



CHOICE IN HACKNEY

(Company Limited by guarantee)

TRUSTEES REPORT

AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2023

COMPANY NO: 03423122

CHARITY NO : 1077287

CHOICE IN HACKNEY  
TRUSTEES REPORT  
AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2023

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**CHOICE IN HACKNEY**  
**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>st</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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.

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**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES**  
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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**  
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**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.

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**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH 2023**

**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 31<sup>st</sup> 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.

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**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 5<sup>th</sup> 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.



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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  
DISABILITY ADVOCACY AND INDEPENDENT LIVING

**Health Advocacy Service**

Health Advocacy is the advice, guidance and support you need to understand and make decisions about your health services.

Health Advocacy can help you:

- Be more involved in important decisions about your health care needs
- Know and use your rights
- Access the health care services you need
- Voice your wishes and feelings
- Support you to raise concerns or complaints
- Access and use health services on an equal basis

Our Health Advocacy service is available to any disabled adult aged 18+ who lives in the London Borough of Hackney or the City of London.

For more information or to make a referral contact:

Linda Bellini: 07595 321 321  
linda.bellini@choiceinhackney.org

Paula Smith: 07905 354 455  
paula.smith@choiceinhackney.org

Paula Smith: 07555 309 431  
paula@choiceinhackney.org

This information is available in a range of accessible formats

[www.choiceinhackney.org](http://www.choiceinhackney.org)

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

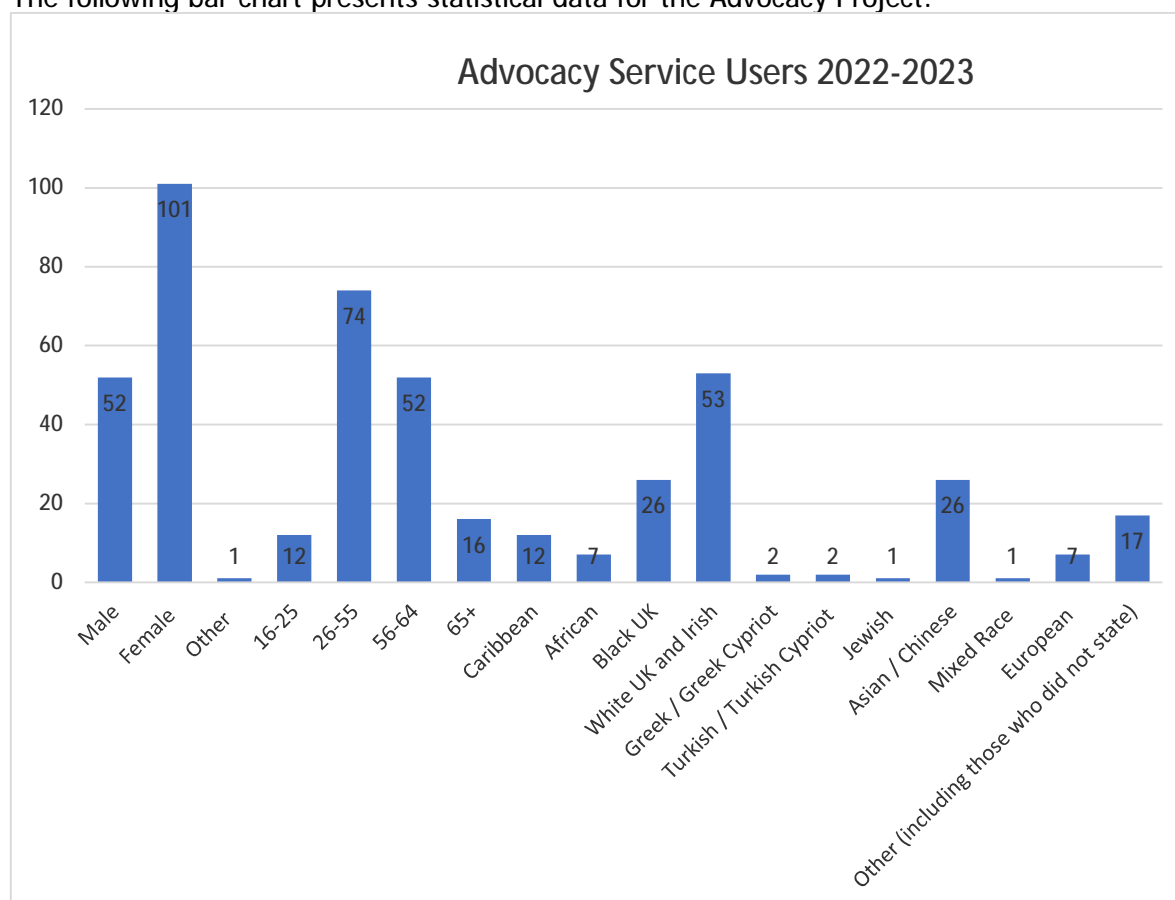
**b) Advocacy continued:**

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:



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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*

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**Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:**

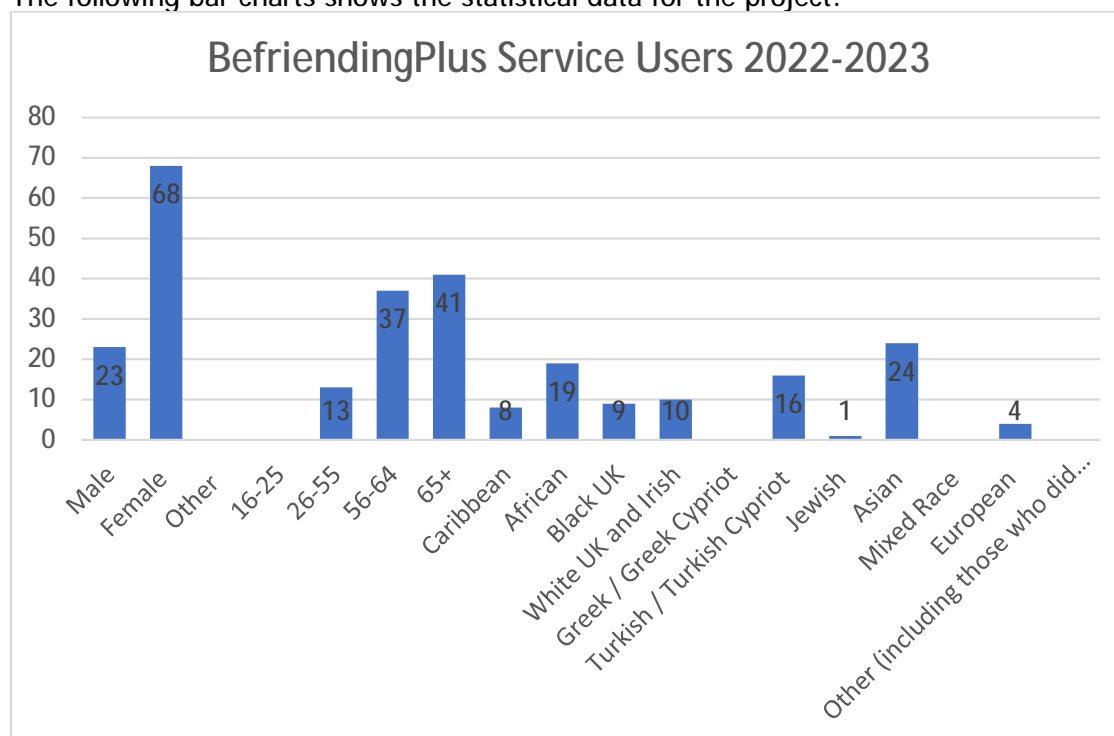
**c) Befriending Plus / Volunteer Project continued:**

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).

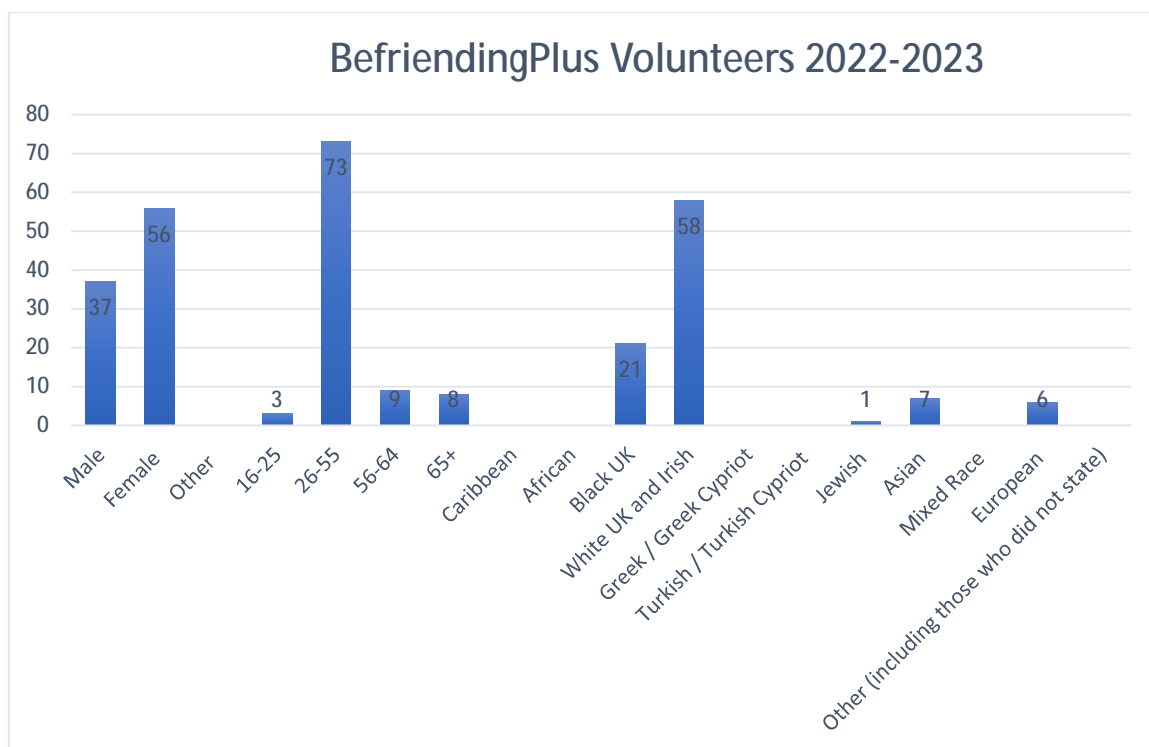
The following bar charts shows the statistical data for the project:



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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

c) Befriending Plus / Volunteer Project continued:



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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.

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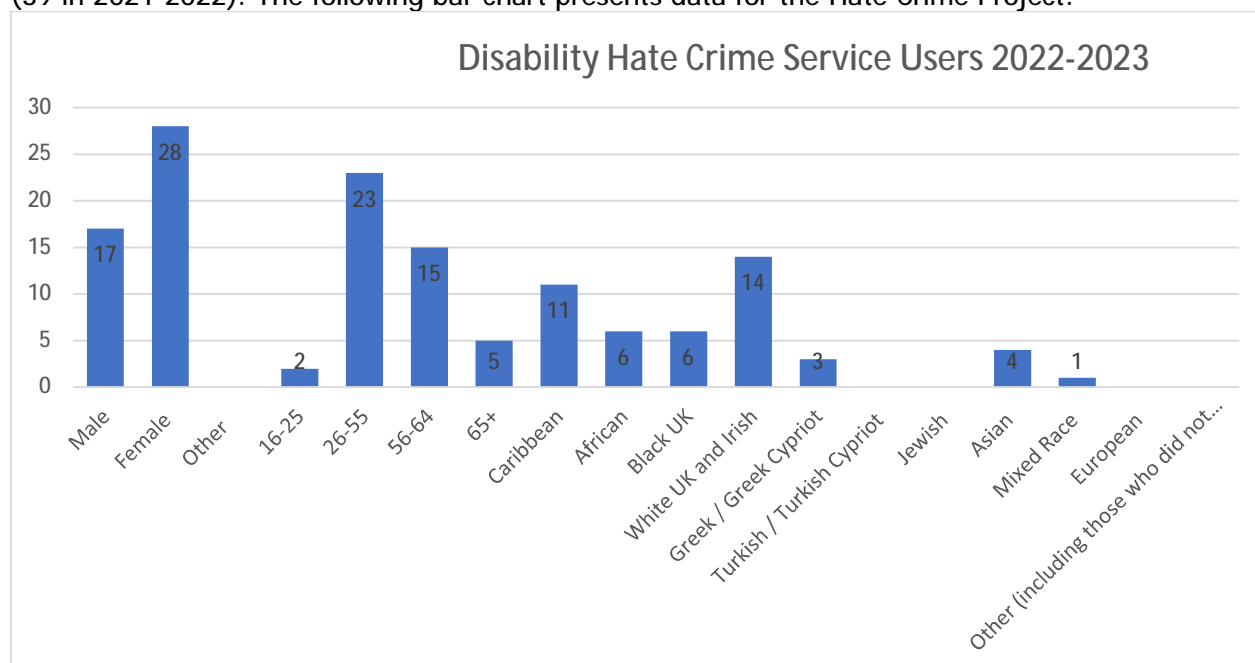
**Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:**

**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<sup>1</sup>. 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:



<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2020-to-2021>

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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.



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**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%<sup>2</sup>, 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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<sup>2</sup> Jayanetti, Chaminda "UK government's £2.9bn job search scheme has put only 7% of participants in work to date" The Guardian online, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022)  
<https://amp.theguardian.com/society/2022/jun/05/uk-governments-restart-scheme-fails-to-find-work-for-93-per-cent-of-people>

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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.

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**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).

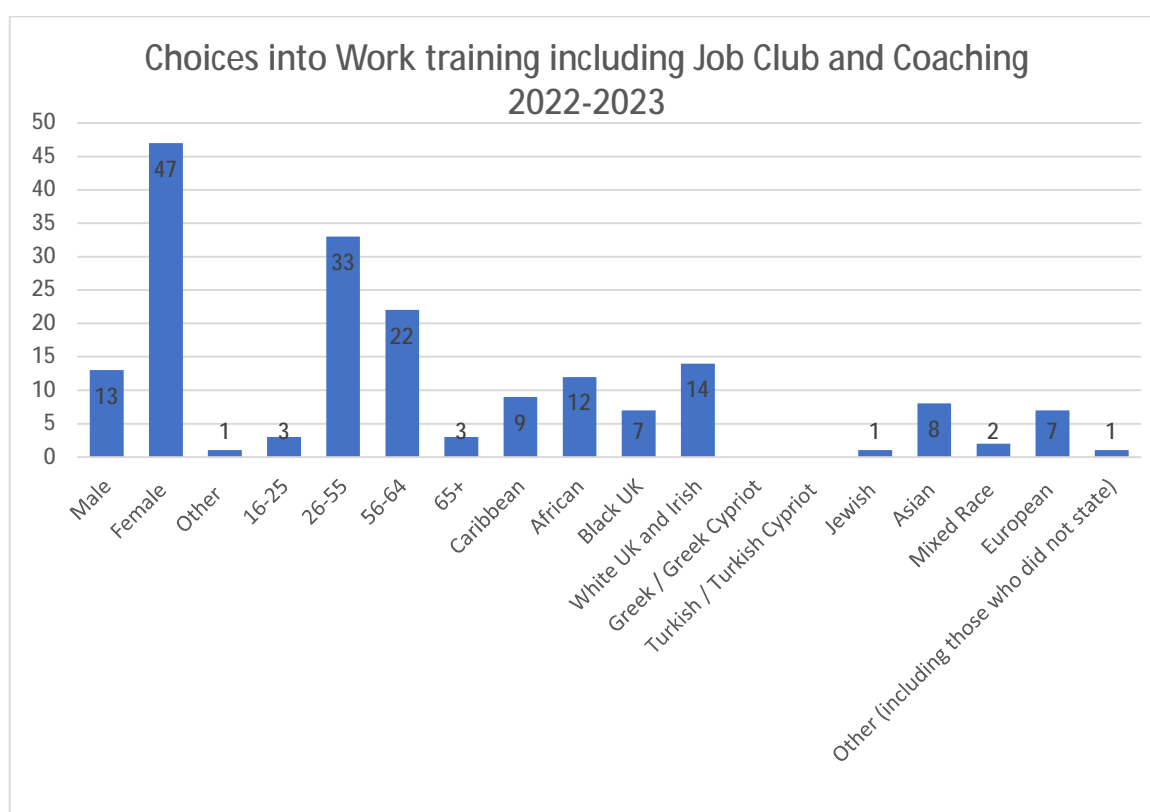
**CHOICE IN HACKNEY**  
**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES**  
**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2023**

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.

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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**  
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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.

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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

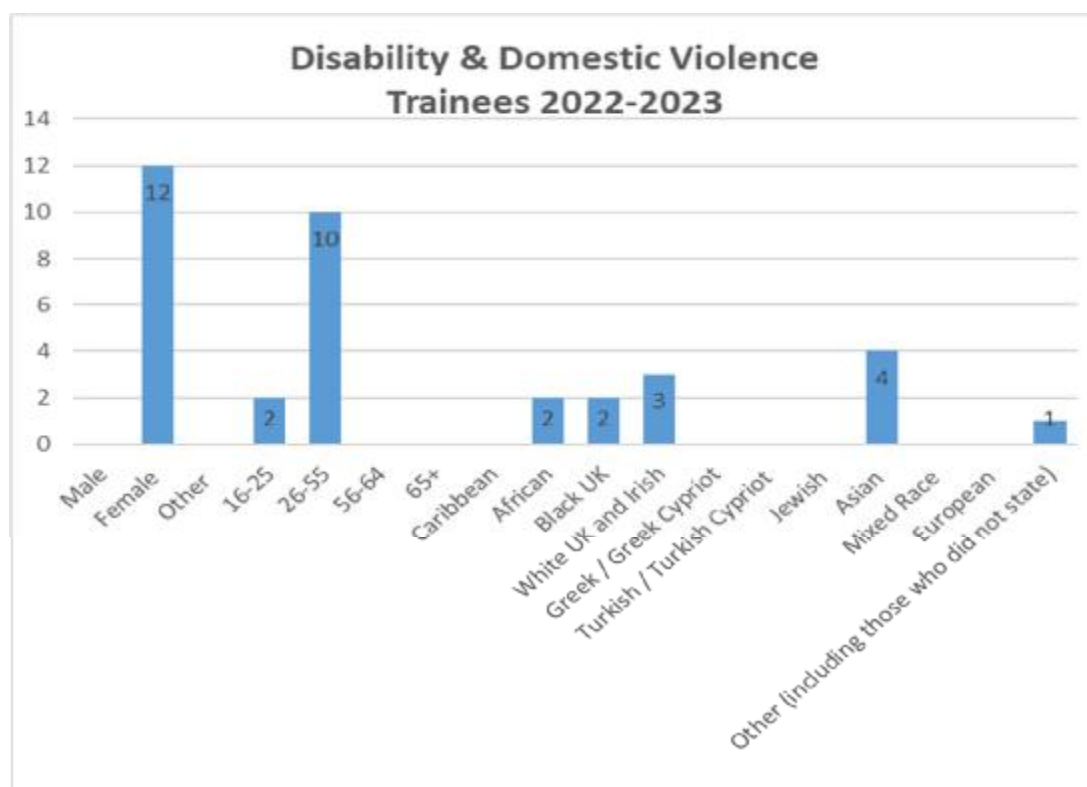
d) Training & Employment Dept continued:

**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:



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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;



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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.

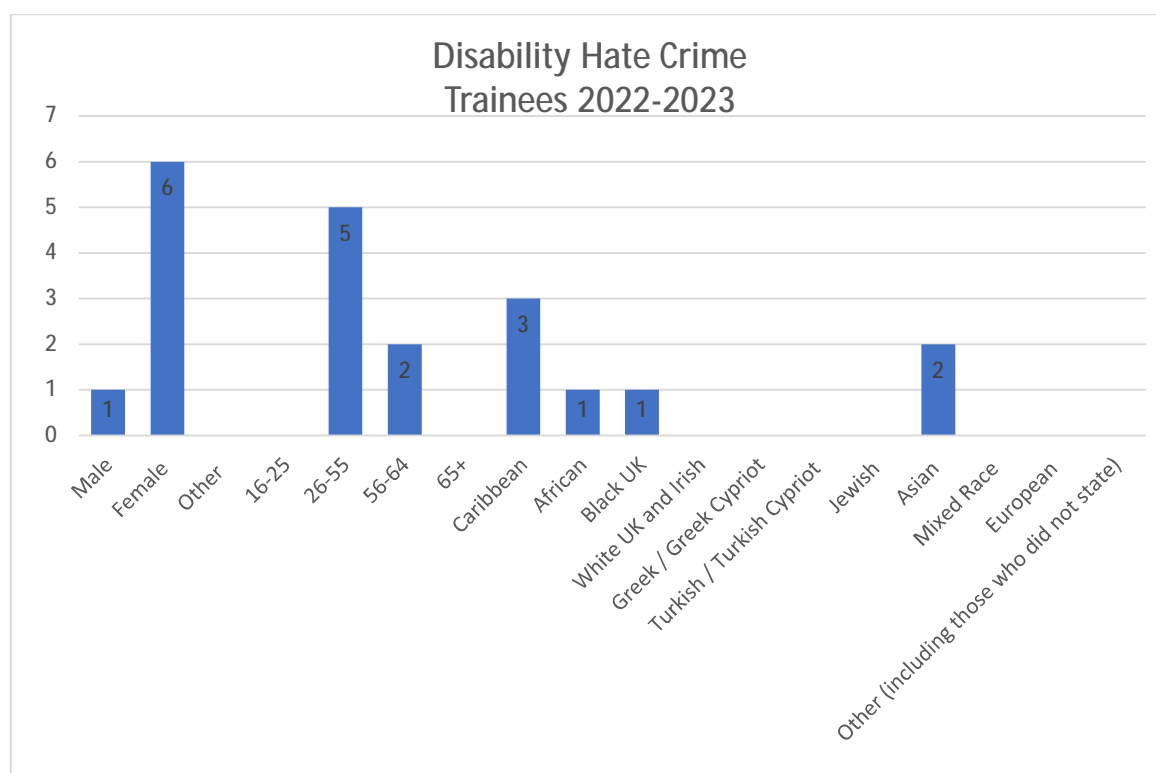
**CHOICE IN HACKNEY**  
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Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:

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):



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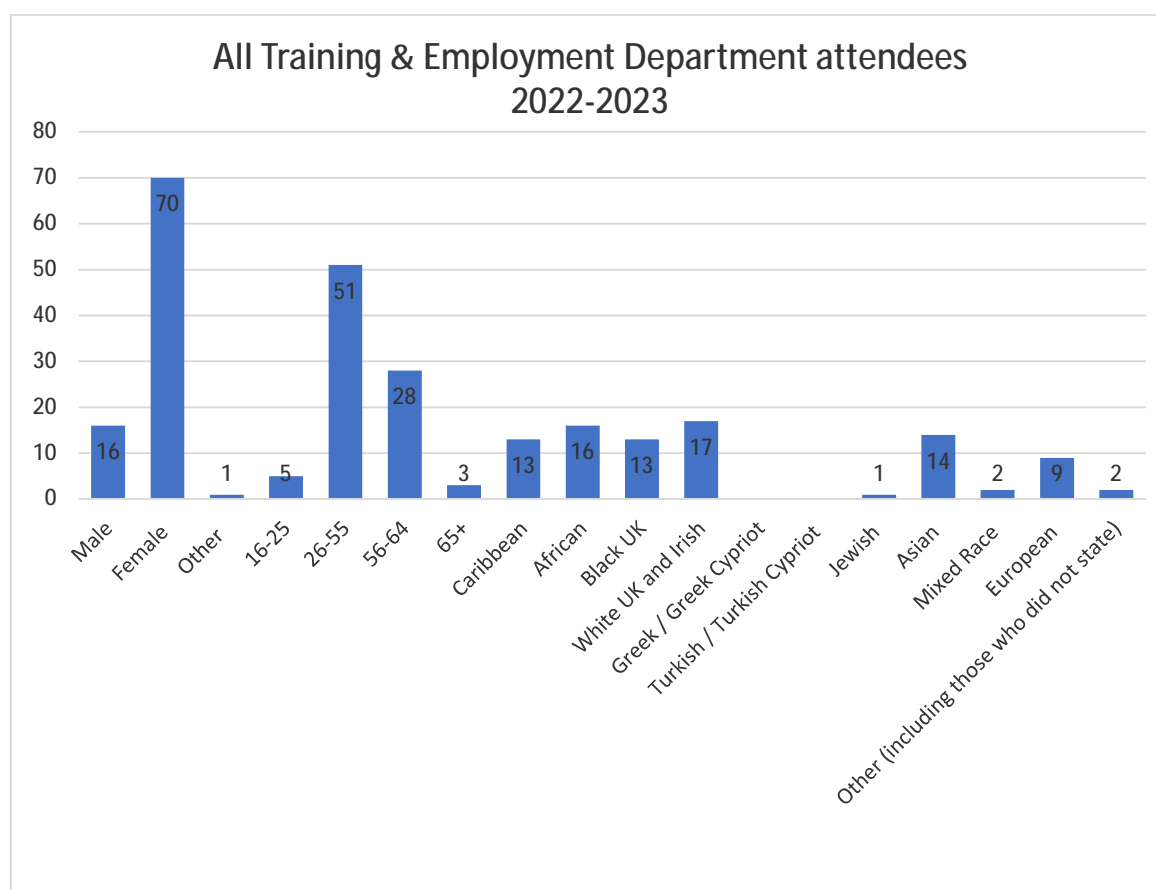
**Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:**

**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:



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**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 Potheary 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**  
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**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).

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**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.

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**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**  
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**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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 teeming 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**  
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**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**  
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**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.

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**Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance continued:**

**f) Funders:**

In the year under review, CHOICE received funding from:

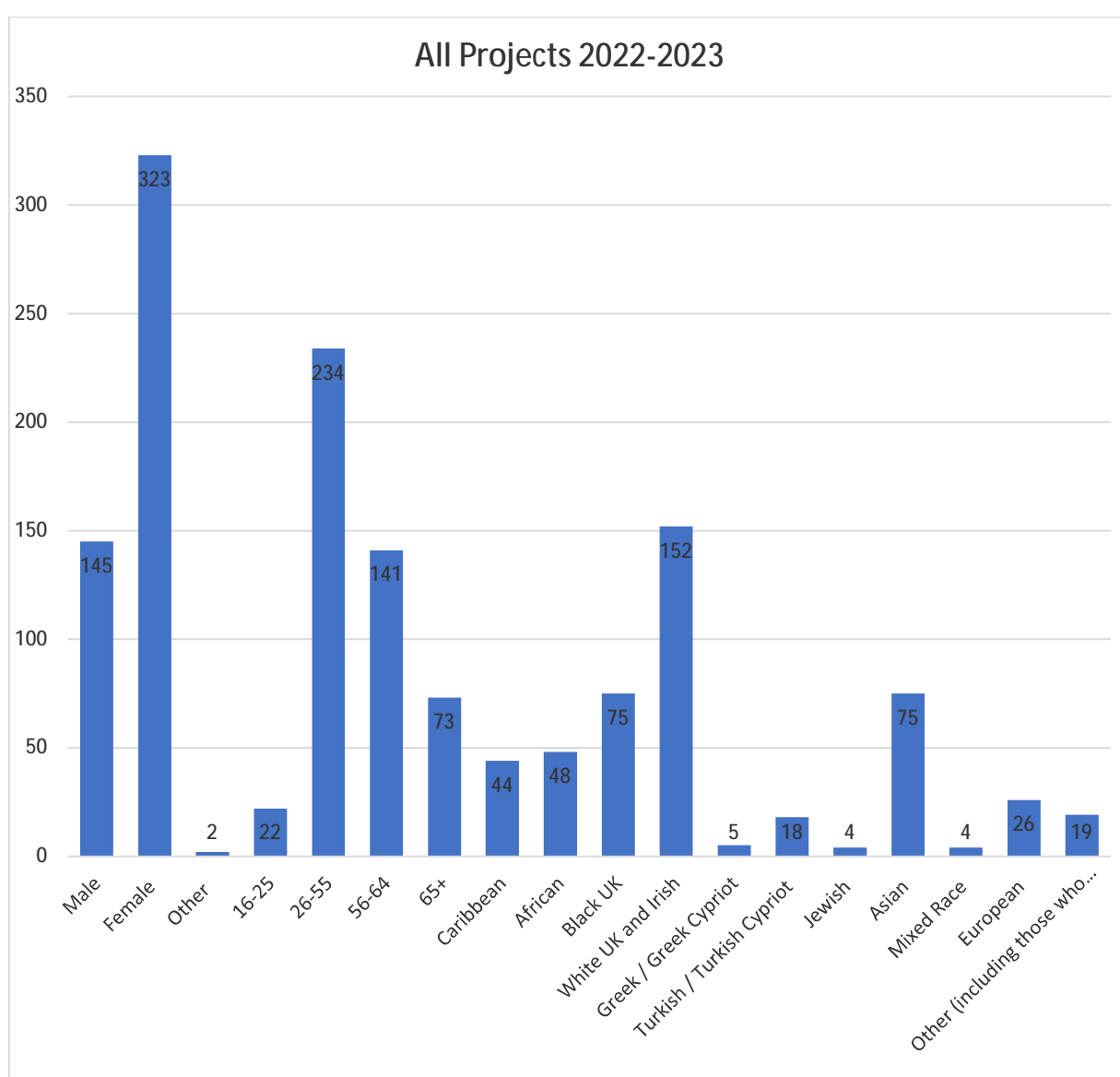
1. Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust – to provide health advocacy to disabled residents of Hackney and the City of London aged 18 plus.
2. London Borough of Hackney via The Advocacy Project (TAP) to provide:
  - i) non-statutory advocacy service to disabled and vulnerable Hackney adults 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**  
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**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:



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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. 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.

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**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.

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**REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES**  
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**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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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 Billinghamurst  
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 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2023**

	Notes	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Total 2022 £
<b>INCOME FROM:</b>							
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
<b>Total</b>		<b>266,313</b>	<b>75,104</b>	<b>341,417</b>	<b>140,622</b>	<b>131,249</b>	<b>271,871</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON:</b>							
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
<b>Total</b>		<b>106,607</b>	<b>123,146</b>	<b>229,753</b>	<b>142,079</b>	<b>78,032</b>	<b>220,111</b>
<b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>		<b>159,706</b>	<b>(48,042)</b>	<b>111,664</b>	<b>(1,457)</b>	<b>53,217</b>	<b>51,760</b>
Transfers between funds		(2,000)	2,000	-	-	-	-
<b>NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS</b>		<b>157,706</b>	<b>(46,042)</b>	<b>111,664</b>	<b>(1,457)</b>	<b>53,217</b>	<b>51,760</b>
Balances brought forward at 1 April		39,193	93,657	132,850	40,650	40,440	81,090
<b>BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD AT 31 MARCH</b>		<b>196,899</b>	<b>47,615</b>	<b>244,514</b>	<b>39,193</b>	<b>93,657</b>	<b>132,850</b>

All income and expenditure has arisen from continuing activities.

**CHOICE IN HACKNEY****BALANCE SHEET****AS AT 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2023**

	Notes	2023	2022
		£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>			
Tangible Assets	7	-	-
Intangible Assets	8	4,170	-
		<u>4,170</u>	<u>-</u>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Debtors	9	188,548	60,460
Cash at Bank and in hand		<u>62,512</u>	<u>85,933</u>
		251,060	146,393
<b>CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year</b>	10	<u>(10,716)</u>	<u>(13,543)</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		240,344	132,850
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<u>244,514</u>	<u>132,850</u>
<b>FUNDS</b>			
Restricted Funds	12	196,899	39,193
Unrestricted Funds			
Designated Funds		-	-
General Fund	11	<u>47,615</u>	<u>93,657</u>
		<u>244,514</u>	<u>132,850</u>

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:

- ensuring that the company keeps accounting records which comply with sections 386 and 387 of the Companies Act 2006 and;
- 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 13<sup>th</sup> 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 HACKNEYNOTES TO THE ACCOUNTSFOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>st</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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
	<u>266,313</u>	<u>10,806</u>	<u>277,119</u>	<u>202,430</u>

**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
	<u>-</u>	<u>64,165</u>	<u>64,165</u>	<u>68,485</u>

**CHOICE IN HACKNEY****NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)****FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2023****3. ANALYSIS OF RESOURCES EXPENDED**

	<b>Raising Funds</b>	<b>Charitable Activities</b>	<b>Total 2023</b>	<b>Total 2022</b>
<b><u>Unrestricted</u></b>	£	£	£	£
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
	<b>9,581</b>	<b>113,565</b>	<b>123,146</b>	<b>78,032</b>
<b><u>Restricted</u></b>				
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
	<b>-</b>	<b>106,607</b>	<b>106,607</b>	<b>142,079</b>
	<b>9,581</b>	<b>220,172</b>	<b>229,753</b>	<b>220,111</b>

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**

	<b>2023 £</b>	<b>2022 £</b>
Salaries	167,578	162,307
Social security costs	7,786	8,142
Employer pension	3,310	3,084
Redundancy costs	-	-
	<b>178,674</b>	<b>173,533</b>

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 31<sup>st</sup> 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**

	<b>Furniture £</b>	<b>Office Equipment £</b>	<b>Total £</b>
<b>Cost</b>			
At 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2022	2,316	23,964	26,280
Additions	-	-	-
At 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	-	-	-
<b>Depreciation</b>			
At 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2022	2,316	23,964	26,280
Charged for the year	-	-	-
At 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	-	-	-
<b>Net Book Value</b>			
At 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	-	-	-
At 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2022	-	-	-

**8. INTANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS**

	<b>CRM System £</b>
<b>Cost</b>	
At 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2022	-
Additions	4,812
At 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	4,812
<b>Depreciation</b>	
At 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2022	-
Charged for the year	642
At 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	642
<b>Net Book Value</b>	
At 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2023	4,170
At 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2022	-

CHOICE IN HACKNEYNOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2023

## 9. DEBTORS

	2023 £	2022 £
Grant debtors	10,168	42,082
Prepayments and other debtors	3,480	18,378
Accrued income	174,900	-
	<u>188,548</u>	<u>60,460</u>

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

PAYE	3,160	4,912
Accruals and other creditors	7,556	8,631
	<u>10,716</u>	<u>13,543</u>

## 11. UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
General Fund	93,657	75,104	(123,146)	2,000	47,615
<b>Total Unrestricted Funds</b>	<u>93,657</u>	<u>75,104</u>	<u>(123,146)</u>	<u>2,000</u>	<u>47,615</u>

*PRIOR YEAR*

	Brought Forward £	Incoming Resources £	Resources Expended £	Transfers £	Carried Forward £
General Fund	40,440	131,249	(78,032)	-	93,657
<b>Total Unrestricted Funds</b>	<u>40,440</u>	<u>131,249</u>	<u>(78,032)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>93,657</u>



CHOICE IN HACKNEYNOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>st</sup> 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	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Restricted Funds</b>	<b>39,193</b>	<b>266,313</b>	<b>(106,607)</b>	<b>(2,000)</b>	<b>196,899</b>

<i>PRIOR YEAR</i>	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)	-	-
<b>Total Restricted Funds</b>	<b>40,650</b>	<b>140,622</b>	<b>(142,079)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>39,193</b>

**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 Potheary 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 31<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2023****13. FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS**

At the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 the Charity had commitments under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

	2023 £	2022 £
Amounts payable:		
Within one year	1,053	948
Between two and five years	-	-
After five years	-	-
	<u>1,053</u>	<u>948</u>

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 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 (2022: Nil).

**15. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES**

There were no contingent liabilities at 31<sup>st</sup> 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	<u>4,170</u>	<u>62,512</u>	<u>188,548</u>	<u>(10,716)</u>	<u>244,514</u>
<b>PRIOR YEAR</b>					
	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	<u>-</u>	<u>85,933</u>	<u>60,460</u>	<u>(13,543)</u>	<u>132,850</u>

**CHOICE IN HACKNEY**

**NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS (Continued)**

**FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>st</sup> 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.