



Every pregnancy has a story. Whatever your story, you have choices.

# **Choices Islington**

**Annual Report and Financial Statements**  
**31 December 2021**

A company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales number 6517231  
Registered charity number 1124209

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2021

## Introducing Choices Islington

### Our vision

For no-one in London to face a pregnancy crisis alone.

### Our mission

To provide the gold standard of support for anyone facing a pregnancy crisis.

### Our ethos

As a Christian organisation, we believe that all people deserve to be treated with care, compassion and respect, regardless of their faith, race, income, sexual orientation or employment status. We are not a campaigning organisation, and we do not have a political agenda.

We recognise that abortion is a controversial issue that divides people in a polarising debate. We choose instead to unite people by meeting our clients at their point of need, and never passing judgment. Our goal is to provide accurate information, counselling and practical support so those in crisis can reach a healthy, well informed decision that is their own. We will safeguard our clients to ensure this decision is not influenced by coercion, manipulation, or misleading information.

All Choices staff and volunteers are appropriately trained and supervised to reflect our ethos. We're committed to practice within all national legal frameworks and professional guidelines, including anti-discrimination and child protection legislation. As a faith-based organisation, Choices reserves the right to apply occupational requirements to key counselling and leadership roles, to preserve the Christian ethos of our organisation in line with the Equality Act 2010.

### How we accomplish our mission

We offer clients facing the dilemma of a pregnancy crisis a compassionate, caring, non-directive one-to-one session with a trained counsellor who will help them to consider their situation, to understand their thoughts and feelings in a safe environment, so that they can be empowered to make informed and internally resolved choices in the present.

We provide time-limited counselling (up to six months) for those who are struggling following a decision to terminate a pregnancy, following a pregnancy loss or during pregnancy/the perinatal period. This service is low-cost, and all counsellors are qualified or completing their training (registered with an accredited provider). Choices is a member of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Counselling is offered in the community and to female offenders in two women's prisons (as a free service). Female offenders are also offered counselling for issues surrounding child separation and child loss – abiding themes for women in prison.

We support mothers practically by offering:

- One-to-one befriending with a trained befriending volunteer for pregnant and new mums
- Counselling for women during pregnancy and in the first year, to explore relationship and attachment issues as well as trauma, anxiety and depression during the perinatal period
- A free loan of baby clothes and equipment in the Choices Boutique
- Parenting courses and signposting to community support

The focus of these services is on building our clients' resilience to handle adversity and face the future with hope following a pregnancy crisis – be that an abortion, child loss or separation, or when parenting in difficult circumstances.

## Legal and administrative information

Company/Charity name	Choices Islington (formerly Choices Confidential Pregnancy Advice)
Registered charity number	1124209
Registered company number	6517231

# Report of the trustees

## (incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2021

Registered office	390, Caledonian Road Islington London N1 1DN
Email	info@choicesislington.org
Telephone	020 7700 4475
Website	www.choicesislington.org
Trustees/Directors	Hannah Carter (Chair) Tamsin Merchant Charlotte Quarmby (Treasurer) Sarah Rose Feeney John Wyatt Ian Gambier Ann Wiltshire Elizabeth Dulley
Company Secretary	Sophie Guthrie-Kummer
Bankers	Charities Aid Foundation Bank National Westminster Bank plc
Independent examiner	Christopher Clarke

### Our charitable aims

1. To reduce distress for individuals and couples facing an unplanned pregnancy and facilitate informed decision-making in a non-directive and compassionate manner.
2. To enable women and men troubled by abortion or other pregnancy loss concerns to address and start to resolve these issues through counselling.
3. To enable female offenders troubled by abortion, pregnancy or other child loss/separation concerns to address and start to resolve these issues through counselling.
4. To support vulnerable mothers, including through provision of practical and emotional help with parenting.
5. To empower young and disadvantaged people, including offenders, to make healthy lifestyle choices in relationships and regarding sexual health and thereby reduce unplanned pregnancy (and sexually transmitted infection rates) and build self-esteem.

### Public benefit

We have referred to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit when reviewing our aims and objectives and in planning our future activities. In particular, the trustees consider how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives they have set.

### Choices' Theory of Change

The main goal of Choices is **to improve the resilience of our clients to: cope with a pregnancy crisis, make their choices healthily, and to have confidence to face the future with hope.**

**We do this by equipping them practically and with skills to understand their thoughts and feelings, and to act congruently with their values.**

We define a pregnancy crisis as including but not limited to: unplanned pregnancy, pregnancy loss, child separation, parenting under difficult circumstances.

**The Outcomes we aim to see all lead towards the main goal: to help our clients to build resilience and to face the future with hope.**

*Key outcomes that we want to see in our clients as they reach that goal and through the programmes we offer are:*

- clients are better able to freely express and explore their emotions
- clients are better able to safely and creatively explore all of their options
- clients feel more connected to a positive person
- parents learn parenting skills and have more financial/practical support

*Leading to:*

- clients have increased self-acceptance.

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2021

- clients have increased confidence in themselves.
- clients feel less traumatized by their experiences of pregnancy crisis.



## Review of achievements in 2021

*"Befriending – and Choices – has given me the ability to believe I can take care of my kids. I now have the courage and feel confident and strong that I can do it!"*

- Befriending client

*"I just want to say thank you because it's been really what I needed. I was in crisis and felt abandoned by the healthcare system so I'm so happy I found this service."*

- Counselling client

*"I'd like to say how helpful that was. I found the format very helpful, I was guided through very nicely, I didn't feel pushed or forced, you listened. This was something I really needed right now."*

- Client facing an unplanned pregnancy

Working with women at a vulnerable point in their lives during an ongoing pandemic has continued to be challenging. But the need for Choices' services remains evident – and the change and resilience that we see building in the lives of the women we work with continues to inspire and galvanise us.

Through another year of lockdowns and working from home, most of Choices' services have continued online – offering counselling, befriending and one-off decision-making sessions for those facing unplanned pregnancy on online platforms, as well as parenting courses and training events. Prison counselling moved back to in-person working for most of the year and our 'Boutique' (baby clothes and equipment service) continued to operate in a socially-distanced way – providing packs of clothes and equipment for clients where before we would have invited them in for a personal one-hour session, choosing items and identifying other needs they might have.

Changes in our staff team meant we recruited five new members of staff across the year, as well as up to 10 new volunteers across counselling and parenting support projects. The NHS trust Choices operates under invited us to participate in a funded pilot project to support women during the perinatal period in HMP Send, for which we also recruited to a fixed-term counselling post. One of the new staff posts was a development of a new role formalising a piloted service we started last year: offering pregnancy counselling for those experiencing mild to moderate anxiety and depression, or processing trauma and attachment issues as well as other at-risk factors during pregnancy.

**In summary: over the course of 2021, Choices worked with just under 400 clients. We saw 161 counselling clients in prison and in the community and saw 65 clients for one-off sessions facing a pregnancy crisis. We delivered 164 'Boutique packs' to parents in need of clothes and equipment as well as basics such as nappies and baby food; we ran three online parenting courses with groups of parents, and befriended at least 7 mums or mums-to-be across the year. Finally, we resourced and trained two partner organisations to run 'I Am Project' courses.**

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To reach our goal, and Choices' charitable aims, we have three main outputs. We define these outputs as the programmes we run to meet our clients' needs.

These are:

- Community and prison counselling services (with trained or trainee counsellors):
  - o one-off decision-making for those facing an unplanned pregnancy or other pregnancy crisis (eg diagnosis of foetal abnormality/relationship breakdown) in the community
  - o ongoing counselling (low cost) with a trained counsellor for those struggling to come to terms with pregnancy loss in prison and in the community
  - o ongoing counselling for women struggling with child loss or separation in the prison setting.
  - o Ongoing counselling (low cost) for women during pregnancy
- Practical parenting support:
  - o Befriending with a trained volunteer befriender for pregnant or new mums in the perinatal period
  - o Group courses for parents (Circle of Security Parenting TM) focused on building secure attachment relationships.
  - o 'Boutique' – baby clothes and equipment service
- Signposting
  - o Supporting and helping all clients to feel more confident to access other relevant services

### A Summary of achievements across our main outputs follows:

#### Community Counselling

Our counselling service enables clients to address their painful issues of loss and/or trauma and find healthy ways of processing their experiences, with the goal of increasing their resilience and ability to face future challenges.

##### Unplanned Pregnancy/Pregnancy Crisis

In 2021, 5 staff members provided 56 unplanned pregnancy support sessions to 55 individual clients – 11 of whom were couples (65 clients in total). This is fewer sessions than the total 70 in 2020 but we saw a 12 per cent increase in the number of people requesting our service, with a 9 per cent increase in the numbers of clients that went on to have at least one session. Of the 77 overall enquiries, 9 per cent cancelled their booked appointments because they no longer needed it and 20 per cent did not respond to our follow-up after their initial enquiry. Often, this can be due to the vulnerability of the issue and isn't unusual but we continue to assess the data to ensure we make our services as accessible as possible. All of these sessions last for longer than one clinical hour – on average they are 1.25 - 1.5 hours long.

Evaluations show that our clients find the unplanned sessions very helpful: 100 per cent of clients feel welcomed, at ease and not judged by their counsellor, giving the top mark of 6/6 for these questions in our evaluation framework. In our 6-week follow-up session with clients - offered as a check-in at the initial meeting – all gave positive feedback with regards to how useful they found our service and more than half (55 per cent) made their decision about their pregnancy in the six weeks following the session.

Our clients said:

*'I'd like to say how helpful that was. I found the format very helpful, I was guided through very nicely, I didn't feel pushed or forced, you listened. This was something I really needed right now.'*

*'I really thought it was so useful, I wish I'd done it weeks ago. This is a pragmatic approach to articulating feelings and brought to light what I'm feeling. The losses of having a termination felt really strong for me. I hope this will be useful for my partner too.'*

*From a follow up session - 'I felt quite trapped until I'd explored all the options, having the space made me feel less cornered. We ended up losing one of our babies as we were having twins, but your service gave us a good platform to explore our worries and you helped us to feel more settled from the beginning. Thank you'*

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## Pregnancy Loss and Pregnancy Counselling

This low-cost service has developed in the past year with the advent of the pregnancy counselling service. All counselling work has continued online throughout the year with very few clients requesting in-person work which would have been disrupted by lockdowns. Across the year, we saw 49 clients for a total of 453 sessions. The majority of these were pregnancy loss clients – mostly those struggling following an abortion, but some following a miscarriage. Eight clients came for pregnancy counselling this year as the service became fully operational with a new member of staff setting it up in the final quarter of the year. The pregnancy counselling service has not yet had enough clients complete their counselling to consider evaluations, so the below relates to the pregnancy loss service.

Over the course of the year, we continue to offer one-off sessions for those who are interested in counselling and who attend an assessment but do not go on to access on-going counselling. For some, one session is enough. However, we are aware that for many, this is a sensitive subject and one which they need to feel ready to work on. Some clients return a year or two later. As a result, we saw 7 clients for an initial appointment which did not lead to them continuing with counselling this year. We also received enquiries from a further 22 clients who did not proceed to having an initial appointment.

Our counselling service is well supported by a valued team of trainee counselling and psychotherapy students on placement with us, as well as newly qualified counsellors working towards professional accreditation who also volunteer with us. Our team is currently made up of four staff members and seven volunteers, and hasn't seen much turnover in the last year.

## Evaluations

Counselling is having a significantly positive impact:: using NHS approved psychometrics – GAD7 and PHQ9 scales for Anxiety and Depression respectively – we saw that before counselling 42 per cent had moderate to severe anxiety and 52 per cent were experiencing moderate to severe depression. However, after counselling, these figures fell with 10 per cent experiencing moderate to severe anxiety and 10 per cent experiencing moderate to severe depression.

We also evaluate our clients' experience of the counselling we offer, which is through a loosely structured 'programme' helping them to process different emotions related to grief and loss. Clients said they appreciated having a safe space to talk about their experience where they felt listened to with compassion, empathy and professional non-judgement by their counsellors. This facilitated a process whereby they felt they could come to terms with the most pressing aspects of their experiences, gain more understanding and self-acceptance for themselves in turn leading to a greater sense of clarity about the impact of their experience. Clients particularly expressed that the counselling gave them a greater ability to: better identify and understand their emotions, be honest about their emotions around their loss and accept the reality of the loss and what it has meant for their life. As one client put it: 'being able to untangle the different emotions I was experiencing; to name them and understand them.'

The benefits they experienced included a more integrated sense of themselves, an increased feeling of resilience and the sense that they could move forward with hope. Finding a place in their life for their abortion experience meant they could experience peace instead of pain.

Our evaluation framework measures on a scale of 1-6 (6 being 'strongly agree', 1 being 'strongly disagree') how clients feel about statements covering the above-mentioned issues. We saw this year that before counselling, 73 per cent of clients scored between 1-3 while 27 per cent scored between 4-6. After counselling, 4 per cent scored between 1-3 while 96 per cent scored between 4-6 on that scale.

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Some qualitative feedback from clients on what they found helpful:

*"Identifying unfamiliar emotions and being able to name them; this helped me to understand why I was feeling the way I was and finding things difficult. I have been guided to be more compassionate towards myself which will be something I hope to always take with me to difficult situations I will encounter in the future."*

*"I have found the structure so helpful in making sense of such unfamiliar emotions; have valued so much this space for working things through and understanding how I feel. My counsellor has always been so warm and kind and I have felt able to be open and honest in working through what I found to be such a painful time".*

*"I cannot express how helpful this has been to enable me to heal; the many stages made sure I didn't bury anything, and it felt so healthy to explore how I was feeling from all aspects. I am so thankful for the kindness, empathy and flexibility of this service"*

*"I found it useful to have a consistent, non-judgmental safe space to discuss my situation. I really enjoyed speaking to someone who didn't feel like a robot. My counsellor made me feel very heard and seen. I appreciated her observations, reflections and insights."*

*"I really appreciated having a safe, non-judgemental space to speak about the loss, to verbalise my feelings, my reasons, to be heard and listened to. Having this space to talk about it means I can also speak about it elsewhere."*

*"It's been a really positive experience overall, especially being able to talk in general about life as well as my loss. The flexibility of the programme was really good, and the exercises were useful. I really wanted to attend every session every week"*

### Choice for Change Prison Counselling

Choice for Change (C4C) is a counselling project for female offenders facing pregnancy loss and child bereavement/child separation issues. The project is hosted by the Mental Health Teams at HMPs Bronzefield and Downview and holds a Service Level Agreement with CNWL NHS Foundation Trust to provide its services. In its fifth year at these prisons, C4C has seen some significant changes with the retirement of its founder and team lead and a new appointment to the service. One counsellor also left in October leading to the post being shared between two counsellors, one current staff counsellor at HMP Bronzefield and one new staff counsellor at HMP Downview. Over the year, three volunteer counsellors left and three new volunteer counsellors joined the team, which has now reached a total of 9.

The covid pandemic has continued to impact on work in prisons with small lockdowns due to outbreaks, but overall we have been able to enjoy returning to face-to-face sessions and daytime working hours (in contrast to holding sessions over the phone out of hours last year). Our Post-Release counselling service (PRC), which we started during the lockdown when we couldn't work in the prisons and women we had been working with were being released without having completed counselling, continues on a small scale with one volunteer managing the client load.

Overall, we worked with 44 women delivering 503 sessions at HMP Bronzefield and with 34 women delivering 409 sessions at HMP Downview during 2021. The team has also worked with 10 women remotely, delivering 60 sessions overall, to post-release clients.

As already mentioned, Choices received funding from CNWL to pay a member of staff to participate in a perinatal counselling support pilot project. The contract for this service ran from April 2021 – March 2022 and has been extended to continue until March 2023. Choices' counsellor worked with 4 women referred from the perinatal service and delivered 55 sessions overall, as well as referring at least one client on to the general C4C service.

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Clients in the prison setting are universally traumatised and responding to a variety of challenges, even though our work with them is targeted to issues surrounding pregnancy crisis, loss, and child separation. Demographic statistics taken from the women we worked during 2021 demonstrate the following:

### Main Referring issue:

- 89% Child Separation
- 17% Child Bereavement
- 28% Miscarriage
- 24% Abortion

### Adverse Experiences:

- 49% Childhood Sexual Abuse
- 60% Adult Sexual Abuse
- 50% Childhood Domestic Abuse
- 49% Adult Domestic Abuse

The data shows that many women documented more than one adverse experience. Only 8 per cent of the women we work with did not experience any of these issues. 70 per cent of C4C clients are under the age of 35.

### Evaluations

We use GAD7 and PHQ9 psychometric scales to score and monitor anxiety and depression levels in clients from the beginning to the end of a counselling intervention. Results are positive: psychometric scores before counselling show that 93 per cent had moderate to severe anxiety and 76 per cent were experiencing moderate to severe depression. However, after counselling, 31 per cent were experiencing moderate to severe anxiety and 15 per cent were experiencing moderate to severe depression.

As mentioned above, at the beginning and end of therapy, we monitor our client's experience of therapy to understand and assess the impact of our work. We ask questions focusing on issues such as working with emotions, self-esteem, self-confidence and an ability to move on and these are measured from 1-6, indicating growth as their scores increased. Sometimes clients would tick all 6s at the beginning of counselling for a variety of reasons, such as personal defences and therefore it can be difficult to gain an accurate outcome but overall, there is a definite pattern of growth. Before counselling 55 per cent scored between 1-3 while 45 per cent scored between 4-6. After counselling, 100 per cent scored between 4-6.

On some occasions these high scores may reflect the clients desire to please their counsellor, which also demonstrates a positive counselling experience. Overall the results are encouraging as they demonstrate growth.

Clients tell us how valuable the service is to them. There is a real sense becoming unstuck and being able to take responsibility for their actions, finding forgiveness, letting go and an ability to move on with their lives.

Some feedback on the difference the counselling made:

*'It has been great learning about how to cope with my emotions because I know I have struggled with that.'*

*'Learning to actually grieve and accept the losses and traumas I've been through.'*

*'Acceptance and letting go, talking about separation, no longer stuck in a rut, feel I can move on.'*

*'Being able to understand my past and the things I have been through but most of all now I can move on without all the anger and pain.'*

*'Speaking about things I have never told anyone in my life. Bring up something in me, that stays with me – I found the diamond in me.'*

*'Forgiveness - the pain being healed in my heart.'*



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## Practical Parenting Support

This project exists to support those who are parenting in adverse circumstances, such as on low income, in insecure housing, or single parenting. There is also a significant overlap with our counselling work, whereby a number of clients who have become pregnant unexpectedly and choose to continue with their pregnancy may go on to have counselling during their pregnancy and also receive support in the form of befriending or by using the Boutique – a baby and child clothes and equipment service.

With funding from the Rank Foundation, we were able to appoint a member of staff for two days a week for the first three months of the year to run the Boutique as our Parenting Support Manager was unable to travel to the office safely during the lockdown. Then, through the year, the Boutique continued as a socially distanced service – providing pre-prepared 'packs' of clothes and equipment for families. As a result, we have trained and worked with 9 volunteers through the year who have helped to keep this much-needed service running.

We gave out a total of 167 Boutique packs to parents in need of clothing and equipment. One of our clients said the following about the Boutique support:

*'Thank you so much for all the clothes/ shoes/ toys and beauty stuff for me too! I really appreciate it and so will my daughter. It was lovely to meet you and your team'*

During 2021, we supported 9 clients through our befriending project, with the help of seven volunteer befrienders, working alongside our Parenting Support Manager who also undertakes a number of holding and support sessions with befriendees. Sessions might include essential advocacy, liaison and signposting to and with other services as needed as well as practical and emotional support. Sessions this year were all online/on the phone again.

Our clients said the following about their befriending experience:

*'It's made me comfortable to talk about my situation and not feel shame.'*

*'My befriender has been really reassuring and like family. I look forward to talking to her and sharing about her week. She is encouraging and doesn't judge me. She is a mum and shared tips with her about how to do things.'*

*'Befriending (and Choices) has given me the ability to believe I can take care of my kids. I now have the courage and feel confident and strong that I can do it [parent].'*

As we did last year, we adapted some of our monitoring and evaluative measures within befriending to incorporate some GAS (Goal Attainment Scaling) goals. We work collaboratively with the client to set goals for their befriending and at the end, we measure the extent to which they feel that they attained these goals. All clients who have participated have attained their goals.

We also ran the Circle of Security™ parenting courses again this year, both in person and online, in partnership with the charity Growing Hope (which supports families with children with additional needs). In total, we ran one course in person in the final quarter of the year, and two online earlier in the year. In total, we had 21 clients register to attend the courses and the feedback has shown how important this has been for clients in a difficult year.

Parents said the following about the difference the course made:

*'I feel much better equipped to parent and to recognise and respond to my child's needs.'*  
*'It has reminded me of some underlying principles that will hopefully accompany me throughout my parenting journey.'*  
*'It has helped me to take my daughter's lead and to look for what she needs.'*

Using our own evaluation framework, which scores multiple choice questions out of a total of 6 – where 1 is strongly disagree and 6 is strongly agree –, we found: across all three courses, all participants scored on average 5.8 or above on how well the course was facilitated and feeling understood and supported by the facilitator. Participants also moved from an average of 4.15 to 5.9 on the question of how confident they felt to face future challenges as a result of being on the course. There was also real

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movement on being able to step back and think before reacting to a child's emotions as participants moved from 4 to 5 out of 6 as an average score.

### Relationships Education

As part of the picture to help avoid the dilemma of unplanned pregnancy, we offer training on a limited basis to other organisations to run an arts-based relationships course that promotes self-respect and positive values around making healthy relationship decisions. The 'I Am Project' is a nine-week course which, using the creative arts, explores healthy relationships with an emphasis on developing self-esteem. We no longer run this course ourselves and only offer training to other organizations in how to use the material (which belongs to Choices) once a year, or according to demand. In 2021, we ran one online training for two organisations that work with young and vulnerable people and one that supports relationships of all kinds. All fed back that they felt satisfied by their training and confident the course would open up constructive conversations about relationships.

### Summary of operations

The main operational drive through 2021 has been to ensure the pillars are in place for Choices to continue along its strategic aim of growth in terms of both numbers of clients and geographical spread. This has meant continued work on building our database capability to ensure data from all projects (including from prison, which poses more complications than others) can be safely help and processed, enabling us to report on the impact of our work.

Grant fundraising was successful last year, raising a total of £112,260, and our community fundraising – particularly our online Christmas appeal – was surprisingly successful, raising nearly £10,000 more than anticipated. However, we do not rest on these successes as we're aware that fundraising continues to be challenging in this climate, so are continuing to aim to build deeper relationships with churches, greater profile on social media and raising awareness of our name and brand with a wider audience. In this way, we have prioritised offering speaking engagements at churches and elsewhere.

One of the big developments of the year was the preparation to move the Boutique service to a new community venue run by a partner church KXC (in nearby Kings Cross) - a move planned for early 2022. With the move, the service can begin to operate more as it did before – when women (and their families) come in to meet with a Choices staff member or volunteer to have a 1-1 session; identify the items they need and share other needs which can lead to better signposting and holistic support. Our befriending service has suffered over the past year from the Boutique service operating in a socially distanced way as we couldn't as easily engage with our clients. We have also had some interest in expanding the Boutique via new 'plants' of Boutique services in churches we have a relationship with – this might be a long-term plan but is one we have in mind as we develop this new opportunity with KXC.

The loss of our Parenting Support Manager in August led to the development of two new roles, separating out the Boutique Manager role from a newly-created Therapeutic Parenting Support Manager role who oversees the pregnancy counselling, befriending and parenting courses. Both of these roles (which are part-time) work closely together but take into account the possibilities of growth in both areas with future funding.

Safeguarding – particularly while working online – has been a major focus this year and we ran two training evenings for all staff and volunteers on child and adult at risk safeguarding, and on responding to violence against women and girls.

Finally, we have been renegotiating the lease Choices holds on its current building and have negotiated the right to sub-let on license to another charity with the expectation being that both charities share rental and maintenance costs but continue to offer home-working to staff, thereby saving money and creating an environment in which expertise, experience and best practice can be shared across the sector.

### Future Plans

- Continue to incrementally grow each of our services to meet the needs of women and their families across north London
  - Develop the new Boutique in partnership with KXC – recruiting volunteers from among that community; explore options for new Boutique plants in other churches
  - Grow the pregnancy counselling and befriending services

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- Market the unplanned/crisis pregnancy service among referral agencies
- Continue to build partnerships with statutory bodies (referrers) and organisations to sustain the planned growth in services (more clients and potential funding)
- Build Choices' online presence through strategic use of social media and newsletters – in order to reach more clients as well as more potential funders and volunteers
- Continue to use, develop and test our evaluation framework reflecting Choices' Theory of Change
- Continue to strengthen the governance of the board of Trustees and promote inclusion
- Explore options for Choices to charge for some services to create a sustainable revenue stream
- Finalise lease negotiations and license for sub-letting office space to another charity as an income stream and opportunity to share best practice

## Finance

Total incoming resources amounted to £215,856 for the year to 31 December 2021 (2020: £188,621). Total resources expended over the same period was £193,589 (2020: £163,698). The net position for the year amounted to a surplus of £22,267 (2020: £24,923). Net resources at the end of the year were £143,007 of which £424 is restricted. Further details are found later in this report, including details of the grants we gratefully received in the year.

Choices is reliant on gifts from grant-making trusts and foundations, as well as individual and major donors. We would like to thank the following donors for their support in 2021:

Anchor Foundation, All Souls Church, Ako Foundation, Borrows Charitable Trust, Charities Aid Foundation, Fitton Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Henry Smith Foundation, Islington Borough Council, Joan Ainslie Charitable Trust, KXC (Kings Cross Church), The Leathersellers Company, Lloyds Bank Foundation, Marsh Charitable Trust, Morris Charitable Trust, National Lottery Community Fund, Pilgrim Trust, Rank Foundation, Souter Charitable Trust, Voluntary Sector Mental Health Fund, St Mary's Hornsey Rise.

The charity holds its reserves in a current bank account and in a CAF deposit account which generates interest on monies invested. It is the policy of the trustees to maintain at least three months' expenditure in reserve. The financial management of the charity is supervised and monitored by the Finance Subcommittee of the Board and the trustees.

## The people who make it happen

### Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the strategic direction and policy of the charity. The Trustees, who are also Directors of the charitable company, meet every three months to review progress and performance, monitor the financial position, monitor risk and make strategic decisions. The Trustees/Directors who served during the year and up to the date of this report are listed on page 2. New trustees are appointed by existing trustees of whom there should be a minimum of three. Trustees are selected for their individual skills, knowledge and vision. New trustees are appropriately trained and inducted.

### Team

Choices is run by the Executive Director and a five-person Management Team consisting of the project team leads. The Management Team and Executive Director are accountable to the Board. All staff are part-time (FTE was 3.5 members of staff in 2021).

### Volunteers

Choices continues to benefit from talented and committed volunteering. We have welcomed and trained four new trainee counsellors in the pregnancy loss/post-abortion counselling low-cost service. Three new counselling volunteers were trained to work in the prison counselling projects. We have also had support from a number of volunteers (not all of whom were able to commit to a year) to help with Choices' other projects, including one-to-one befriending of vulnerable mothers and help in the 'Boutique' baby clothes and equipment service. Our overall volunteer base, including trustees, is around 30+. Choices' goal is that volunteers should derive as much benefit from their work with the organisation as we derive from them. All of our counselling volunteers use Choices as a placement opportunity as part of their training as a counsellor at a reputable institution accredited with the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists (BACP), of which Choices is an organisational member.

# Report of the trustees

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### Governance

- The Trustees maintain a Risk Management policy, which is reviewed at least annually – more frequently during the past year with respect to responding to covid regulations and risk. Where appropriate, systems or procedures have been established to mitigate the risks the charity faces.
- Internal control risks are minimised by the implementation of procedures for authorisation of all transactions and projects.
- Procedures are in place to ensure compliance with the health and safety of staff, volunteers, clients and visitors. These procedures are periodically reviewed to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the charity.
- The Trustees oversee Choices' compliance with GDPR legislation at every meeting, and adherence to the Charity Commission's Governance Code on an ongoing basis.
- A smaller finance sub-committee, which includes the Treasurer, Bookkeeper and Executive Director, meets before each meeting of the Trustees and examines financial progress on a monthly basis.
- The Trustees have been particularly concerned with exploring inclusion and broad representation at all levels of the organisation – from the Board, through staff and volunteers, with a view to new appointments to the Board and continuing to explore ways of including user voice in programme development.
- No trustees claimed expenses this year.

### Statement of trustees' responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

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 charity and of the surplus or deficit of the charity for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether the policies adopted are in accordance with the Companies Act 2006 and with the applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006 and the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP): "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" issued in 2012. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities in determining how amounts are presented within items in the statement of financial activities and balance sheet, the Trustees must have regard to the substance of the reported transaction or arrangement, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles or practice.

### Small company provisions and independent examination

For the year ending 31 December 2021, the company was entitled to exemption from audit under section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies. The members have not required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with section 476. The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts. These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime. The trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year (under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011) and that an independent examination is needed. The trustees have appointed Christopher Clarke ACA as Independent Examiner for the year ended 31 December 2021.

Approved by the Board and signed on its behalf by;



**Sophie Guthrie-Kummer**  
Executive Director and Company Secretary

27 April 2022

# Report of the trustees

## (incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2021

I report on the accounts of the company for the year ended 31 December 2019, which are set out on pages 12 to 20.

### Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The trustees (who are also the directors of the company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

Having satisfied myself that the charity is not subject to audit under company law and is eligible for independent examination, it is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act;
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act; and
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

### Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the statement below.

### Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
  - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 386 of the Companies Act 2006; and
  - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records, comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the Companies Act 2006 and with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice: Accounting and Reporting by Charities have not been met; or
- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Christopher Clarke, ACA

28 March 2022

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2021

## Statement of financial activities

(incorporating the income and expenditure account)

for the year ended 31 December 2021

	Notes	Unrestrict ed Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Funds 2021 £	Funds 2020 £
<b>Income and endowments from:</b>					
Donations and legacies	2a	142,308	44,560	186,869	183,242
Other fundraising activities	2b	6,036	-	6,036	-
Income from investments	2c	1	-	1	7
Income from charitable activities	2d	6,450	15,000	21,450	5,372
Other income	2e	-	-	-	-
<b>Total income and endowments</b>		<b>154,795</b>	<b>59,560</b>	<b>214,356</b>	<b>188,621</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>					
	3				
Expenditure on Raising Funds		10,432	-	10,432	11,024
Expenditure on Charitable activities		110,116	73,042	183,157	152,674
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>120,547</b>	<b>73,042</b>	<b>193,589</b>	<b>163,699</b>
<b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>		<b>34,248</b>	<b>(13,481)</b>	<b>20,767</b>	<b>24,922</b>
Opening balances brought forward		<b>106,836</b>	<b>13,905</b>	<b>120,741</b>	<b>95,819</b>
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>		<b>141,083</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>141,507</b>	<b>120,741</b>

All activities are continuing activities.

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses for the year and therefore no statement of total recognised gains and losses has been prepared.

The notes on following pages form part of these accounts.

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2021

## Balance Sheet

for the year ended 31 December 2021

	Notes	Unrestrict ed Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Funds 2021 £	Funds 2020 £
<b>Fixed assets</b>					
Tangible fixed assets	4	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-
<b>Current assets</b>					
Rent deposit		4,000	-	4,000	4,000
Accrued income and prepayments		3,443	-	3,443	10,042
Debtors	5	3,809	-	3,809	4,305
Cash at bank and in hand		136,596	9,602	146,198	106,138
		147,849	9,602	<b>157,451</b>	124,485
<b>Liabilities</b>					
Creditors-amounts falling due in 1 year	6	(6,766)	(9,178)	<b>(15,943)</b>	(3,744)
<b>Net current assets</b>		141,083	424	141,507	120,741
<b>Total net assets</b>		141,083	424	141,507	120,741
<b>Funds of the charity</b>					
Unrestricted				141,083	106,836
Restricted	7			424	13,905
				141,507	120,741

The company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 December 2021 and the members/guarantors have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2021 in accordance with Section 476 of the Companies Act 2006.

The trustees/directors acknowledge their responsibility for complying with the requirements of the Act with respect to accounting records and for the preparation of accounts. These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime.

**Approved by the Board of Trustees on 27 April 2022 and signed on their behalf by:**

  
Hannah Carter (May 24, 2022 17:34 GMT+1)

**Hannah Carter**  
Chair of Trustees

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2021

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 December 2021

### 1. Accounting Principles

The principal accounting principles are summarised below and have been applied consistently throughout the year.

#### **Basis of accounting**

These accounts have been prepared on the basis of historical cost in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008), the Statement of Recommended Practice "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" (effective 1 January 2015), with Accounting Standards and with the Charities Act 2006.

#### **Basis of preparation of accounts**

These accounts have been prepared on the going concern basis.

#### **Fund accounting**

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the trustees. Restricted funds can only be used for particular limited purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

#### **Incoming resources**

Incoming resources are recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities (SoFA) when the charity becomes unconditionally entitled to the income and the amount can be quantified with reasonable accuracy and where it is confident that it will be received.

Performance related income is only included in the SoFA once the related services have been provided.

#### **Deferred income**

Grants and donations received in advance and specified by the donor as relating to specific future periods or subject to conditions which are still to be met, are deferred to the period to which they relate.

#### **Tax reclaims on donations**

Gift aid tax reclaims on donations are included in the SoFA in the same period as the donations to which they relate.

#### **Volunteer services**

The value of volunteer services received is not quantified in the accounts but is described in the trustees' report.

#### **Investment income**

Income from investments is included in the accounts in the period it is receivable.

#### **Liability recognition**

Liabilities are recognised as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to pay out resources.

#### **Operating leases**

Operating lease rentals are expensed on a straight line basis over the period of the lease.



# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2021

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 December 2021

### 2. Income

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2021	Total Funds 2020 £
<b>a Donations and legacies</b>				
Donations	79,151	1,000	80,151	65,599
Grants from trusts	53,700	43,560	97,260	107,474
Gift Aid	9,457	-	9,457	10,170
	<u>142,308</u>	<u>44,560</u>	<u>186,868</u>	<u>183,242</u>

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

Anchor Foundation		4500	4,500	
Ako Foundation	2,500		2,500	
400 Caledonian Road			-	50
Borrows Charitable Trust	1,000		1,000	-
City of London		10000	10,000	
Charities Aid Foundation		11675	11,675	6,725
Fitton Trust	200		200	-
Garfield Weston Foundation	7,500		7,500	
Henry Smith Foundation	30,000		30,000	15,000
Islington Borough Council Coronavirus			-	10,000
Joan Ainslie Charitable Trust			-	5,000
Leathersellers	7,500		7,500	7,500
Lloyds			-	5,008
London Community Response Fund			-	12,546
Mayor's Community Fund		900	900	
Macquarie Group Foundation			-	-
Marsh Charitable Trust	500		500	450
Morris Charitable Trust	2,500		2,500	
Mrs Smith and Mount Trust			-	5,000
National Lottery Community Fund		485	485	9,945
Norman Evershed Trust			-	250
Pilgrim Trust		5,000	5,000	10,000
Postcode Community Trust			-	20,000
Rank Foundation		10,000	10,000	-
Voluntary Sector Mental Health Fund		1000	1,000	
Souter Charitable Trust	2,000		2,000	-
	<u>53,700</u>	<u>43,560</u>	<u>97,260</u>	<u>107,474</u>

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2021

## b Other fundraising activities

Fundraising event donations	-	-	-	-
Donation for office space	6,036	-	6,036	-

## c Income from investments

CAF bank deposit interest	1	-	1	7
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## d Income from charitable activities

Education practitioner training	225	-	225	200
Community counselling	6,225	-	6,225	5,172
Prison counselling income	-	15,000	15,000	-
	<u>6,450</u>	<u>15,000</u>	<u>21,450</u>	<u>5,372</u>
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<u>154,795</u>	<u>59,560</u>	<u>214,355</u>	<u>188,621</u>

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2021

## 3. Expenditure

### a. by project

	Community Counselling	Education	Parenting Support	Prison Counselling	Total Charitable Expenditure 2021	Total Raising Funds Expenditure 2021
<b>Incurred directly on activities</b>						
Staff costs	15,059	-	20,491	42,306	77,856	
Premises costs	-	-	-	-	-	
Supervision costs	3,192	-	-	3,568	6,760	
Telephone and communication	-	-	-	23	23	
Publicity	-	-	-	23	23	
Staff development	-	-	-	-	-	
Freelancer costs	-	-	-	-	-	
Resources/training costs	-	-	1,247	486	1,732	
Volunteer expenses	111	-	14	992	1,118	
	<b>18,363</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>21,752</b>	<b>47,398</b>	<b>87,512</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Support costs</b>						
Staff costs	14,586	14,586	14,586	14,586	58,343	
Office expenses	598	598	598	598	2,392	
Premises costs	5,796	5,796	5,796	5,796	23,185	
Charitable donation - Centres Network	131	131	131	131	525	
Event costs	-	-	-	-	-	9,568
Fees and subscriptions	619	619	619	619	2,474	864
Freelancer costs	188	188	188	188	750	
Insurance	100	100	100	100	399	
Bank charges	27	27	27	27	107	
Bookkeeping costs	1,164	1,164	1,164	1,164	4,657	
Publicity	23	23	23	23	92	
Staff development	314	314	314	314	1,258	
Telephone and communication	366	366	366	366	1,463	
	<b>23,911</b>	<b>23,911</b>	<b>23,911</b>	<b>23,911</b>	<b>95,645</b>	<b>10,432</b>
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>42,274</b>	<b>23,911</b>	<b>45,663</b>	<b>71,309</b>	<b>183,157</b>	<b>10,432</b>

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2021

## Expenditure by project: previous year comparatives

	Community Counselling	Education	Parenting Support	Prison Counselling	Total Charitable Expenditure 2020	Total Raising Funds Expenditure 2020
<b>Incurred directly on activities</b>						
Staff costs	12,938	7,594	18,590	25,133	<b>64,255</b>	
Premises costs	-	-	-	-	-	
Supervision costs	2,592	-	-	3,260	<b>5,852</b>	
Telephone and communication	-	-	-	168	<b>168</b>	
Publicity	-	-	-	-	-	
Staff development	-	-	-	-	-	
Freelancer costs	-	-	-	-	-	
Resources/training costs	158	177	421	271	<b>1,028</b>	
Volunteer expenses	103	73	77	108	<b>360</b>	
	<b>15,791</b>	<b>7,844</b>	<b>19,088</b>	<b>28,939</b>	<b>71,662</b>	-
<b>Support costs</b>						
Staff costs	10,931	10,931	10,931	10,931	<b>43,726</b>	
Office expenses	1,819	1,819	1,819	1,819	<b>7,276</b>	
Premises costs	6,662	3,331	6,662	3,331	<b>19,987</b>	
Office maintenance	482	482	482	482	<b>1,926</b>	
Charitable donation - Centres Network	-	-	-	-	-	
Event costs	-	-	-	-	-	<b>1,617</b>
Fees and subscriptions	100	100	100	100	<b>400</b>	<b>9,408</b>
Insurance	156	156	156	156	<b>623</b>	
Bank charges	39	39	39	39	<b>157</b>	
Bookkeeping costs	1,005	1,005	1,005	1,005	<b>4,018</b>	
Publicity	250	250	250	250	<b>1,000</b>	
Staff development	49	49	49	49	<b>195</b>	
Telephone and communication	426	426	426	426	<b>1,704</b>	
	<b>21,919</b>	<b>18,588</b>	<b>21,919</b>	<b>18,588</b>	<b>81,012</b>	<b>11,024</b>
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>37,709</b>	<b>26,431</b>	<b>41,007</b>	<b>47,527</b>	<b>152,674</b>	<b>11,024</b>

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2021

b. by fund

## Expenditure on charitable activities

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total expenditure 2021	Total expenditure 2020
	£	£	£	£
Staff costs	86,250	49,876	136,125	107,981
Premises costs	17,498	5,687	23,185	19,987
Supervision costs	6,010	750	6,760	5,852
Publicity	92	23	115	1,000
Staff development/training	258	1,000	1,258	195
Resources/training costs	404	1,329	1,732	1,028
Travel costs	-	-	-	-
Volunteer expenses	1,104	14	1,118	360
Office expenses	2,392	74	2,466	7,276
Office maintenance	-	-	-	1,926
Charitable donation - Centres Network	525	-	525	-
Event costs	-	-	-	-
Fees and subscriptions	2,474	-	2,474	400
Full Cost Recovery (support costs)	- 13,944	13,944	-	-
Freelancer costs	750	-	750	-
Insurance	399	-	399	623
Bank charges	107	-	107	157
Bookkeeping costs	4,657	-	4,657	4,018
Telephone and communication	1,142	344	1,486	1,871
	<b>110,116</b>	<b>73,042</b>	<b>183,157</b>	<b>152,674</b>

## Expenditure on raising funds

Event costs	424	-	424	1,617
Fees and subscriptions	9,144	-	9,144	9,050
Bank charges	864	-	864	357
	<b>10,432</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>10,432</b>	<b>11,024</b>
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>120,547</b>	<b>73,042</b>	<b>193,589</b>	<b>163,699</b>

c. Employees

	2021	2020
Gross salaries and wages	127,376	102,581
Employer's National Insurance	5,080	3,530
Employer's pension contributions	2,439	1,869

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2021

There are no employees who received emoluments in excess of £60,000 (2020:nil).  
Key management personnel comprise Sophie Guthrie-Kummer, Executive Director.

## 4. Tangible fixed assets

None to report

## 5. Debtors

	2021	2020
Gift aid recoverable	3,398	3,805
Counselling income	412	500
Accrued income and prepayments	7,443	10,042
	<b>11,253</b>	<b>14,347</b>

## 6. Creditors

	2021	2020
Amounts due within one year	985	1,885
Tax and pension contributions payable	2,656	1,859
Deferred income and accruals	12,303	
	<b>15,943</b>	<b>3,744</b>

## 7. Movement of Restricted Funds

	Building Works	Parenting Support	Prison counselling	Core costs restricted funds	Total restricted funds
opening balance		8,523	-	5,383	13,905
incoming resources	900	6,485	20,500	31,675	59,560
resources expended	900	14,583	20,500	37,058	73,042
closing balance	-	<b>424</b>	-	-	<b>424</b>

## 8. Related Party Transactions

John Wyatt, trustee, is married to Celia Wyatt, who was employed as Prison Counselling Manager of Choices Islington until April 2021 and received a salary of £7,994. Celia continued as a volunteer until the end of 2021 and received payments totalling £386.42 in relation to travel expenses incurred in this voluntary role.

# **Report of the trustees**

**(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2021**