These sessions benefited 11 people who received support with setting job goals, discussing and overcoming barriers into work, and visualising the changes they want to make in their lives.

Mentoring:
We have also provided 26 mentoring sessions to disabled people which has engaged 17 trainees in the funded period. One of our highly experienced Disability Rights Advocates has provided them with valuable experience and skills in disability advocacy. Lockdown had caused former host organisations to stop taking on our trainees as they were closed or had furloughed their staff. This meant that CHOICE became the primary (and sole) host for trainees who had completed the virtual classroom-based element of the Choices into Work course. Trainees were engaged in delivering a high quality advocacy service by taking on light casework before progressing to more complex ones. Between them they supported 32 service users to i.e. obtain benefits and services needed to help them live independently.

Equipment:
We were pleased to be able to use part of our funding from Henry Smith Charity – Community Match Challenge to purchase laptops, tablets and mobile phones for trainees who were being coached and mentored. This allowed them to engage with our services, service users and take the first steps towards creating a new business or begin a career – all from the comfort of their home.

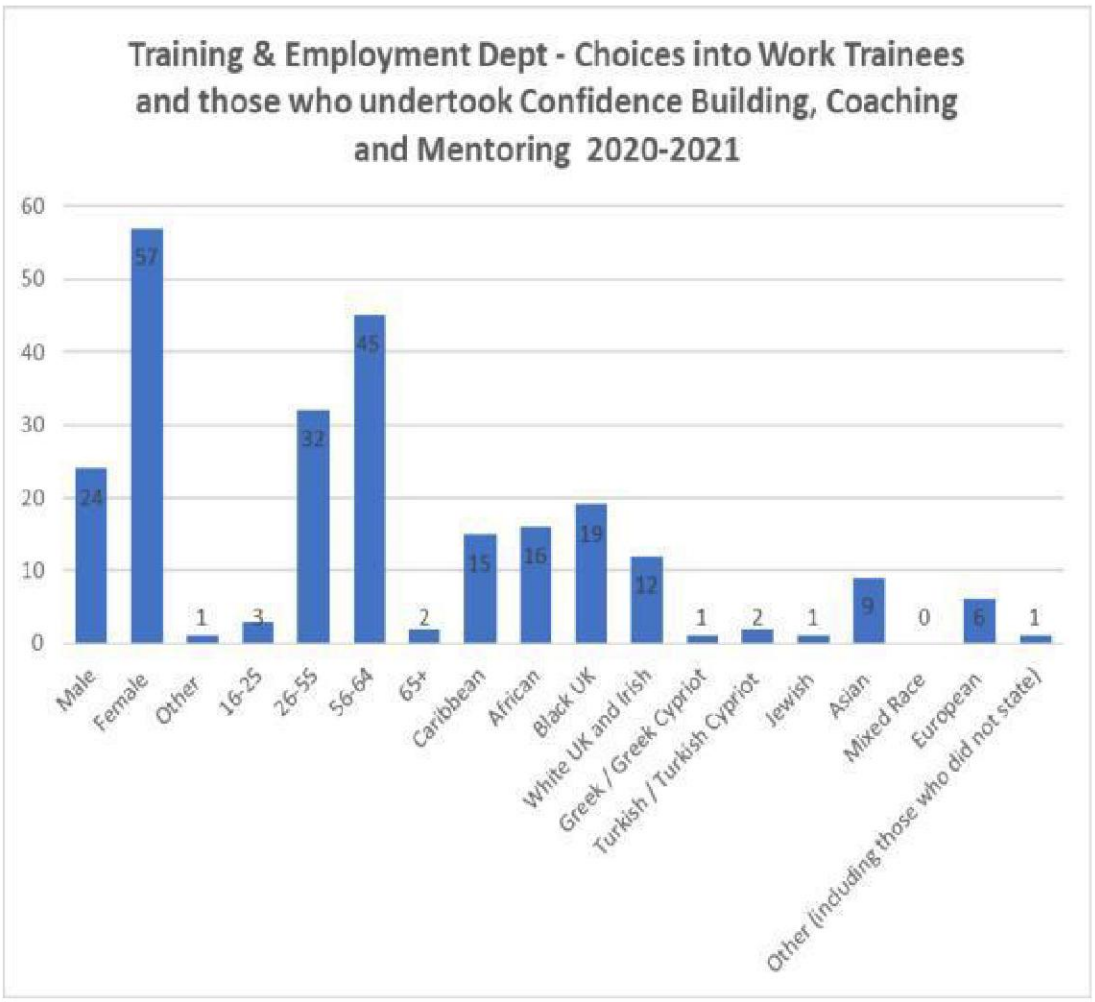
CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

During the period under review, 3 Choices into Work training programmes were carried out for 32 disabled people (34 in 2019-2020). Overall, there were 82 beneficiaries of the services available with the Training & Employment Dept including: Confidence Building, Coaching and Mentoring sessions.

The following bar chart presents statistical data for the Choices into Work Project:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

e) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Specialist Training Programmes – Domestic Violence and Hate Crime:
We are grateful to Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales for providing 3-years part-time funding towards our specialist training programmes of Domestic Violence and Hate Crime.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the UK-wide lockdown significantly impacted the recruitment processes and start dates for both of these specialist training programmes. Despite a thorough recruitment process, we were only able to recruit one Domestic Violence Trainer and are having to again restart the process to recruit a Hate Crime Trainer.

Domestic Violence programme:
From experience, we know that online training delivery methods (as opposed to our traditional face-to-face methods) take longer and more time was needed to prepare a syllabus that met the accrediting bodies standards. The trainer then prepared and delivered accessible training sessions within the continuing lockdown situation. Consequently, we consider it prudent to plan for up to 3 sessions in Year 2 to make up for this year's shortfall.

The main successes of the work funded by the grant over the last year are as follows:

Specialist Trainer Recruitment:
We were able to recruit a highly skilled, disabled trainer who has many years' paid work experience of domestic violence advocacy and who is also a fully qualified Home Office accredited Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy (IDVA) Advisor.

The Domestic Violence Trainer quickly planned the syllabus, delivered and co-ordinated 1 rolling programme of specialist domestic violence training, ensuring it met the requirements of the accrediting body: Open College Network Credit4Learning (OCN).

The trainer then went on to:

Recruit and enrol trainees:
10 disabled people with a range of impairments were recruited onto the initial training session with the aim of developing their knowledge and skills and halving the number of high-risk victims of domestic abuse and the amount of time it takes for victims to get effective help. These trainees studied a wide scope of training topics and have broadened their employment opportunities.

We were surprised and pleased by the response to our training publicity but realised the training was addressing a need that was very much in demand throughout the UK-wide lockdown.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

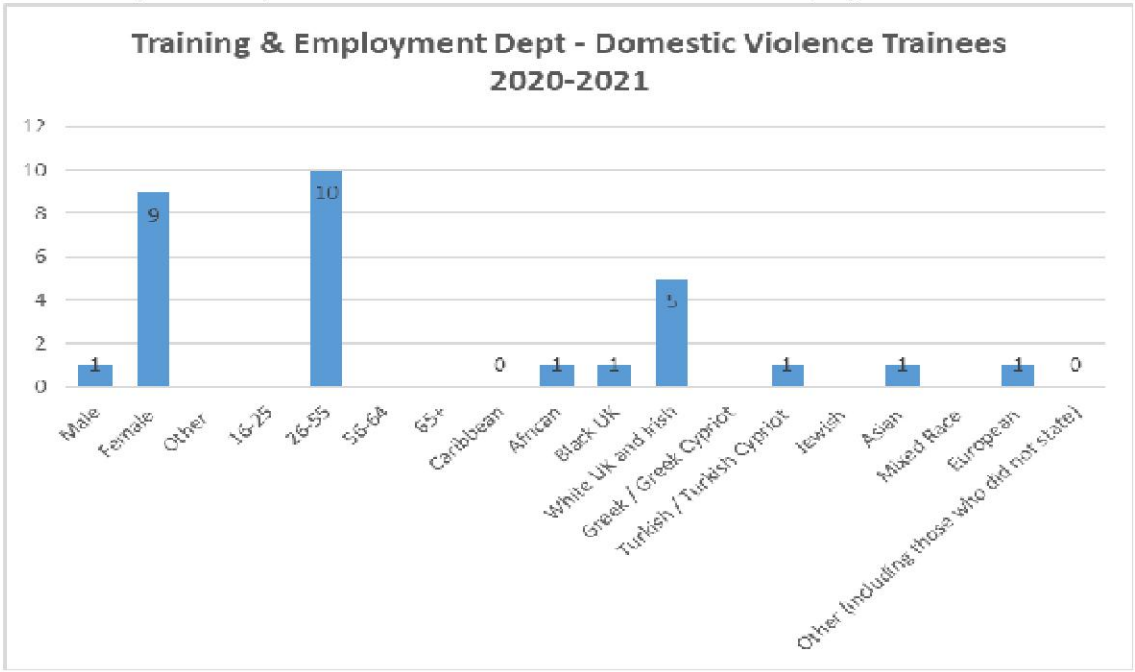
e) **Training & Employment Dept continued:**

Successful completion of course:
8 trainees successfully completed the course, and 6 are about to undertake their work placements.

As the subject matter (domestic abuse) is very sensitive and trainees (including some who may be survivors of domestic violence themselves) would be expected to undertake the training in the home still shared with the perpetrator of abuse, we were concerned that the number of trainees who went on to complete the course or undertake their work placements would be low. However, we consider 8 (of the initial 10 trainees enrolled) to have completed the training and 6 (out of 8 trainees) who are about to undertake their work placements as a success in what are very uncertain and challenging times for everybody.

Hate crime training programme:
In relation to the hate crime training as we are an established training academy for OCN and have experience of compiling other accredited programmes, we are hopeful that the Level 4 Diploma will be achieved within a limited time period. During the period under review, the specialist Domestic Violence programme engaged 10 disabled people.

The following bar chart presents statistical data for the Domestic Violence programme:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

f) **Partnership working:**
Partnership working allows us to reach out to more disabled people. We aim to raise awareness of the services that we provide within an expanded community. This will secure the rights of disabled people as full citizens, improve their quality of life and promote an inclusive society where disabled people can participate fully and equally. We are pleased to continually expand and strengthen our network of organisations who are open to reciprocal working, which encourages sharing a lived experience of disability, knowledge, training opportunities, services, a loyal customer base as well as joining together to strengthen consortium-based funding applications.

Our network of organisations includes (but is not limited to):

i) Department for Work & Pensions – who continue to provide our Choices into Work project with guest speakers during the classroom-based element of the course on topics such as Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments. The benefit of this is that trainees receive up to date information direct from the source on benefit entitlements for themselves and also for the disabled people who they will be advocating for;

ii) Disability Action in Islington and Hackney Employment Hub – these two organisations have provided us with both accessible training venues in the past for the classroom-based element of the Choices into Work project and trainees wanting to upskill and improve their employment prospects by undertaking the course;

iii) Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE) – have provided us with co-training opportunities to schools on the needs of children and young adults who attend special educational needs (SEND) establishments;

iv) Community Alliance to Combat Hate (CATCH) – this consortium led by the Gay London Police Monitoring Group (Galop) regularly make referrals into our disability hate crime service. We also carry out joint-working with partner organisations Stay Safe East and Real Tower Hamlets.

v) Salvation Army, Hoxton – as well as providing an accessible venue for our Active Lifestyle Project's weekly Coffee Club sessions, we also share service users who engage in seated exercise sessions to improve health and wellbeing of disabled people.

vi) The Advocacy Project (TAP) – as the lead organisation for both statutory and non-statutory advocacy, which is funded by London Borough of Hackney, TAP regularly make referrals into the service and offer our advocates training opportunities throughout the year.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

f) **Partnership working continued:**

vii) Inclusion London – this pan-London disability-related organisation provided us with a range of training programmes to build our skills, knowledge and sustainability throughout the year.

g) **Quality marks:**

i) **Trusted Charity:**
At the time of writing, we can confirm that the organisation successfully completed its reassessment process and therefore continues to be recognised as a "Trusted Charity" giving us real credibility and recognition as a small third-sector charity. This award was quality assessed by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) in the summer of 2021.

ii) **Open College Network Credit4Learning (OCN):**
We are pleased to confirm that following negotiations with the Open College Network Credit4Learning (OCN), they have agreed to accredit two programmes within the Training & Employment Dept. This means that all of our hard work in outlining and then providing OCN with detailed course modules for the Disability and Domestic Violence plus the Hate Crime components of the Training & Employment Dept have now been awarded a Level 4 Diploma. Our trainees undertaking the two modules will be able to receive an accredited certificate from OCN, which displays their logo.

h) **Impact of COVID-19 on the organisation:**
The Coronavirus pandemic and the resulting UK-wide lockdown had caused a great deal of disruption to many disabled people and the organisations they rely on to support them. No amount of planning could have prepared us for what was a very challenging situation since our organisational and business plans do not include a section on "What to do in the event of a pandemic!"

The Trustees however, did quickly introduce a stand-alone COVID-19 Risk Assessment during the year, which includes robust procedures and processes that our team followed to mitigate against i.e. infection risks. The document forms part of an arsenal of strategic planning that contribute towards making CHOICE IN HACKNEY (CHOICE) a stronger organisation, capable of tackling such issues head on.

CHOICE is well-known amongst disabled people and during the pandemic, they were disproportionately impacted when threats of social isolation and reduced physical and mental wellbeing were exacerbated. Challenges of disruption to daily routines caused greater anxiety and was linked to collapsing support networks and the strain on local services (particularly in Hackney, which had also undergone a Cyber-attack in the year).

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

h) **Impact of COVID-19 on the organisation continued:**

We are very pleased to have been able to quickly move our services from face-to-face to online delivery methods, and successfully applied for short-term COVID-19 emergency funding. This allowed us to expand our existing services particularly those that had limited eligibility i.e. Advocacy. For example, we were able to meet some of the shortfall by advocating during telephone or online welfare benefit reassessments and/or requesting a review or appeal with greater success rates. Our Active Lifestyle / Volunteering Projects were also adapted to include a food and medication drop-off service, online exercise and group sessions and socially distanced gardening and a walking friends services. All of which reinstated order and social inclusion into the lives of disabled people who were previously left isolated and afraid without adequate support.

The Training & Employment Dept moved online with CHOICE becoming the sole host for many of its trainees undertaking their work placements. Additional confidence building, mentoring and coaching kept disabled people motivated and focussed on goals with equipment (i.e. laptops, tablets) being loaned to trainees as necessary. Our Disability Hate Crime service users reported lockdown increased hostilities particularly, for survivors of hate crime and/or domestic violence where perpetrators are neighbours or within the home (where they were told to remain). This service was brought online and advertised internally to ensure greater take up.

These adaptations accommodated the changing needs of disabled people amidst the pandemic and (subject to funding) will continue beyond 2022 particularly as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment of Hackney states: "the number of people with disabilities is going to increase by 36% in Hackney by 2035". Also, "national evidence suggests people with physical disabilities experience significantly higher unmet need accessing healthcare". (Estimated to be 7,000 disabled adults in Hackney)[1].

Whilst these figures were pre-pandemic (in 2019), we expect take-up of our services to at least quadruple over the coming years as many more people will experience the disabling effects of long-COVID. At the time of writing, we are in the process of a vigorous fundraising procedure to ensure that we are able to meet the growing needs of disabled people now and into the future.

We are grateful to our Trustees who worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic – often going above and beyond what was expected of them to ensure their strategic responsibilities were met. Meetings continued to be delivered online via Zoom Video Conferencing and were well attended as a result. Throughout the year 10 meetings (as opposed to the usual 6) were held – a demonstration of the Trustees' commitment to ensuring the organisation was able to continue its services to a high standard throughout the pandemic.

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1 https://hackneyjsna.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Physical-disability.pdf

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

i) **Funders:**

In the year under review, CHOICE IN HACKNEY received funding from:

1. Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust – to provide health advocacy to disabled residents of Hackney and the City of London aged 18 plus.
2. London Borough of Hackney via The Advocacy Project (TAP) to provide a:
   i) non-statutory advocacy service to disabled and vulnerable Hackney adults who are known to Adult Social Care teams, un-befriended, unable to speak up for themselves and require support with a specific advocacy issue; and
   ii) statutory advocacy service to disabled Hackney residents who have care/support needs, substantial difficulty in being involved in the relevant processes and have no appropriate unpaid individual to support them.
3. Henry Smith Charity – funding towards the Choices into Work project (part of the Training & Employment Dept), which provides classroom-based advocacy training, work placements and job search skills. Additional coaching and mentoring support are also funded.
4. Henry Smith Charity Community Match Challenge – to provide a Job-Club, which includes mentoring and coaching support to disabled people wanting to find work.
5. Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales - to provide specialist accredited training in hate crime and/or domestic violence with extended work placements allowing trainees to gain in-depth knowledge of their chosen specialism.
6. Lloyds Bank Foundation for England & Wales COVID-19 REACT fund – funding towards the Choices into Work Project for additional mentoring work placements to support us in our sole role as host organisation for trainees during the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown.
7. Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime – to provide disability hate crime advocacy to disabled people who live or work in Hackney and surrounding boroughs.
8. Hackney Parochial Charities – to provide a Befriending Plus / Volunteering service in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
9. City & Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group – to provide crisis and recovery support to disabled residents of Hackney and the City of London who engage in our Active Lifestyle Project.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

i) **Funders continued:**

10. London Community Response Fund – COVID-19 Response Fund (Wave 3) – part-funding towards our virtual Active Lifestyle / Befriending Plus service.

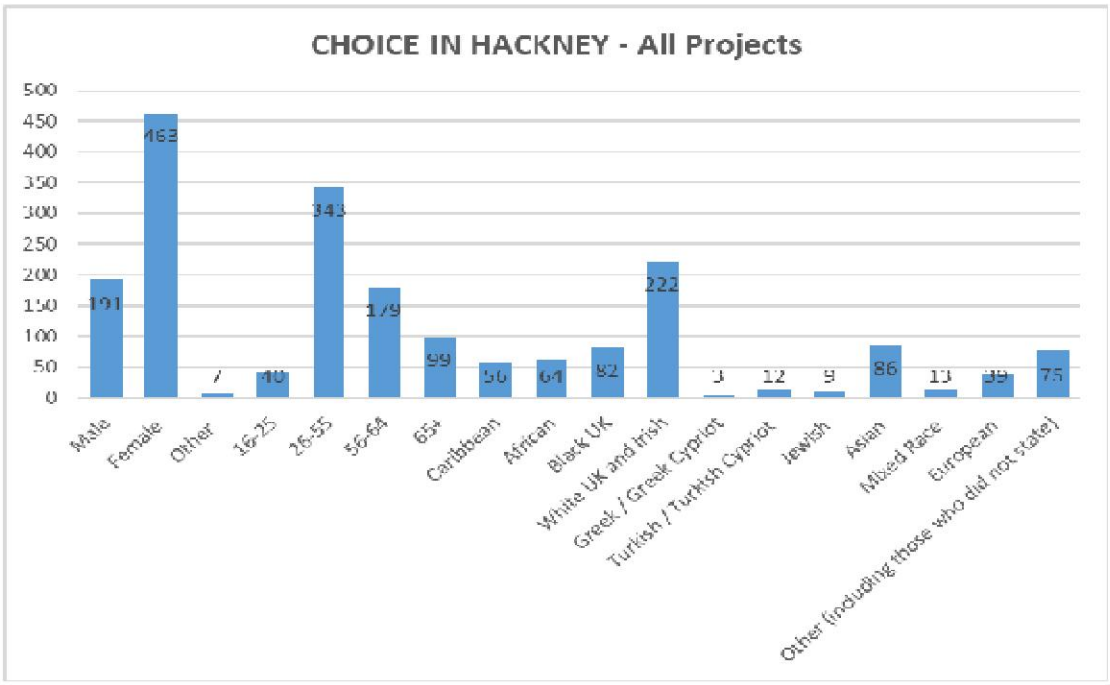
11. National Emergencies Trust – DPO COVID-19 Fund - to provide supplementary Advocacy services to disabled people during the pandemic.

12. National Lottery – Community Response Fund - to provide support to disabled people within our Active Lifestyle / Befriending Plus service.

13. South Hackney Parochial Charity – to provide a remote Befriending Plus service during the pandemic.

The level of funding in the year allowed CHOICE IN HACKNEY to support a total of 661 disabled people (482 in 2019-2020). This figure does not include people who indirectly utilised our services, which includes professionals, friends, family and the general public. Were these groups of people to be included, this figure of 661 would have tripled.

The breakdown of service users supported for all projects is as follows:



CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

Financial Review:
The total results of the year's operations are set out in the attached financial statements. Total incoming resources amounted to £301,958 (2020: £201,715) (2019: £170,725) and total resources expended amounted to £255,255 (2020: £213,939) (2019: £187,504). The net inflow of funds for the year amounted to £46,703 (2020: net outflow £12,224) (2019: net outflow of £16,779).

The company made an unrestricted fund surplus for the year of £20,132 (2020: deficit £8,805) (2019: deficit £13,244) and made a restricted funds surplus for the year of £26,571 (2020: deficit £3,419) (2019: surplus £3,535). Please see note 11 of the financial statements for further information on the restricted funds carried forward.

Risk:
It has become clear during the pandemic that the most significant risk faced by the Charity lies in its reliance on the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for both administration and management of service delivery. The Board of Trustees are therefore reviewing the organisational structure to provide greater administrative support for the CEO and increase the capacity for organisational and service growth so that the charity can maintain sufficient funding to provide for the needs of its service users.

CHOICE remains committed to the ideals of a Disability User Led Organisation. This too presents its own risks in a period of financial austerity. In particular, that the costs of Reasonable Adjustments are no longer fully covered by Access to Work. This would raise unit costs of services and potentially make CHOICE less competitive than other providers. As a result, our business models and funding bids need to articulate the added value created by employment of disabled staff. We will work with others such as Inclusion London, to campaign for Access to Work to cover full costs.

COVID-19 Pandemic:
COVID-19 had direct impact on the Charity's Activities. This created challenges. Some cases dealt with in the Advocacy and Hate Crime projects became more complicated and difficult, this was exacerbated by the precautions of remote working to keep our staff, volunteers and service users safe. In consequence, little use was made of our office space within New City College (NCC) Hackney Campus and, as reported last year, we did not meet our targets for Advocacy work. Income was below budget and there was a danger that we would be unable to meet the full rent for the office space in NCC. Fortunately, we were able to raise specific funding from the Mayor of London's Community Spaces at Risk to cover these costs.

However, the deleterious effect COVID-19 had on our service users also created opportunities for new funding and areas of work. We raised funding for new activities to address some of these COVID-related needs. We were also able to explore new means of service delivery, our recent Trusted Charity Mark assessment referred to the unusual, innovative and effective use of technology such as: Face Time, Skype, Teams, WhatsApp, and Zoom Video Conferencing to provide for service users' needs.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

COVID-19 Pandemic continued:
Our Training & Employment Dept's Choices into Work programme, successfully delivered its whole course through distance learning online. Not only were excellent results delivered but also online delivery attracted participants from a much wider catchment area. As a result, CHOICE closed the year not only in stronger shape financially, as the Financial Review demonstrates, but as a charity with a wider range of activities and skills.

Reserves Policy:
The Charity sets aside funds, as unrestricted reserves, to meet future anticipated or contingent expenditure, in particular to cover staffing costs such as sickness, redundancy, to develop new activities and to ensure the continuity of services through difficult financial periods. The Board of Trustees, after review, decided that the Charity should aim for a level of the "free reserves", of between 3 and 9 months recurrent expenditure, which equates to approximately £50,000 - £150,000.

As in previous years we have made use of Reserves to maintain existing and to develop new services. Not only have we been able to develop new services, as described above, through the pandemic, but also to attract new funding to support these activities. As a result, the tangible assets ("free reserves") have increased and at the year-end amounted to £40,440 (2020: £20,308) (2019 : £29,113). While this is below the desired level, the Trustees realise the success of the hard work and innovation the Charity has achieved through the difficult circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees (who are also the directors of Choice in Hackney 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), including Financial Reporting Standard 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland".

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 information of which the charitable company's examiners are unaware; and
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant information and to establish that the examiners are aware of that information.

The independent examiner, Knox Cropper, 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.

APPROVAL

This report was approved by the Board of Directors and Trustees on 2 December 2021 and signed on their behalf by:

..... S Rennie

Sandra Rennie (Chair)

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

TO THE MEMBERS OF CHOICE IN HACKNEY

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Choice in Hackney for the period ended 31 March 2021.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charitable company (and also its directors for the purposes of company law) you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 ('the 2006 Act'). You are satisfied that the accounts of the Company are not required by charity or company law to be audited and have chosen instead to have an independent examination.

Having satisfied myself that the accounts of the Company are not required to be audited under Part 16 of the 2006 Act and are eligible for independent examination, I report in respect of my examination of the Company's accounts carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act'). In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

Since the Company's gross income exceeded £250,000 your examiner must be a member of a body listed in section 145 of the 2011 Act. I can confirm that I am qualified to undertake the examination because I am a registered member of ICAEW which is one of the listed bodies.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a 'true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
4. the accounts have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Kevin Lally

Kevin Lally
Knox Cropper LLP
Chartered Accountants
65-68 Leadenhall Street, London, EC3A 2AD

Date: 2 December 2021

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
(INCORPORATING THE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

	Notes	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2021 £	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2020 £
INCOME FROM:							
Grants and donations	2(a)	180,096	39,236	219,332	81,130	24,895	106,025
Charitable activities	2(b)	1,250	80,997	82,247	-	95,599	95,599
Other trading activities		-	-	-	-	-	-
Investments		-	12	12	-	91	91
Other income		-	367	367	-	-	-
Total		181,346	120,612	301,958	81,130	120,585	201,715
EXPENDITURE ON:							
Raising funds	3	-	7,717	7,717	-	9,940	9,940
Charitable activities	3	154,775	92,763	247,538	84,549	119,450	203,999
Total		154,775	100,480	255,255	84,549	129,390	213,939
Net income/(expenditure)		26,571	20,132	46,703	(3,419)	(8,805)	(12,224)
Transfers between funds		-	-	-	-	-	-
NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS		26,571	20,132	46,703	(3,419)	(8,805)	(12,224)
Balances brought forward at 1 April		14,079	20,308	34,387	17,498	29,113	46,611
BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31 MARCH		40,650	40,440	81,090	14,079	20,308	34,387

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

BALANCE SHEET

AS AT 31st MARCH 2021

	Notes	2021		2020	
		£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS	7		-		-
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	8	49,147		29,532	
Cash at Bank and in hand		61,044		20,342	
		110,191		49,874	
CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year	9	(29,101)		(15,487)	
NET CURRENT ASSETS			81,090		34,387
NET ASSETS			81,090		34,387
FUNDS					
Restricted Funds	11		40,650		14,079
Unrestricted Funds					
Designated Funds			-		-
General Fund	10		40,440		20,308
			81,090		34,387

The Company is exempt from the requirements relating to preparing audited accounts in accordance with Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006. The members have not required the Company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for:

a) ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and;

b) preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of each financial year and of its profit or loss for each financial year in accordance with the requirements of sections 394 and 395 and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the company.

The financial statements were approved by the Trustees on 2 December 2021 and signed on behalf of the board

Chair: Sandra Rennie

Treasurer: Malcolm Aickin

Registered Company Number: 03423122
Registered Charity Number: 1077287

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

a. Basis of Preparation of Accounts

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), 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.

b. Company Status

CHOICE IN HACKNEY is a company limited by guarantee. In the event of the Charity being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the Charity.

c. Fund Accounting

General funds are unrestricted funds which are available for use at the discretion of the Trustees in furtherance of the objects of the Charity and which have not been designated for other purposes.

Restricted funds are funds which are to be used in accordance with specific restrictions imposed by donors which have been raised by the Charity for particular purposes. The aim and use of each restricted fund is set out in the notes to the financial statements. Statutory grants which are given as contributions towards the Charity's core services are treated as unrestricted.

d. Incoming resources

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.

e. Resources expended

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been included under expenses categories that aggregate all costs for allocation to activities. Governance costs include the costs of servicing meetings of the Board of Trustees, independent examination and strategic planning.

f. Tangible Fixed Assets and Depreciation

All assets costing more than £1,000 are capitalised.

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the costs of fixed assets, less their estimated residual value, over their expected useful lives on:
Furniture/Fittings: 25% straight line basis
Office Equipment: 25% straight line basis

CHOICE IN HACKNEY
NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

g. **Allocation of Overhead and Support Costs**
Overhead and support costs have been allocated between charitable activities and other expenditure on the basis of staff time. The allocation of overhead and support costs is analysed in note 3.

h. **Operating Leases**
Rentals payable under operating leases are charged to the statement of financial activities as they fall due over the term of the lease.

2(a). **INCOMING RESOURCES FROM GENERATED FUNDS**
- Grants received

		2021		2020
	Restricted Funds	Un-Restricted Funds	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£
The Henry Smith Charity	93,300	-	93,300	29,000
Lloyds Bank Foundation	7,545	-	7,545	24,800
CATCH Mobilisation	22,204	-	22,204	17,083
South Hackney Parochial	2,500	-	2,500	-
Hackney Parochial Charities	2,500	-	2,500	-
Access to Work	-	18,998	18,998	22,950
London Community Response Fund	19,703	-	19,703	-
National Lottery	19,464		19,464	-
City & Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group	12,880		12,880	
National Emergency Fund	-	5,990	5,990	-
The Mayor's Community Spaces	-	13,600	13,600	-
Beneficiaries income	-	431	431	1,308
Other income and Donations	-	217	217	967
Allen & Overy Foundation	-	-	-	9,917
	180,096	39,236	219,332	106,025

2(b). **INCOMING RESOURCES FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES**
- Contracts for services and performance related grants

		2021		2020
	Restricted Funds	Un-Restricted Funds	Total	Total
	£	£	£	£
Homerton University Hospital – Advocacy	-	45,802	45,802	45,802
The Advocacy Project – Advocacy	-	33,515	33,515	46,588
LB of Waltham Forest		1,680	1,680	-
APDA - Advocacy	1,250	-	1,250	-
London Council - Advocacy	-	-	-	3,209
	1,250	80,997	82,247	95,599

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

3. ANALYSIS OF RESOURCES EXPENDED

	Raising Funds	Charitable Activities	Total 2021	Total 2020
Unrestricted	£	£	£	£
Staff costs	7,717	69,453	77,170	99,403
Staff training	-	20	20	340
Accountancy	-	350	350	828
Independent examination fee	-	300	300	1,320
Rent		13,600	13,600	6,772
Other Costs	-	8,618	8,618	18,944
Legal & Professional Fees	-	422	422	1,783
	-			
	7,717	92,763	100,480	129,390
Restricted				
Staff costs	-	104,968	104,968	59,370
Staff training	-	100	100	300
Accountancy	-	1,950	1,950	1,652
Independent examination fee	-	2,670	2,670	2,640
Rent	-	8,089	8,089	13,328
Other Costs	-	31,664	31,664	3,693
Legal & Professional Fees	-	5,334	5,334	3,566
	-	154,775	154,775	84,549
	7,717	247,538	255,255	213,939

Staff costs have been allocated to the above expenditure heads on the basis of estimated staff time spent on the activities. Support costs and governance costs are included in the above analysis. Governance costs amounted to £16,555 (2020: £15,845).

4. STAFF NUMBERS AND COSTS

	2021 £	2020 £
Salaries	170,577	148,211
Social security costs	8,330	7,975
Employer pension	3,231	2,587
Redundancy costs	-	-
	182,138	158,773

The average number of employees during the year was 10 (2020:9).
No employee earned more than £60,000 during the year under review (2020: none).
The remuneration of senior management amounted to £47,656 (2020: £46,605).

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

5. TRUSTEES REMUNERATION

During the year, Trustees received reimbursement of expenses amounting to NIL (2020: £452).

No trustee received any remuneration other than disclosed in these accounts.

6. TAXATION

CHOICE is a registered charity and is potentially exempt from taxation in respect of income and capital gains received to the extent that such income or gains are applied exclusively to charitable purposes.

7. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Furniture £	Office Equipment £	Total £
Cost			
At 1st April 2020	2,316	23,964	26,280
Additions	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31st March 2021	2,316	23,964	26,280
Depreciation			
At 1st April 2020	2,316	23,964	26,280
Charged for the year	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31st March 2021	2,316	23,964	26,280
Net Book Value			
At 31st March 2021	-	-	-
At 31st March 2020	-	-	-

8. DEBTORS

	2021 £	2020 £
Grant debtors	46,261	27,397
Prepayments and other debtors	2,886	2,135
	49,147	29,532

9. CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within this year

PAYE	3,860	3,662
Deferred income	-	-
Accruals and other creditors	25,241	11,825
	29,101	15,487

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

10. **UNRESTRICTED FUNDS**

	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
General Fund	20,308	120,612	(100,480)	-	40,440
Total Unrestricted Funds	20,308	120,612	(100,480)	-	40,440

PRIOR YEAR	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
General Fund	29,113	120,585	(129,390)	-	20,308
Total Unrestricted Funds	29,113	120,585	(129,390)	-	20,308

11. **RESTRICTED FUNDS**

	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
Disability LIB	499	-	-	-	499
Advocacy, Training and Employment	13,580	102,095	(75,524)	-	40,151
Disability Hate Crime Project (MOPAC)	-	22,204	(22,204)	-	-
Volunteering	-	5,000	(5,000)	-	-
Active Lifestyle		52,047	(52,047)	-	-
Total Restricted Funds	14,079	181,346	(154,775)	-	40,650

PRIOR YEAR	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
Disability LIB	999	-	(500)	-	499
Advocacy, Training and Employment	15,324	64,047	(65,791)	-	13,580
Disability Hate Crime Project (MOPAC)	-	17,083	(17,083)	-	-
Volunteering	1,175	-	(1,175)	-	-
Total Restricted Funds	17,498	81,130	(84,549)	-	14,079

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

11. RESTRICTED FUNDS (continued)

Restricted funds carried forward relate to on-going projects and are available to be expended in 2021/22.

Disability LIB – this was a one-off grant from Disability LIB towards disabled people's communication support, such as translation and interpretation costs.

Advocacy, Training and Employment (now known as the Choices into Work) - this represents amounts received towards the Choices into Work Project to train disabled people to enable them to find meaningful employment in advocacy or other related fields. This project also offers coaching, confidence building and mentoring.

Disability Hate Crime Project – this represents funding received from the Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC). CHOICE operates within the "Community Alliance To Combat Hate" (CATCH) consortium to support disabled survivors of hate crime that take place within London and surrounding boroughs.

Volunteering – this represents amounts received towards the newly expanded Befriending Plus / Volunteering Project. In addition to its staple of reducing disabled people's feelings of social isolation by connecting service users with likeminded volunteers for Befriending, this service also offered socially distanced gardening, shopping / medication drop-off and walking friends services as well as providing remote volunteering opportunities for disabled and non-disabled people to develop their administrative skills.

Active Lifestyle – this is funding towards our Active Lifestyle project, which included low-impact exercise sessions as well as group activities all taken out online from the comfort of the service users homes via Zoom Video Conferencing to improve health and wellbeing.

12. FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS

At the 31st March 2021 the Charity had commitments under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

Amounts payable:	**2021** £	**2020** £
Within one year	1,264	1,264
Between two and five years	948	2,212
After five years	-	-
	2,212	3,476

In addition to the above, the Charity has a licence agreement for its office premises that started in October 2017, subject to 2 months' notice period. The total annual commitments at the year end amounts to £22,896.

CHOICE IN HACKNEY

NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2021

13. CAPITAL COMMITMENTS

There were no capital commitments at 31st March 2021 (2020: Nil).

14. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

There were no contingent liabilities at 31st March 2021 (2020: Nil).

15. NET ASSETS BETWEEN FUNDS

	Fixed Assets	Cash at Bank and in Hand	Debtors	Current Liabilities	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted	-	30,315	39,226	(29,101)	40,440
Restricted	-	30,729	9,921	-	40,650
Total	-	61,044	49,147	(29,101)	81,090

PRIOR YEAR	Fixed Assets	Cash at Bank and in Hand	Debtors	Current Liabilities	Total
	£	£	£	£	£
Unrestricted	-	17,713	18,082	(15,487)	20,308
Restricted	-	2,629	11,450	-	14,079
Total	-	20,342	29,532	(15,487)	34,387

16. GOING CONCERN

In common with many smaller charities, CHOICE is dependent upon securing income to ensure it can continue to further its charitable objectives as a going concern into the future. The Trustees actively foster relations with existing funders and seek additional funding. While the COVID-19 pandemic made operations more difficult, it also provided opportunities to expand our work and develop new sources of funding. Given the increased level of reserves that has arisen as a result of this approach and the value for money in terms of historic costs per service user outcome, the Trustees are of the opinion that the Charity will be able to continue as a going concern once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted through 2022 and beyond.

17. RELATED PARTY TRANSACTIONS

There were no related party transaction during the year.