



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

# Choices Islington

Annual Report and Financial Statements  
31 December 2022

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2022

## 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 goal

**To work with our clients to improve their resilience and ability 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.

### Our ethos

Choices is a Christian organisation, and so 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. Rather, we offer a safe, hopeful, and empowering space to our clients, our partners and each other.

We work with women and families facing pregnancy crises – from unplanned pregnancy to pregnancy loss, child separation, and parenting under challenging circumstances - and we recognise that these can be sensitive issues. Abortion, particularly, can become 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 judgement. Our goal is to provide counselling and practical support so those in crisis can reach a place of resilience and hope for the future.

All Choices staff and volunteers are appropriately trained and supervised to reflect our ethos. We're committed to working at the highest standards of excellence that we can and practice within all national legal frameworks and professional guidelines, including safeguarding and anti-discrimination legislation. We are organisational members of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) and adhere to the BACP ethical framework. We take seriously our responsibility to provide a non-directive space for our clients.

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.

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2022

## Legal and administrative information

Company/Charity name	Choices Islington (formerly Choices Confidential Pregnancy Advice)	
Registered charity number	1124209	
Registered company number	6517231	
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) Matt Davis (Treasurer) John Wyatt Damilola Makinde	Tamsin Merchant Lizzie Osborne Ian Gambier Elizabeth Dullea
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.

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## How we accomplish our Goal:

Our counselling and practical services focus on empowering our clients as they build their own resilience to handle adversity and face the future with hope following a pregnancy crisis – from abortion to child separation or loss, or parenting in difficult circumstances.

We have three main outputs – Counselling, Practical Parenting Support and Signposting – which form the basis of our services to our clients:

1. A free crisis service for those facing the dilemma of an unplanned pregnancy
2. Low-cost counselling for up to six months for those struggling following a decision to terminate a pregnancy or following a pregnancy loss. And for those with mental health concerns during pregnancy, we offer counselling through the perinatal period, including postnatally.
3. Free counselling for female offenders in three women's prisons and post-release for up to six months around the same issues of pregnancy crisis, loss and child separation and child loss.
4. Parenting support:
  - One-to-one befriending with a trained befriender for pregnant and new mums
  - A free loan of baby clothes and equipment in the Choices Boutique (open to families of under 5s)
  - Parenting courses focused on building secure attachment relationships for families of under 5s
5. Signposting – supporting and helping all clients to feel more confident to access other relevant services – occurs at all levels of our services.

## Our impact in 2022

*'An amazing team of lovely people willing to provide help and support for mothers-to-be like myself. I was made to feel very comfortable. It was an absolute pleasure meeting everyone involved at Choices.'*

- Boutique client

*'I've recommended Choices to other people I know who need access to this service. I didn't find anything else like it when I was looking and am grateful for the support I received.'*

- Post-Abortion Counselling client

*'I thought it was fantastic, I'm incredibly grateful for how seriously you took me and the situation I am in and how non-judgmental the space was. It was surprisingly hard to find that elsewhere, even in other counselling spaces, and I could really feel that throughout. It was very valuable, thank you'*

- Client facing an unplanned pregnancy

We worked with around 400 clients again, over the course of the year.

65 men and women came to us to discuss their unplanned pregnancy; 165 parents and carers came to the Choices Boutique for baby clothes and equipment; 21 parents came on one of the three parenting courses we ran; we worked with 36 women in the community setting, offering counselling following an abortion, 17 women had counselling during pregnancy and postnatally, and we counselled 120 women in the prison setting and following release from prison, and four women were given befriending support with parenting.

On top of this, we supported a further 59 people who got in touch for any of our services but didn't choose to go ahead with an appointment.

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In short, demand for support through a pregnancy crisis – from an unplanned pregnancy to responding to the consequences of whatever choice our clients have made – continues to grow, so Choices aims to continue to grow sustainably and with organisational resilience to meet that demand.

## Community Counselling

Our counselling service enables clients to address their challenges, 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. All our counsellors are qualified or completing their training (registered with an accredited provider). Choices is an organisational member of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

### Unplanned Pregnancy/Pregnancy Crisis

We offer clients facing the dilemma of an unplanned pregnancy a compassionate, caring, non-directive one-off 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 2022, four staff members and one volunteer provided 80 unplanned pregnancy counselling sessions to 65 individuals. Despite seeing the same number of clients as last year, we provided 24 more sessions than in 2021 as just over 25% of clients received more than one session. We had 94 enquiries – which was 22% higher than in 2021. 12 clients booked an appointment but cancelled, and 17 clients did not respond to our follow-up after their initial enquiry – which is a normal drop-off rate for this service which requires a level of vulnerability from the client to even get in touch. We believe the larger reach of this service was due to increased marketing to local organisations across the year, something that we would like to continue for all our services in 2023.

Our evaluations show that all our clients find these sessions helpful. 99% of our clients who offered feedback gave the top mark of 6/6 when asked if they did not feel judged by their counsellor. They all said that they felt able to explore their dilemma and think creatively about their options in our sessions giving scores of at least 5/6.

One client said:

*'You were way more helpful than I thought or hoped you could be, I was just googling desperately and got a call back straight away and was able to see someone for an appointment straight away, it's been so helpful I just can't tell you'*

We offer all clients a six-week follow up session if they'd like to use it as a way of checking-in and offering support.

One client said during a follow-up session:

*'It was a really positive experience - I didn't know there was help out there like this, it was such a good experience'*

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## Pregnancy Loss Counselling

This service supports women and men through difficulties experienced through pregnancy loss with a focus on post abortion concerns. We offer a maximum of 24 sessions at low cost and work online and in person – which has widened our reach. The service is supported by five trainee counsellors who have chosen to have their clinical placement with Choices, and three members of staff. The aim is to recruit two to three more placement trainees over the course of 2023 as we expect demand for the service to increase.

We have supported 36 clients over the last year, delivering a total of 399 sessions. Almost all of these were for post abortion concerns, and all were women this year. Of these, eight clients were carried over from the previous year, 22 were assessed in 2022 and six were supported with an assessment one-off session.

Over the course of the year, we continued to offer one-off sessions for those who were interested in counselling and who attended an assessment but did not go on to access ongoing counselling. For some, one session was 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.

We were contacted by a further 32 clients where the contact went no further than the initial enquiry. Again, the sensitive nature of the counselling often means clients can take some time before they are ready to proceed.

Clients over the past year have mainly identified as White British (60%), White Other (11%), Black British (11%), Black African (13%), Asian Other (5%). They range in age from 20 to 45 with the majority in the 25-29yr age range (50%). The majority come from Choices' unplanned pregnancy service, via an online search or word of mouth.

Since working online has become an established feature of our service offering our reach has extended throughout London, nationwide and even internationally (with clients in Thailand and Hong Kong).

Most clients self-report as feeling depressed and anxious. However, increasingly, our clients have pre-existing mental health diagnoses including Bi-Polar disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder/Complex trauma, OCD, PTSD, as well as anxiety disorders. Clients have also disclosed childhood sexual abuse, bullying and sexual assault.

Counselling is having a significantly positive impact. Using NHS approved psychometrics – GAD7 and PHQ9 scales for Anxiety and Depression respectively – we saw that from the start of counselling to the end, our clients' anxiety reduced by 48.5% and depression reduced by 63%.

Our clients said:

*"I appreciate the space I was given to talk about things I didn't feel able to discuss with anyone else, so now I can speak with people I choose to with greater clarity and purpose."*

*"I came in wanting to be less hurtful to myself, I feel like I have got out of it what I wanted to as I have learnt the ways that I've been hurting myself so that I can be more kind to myself."*

*"Thank you for helping me to understand my feelings. It has helped in my relationships and in life."*

*"It has been really challenging but extremely rewarding and I feel like the counselling has made me more able to explore the deeper issues around my abortion."*

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## Pregnancy Counselling

Our Pregnancy Counselling service provides low cost counselling to expectant parents and in some instances very new parents who are dealing with birth trauma. We provide counselling from around 12 weeks of pregnancy until 37 weeks where our counsellors negotiate a break until after the individual has given birth. We then offer around six sessions of counselling in the first four months after birth.

We are open to providing counselling to partners in the pregnancy, however we are yet to work with any. We have supported one client who was referred to us after a traumatic labour and birth experience. She was offered 14 sessions. We have supported 13 clients over the past year. We also held one-off assessments with another four clients who did not go on to receive counselling. We have at times been working to full capacity over the past year so we are encouraged that the service has grown and we have recruited three placement counsellors and thanks to a grant from the Benefact Trust, another counsellor joined the team one day a week from November for a year. We aim to operate this service without a waiting list as pregnancy is already such a limited time and we don't want clients to wait any longer than absolutely necessary to access support.

Most of our clients come from our unplanned pregnancy service, however one or two heard about the service via word of mouth and another was referred from another similar organisation to ours. Our clients range in age from 18 to late 30s and come from all over London (Islington, Camden, Barnet, Westminster, Wandsworth). Most of our clients self identify as being White British, Black British or White Other.

Many of our clients report that they feel anxious and depressed. When starting counselling at least 50% of our clients have psychometric scores suggesting they had high/severe levels of anxiety and depression. They come with presenting issues such as; unplanned pregnancy, relationship breakdown, financial challenges, domestic violence/ emotional & psychological abuse.

About half of our clients' anxiety and depression scores decrease over the course of counselling. However, these scores do not tell the whole story: in our evaluations, we can see that the way clients speak about their struggles changes hugely during counselling – however the reality is that their situations remain challenging. Becoming a new parent can be full of unforeseen anxieties and challenges and for many these situations do not change. What changes is their ability to face their situation with hope and resilience.

Our clients said:

*"I have thoroughly valued this service; it saved my mental health during the most difficult situation I have faced in my life. It provided me with support when I felt completely lost and alone, and helped me to find a way forward, so I am extremely grateful."*

*"It has helped me get through a particularly challenging time professionally and personally and I am very grateful for that. I feel much better prepared to face future challenges and this service has reminded me just how capable I am of dealing with whatever life throws at me and I will definitely move into the next phase of my life with more confidence. Thank you."*

*"I was so scared that I wasn't going to be able to do this alone. Had I had not had this service, I don't think I would have continued with this pregnancy. I feel like you've saved my life in a way - which was unexpected. This gives me strength to keep going and to try not to worry about things as much."*

## Prison Counselling

Choices Prison Counselling (C4C), formerly known as Choice for Change, is a counselling service for female prisoners for pregnancy loss and child bereavement/child separation issues – abiding issues for women in prison. C4C is hosted by the Mental Health Teams at HMPs Bronzefield, Downview and Send, under a Service Level Agreement with CNWL NHS Foundation Trust, and is integrated into the overall Mental Health provision at the prisons, where we work closely with their teams. The counselling team is made up of three members of staff and eight volunteer counsellors, three of whom joined in 2022.

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Across the three prisons and post release, C4C counsellors worked with 120 clients last year. Most of the clients we worked with had a short contract of 6-12 weeks although we worked with some for up to 24 weeks, but we also offered a crisis or holding session to some women as they faced a difficult date such as an anniversary, birthday or adoption hearing. As we are now working in an additional prison and have a greater number of volunteers following the COVID-19 pandemic, our client numbers are up about 25% on last year and 12% from 2020. 12 of our clients were also seen in our new 'post release' service which was started during lockdown.

Child separation is by far the largest referring issue we work with (78% of clients) followed by adoption and miscarriage. Our clients range from the ages of 17-59 years old, with 30-34 years being the greatest age represented. 45% of all clients are White British, followed by Black British and White Irish (12% and 11%). At least 88% of the women we work with have experienced adverse childhood experiences such as sexual and domestic abuse. The work that our service offers works directly with the fallout and consequences of these experiences.

The psychometric feedback we received from clients indicates a positive experience of counselling. Pre-counselling scores show 73% of clients presented with moderate to severe anxiety and 76% with moderate to severe symptoms of depression. At the end of therapy, the majority of clients reported a significant reduction in their symptoms: only 26% of clients reported symptoms of moderate to severe anxiety and 31% reported symptoms of moderate to severe depression. Sometimes the ending can be an anxious time for clients, especially if it is before release and this can be reflected in the scores.

In terms of the impact of counselling, clients showed a significant improvement in our evaluations: we ask clients to rate statements on a scale from 1-6 (6 being 'strongly agree'), focusing on issues such as understanding emotions, self-confidence and the ability to 'move on'. 71% of clients gave scores of between 1 and 3 at the beginning of therapy and 92% of clients gave scores of 4 and above at the end, which shows a marked improvement for this vulnerable and complex cohort.

Our clients said:

*"My counselling sessions exceeded my expectations, and I would not have been able to deal with my sentence without it. I understand myself; I control my emotions better. I was free to talk about anything in a non-judgmental space. I see myself ready to face anything now."*

*"Talking to someone and not feeling judged was very helpful and being able to vent. I feel stronger mentally."*

*"Being able to trust my counsellor has enabled me to start to open up."*

*"Keep doing what you are doing and expand if you can."*

## Practical Parenting Support

This service exists to support those who are parenting in adverse circumstances, such as on low income, in insecure housing, or single parenting. We offer befriending and a baby clothes and equipment service – the Choices Boutique.

Our **befriending** service supports new parents and parents-to-be by providing one-to-one regular support with a trained befriender. This support can be both emotional and practical.

This service (which has about six volunteers) has been quiet over the past year: we assessed six clients and three of these turned into befriending clients. One client was supported for three months off the back of attending a Circle of Security parenting course. Two clients started befriending with us after accessing other services (Pregnancy Counselling and Boutique).

This number is down on previous years which may be due to low staff resource, and also highlights the need to build referral pathways up between Boutique and the befriending service. All of our befriending clients in the past year, who are more often than not lone parents, have come from another Choices service. Our befriending clients have identified as mixed race (White and Black British) or Black British. They have been based in Islington, Camden and Westminster.



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Our clients indicated that befriending made them feel less lonely and more confident in their parenting decisions and ability. We are also building up the referral pathway between pregnancy counselling and befriending – for some of our clients this works as a good step down once counselling has ended.

The **Choices Boutique** is a baby and children's clothing and equipment bank. We receive good quality, second-hand items and offer them to families who can use them. Run out of a community building run by a partner church (KXC), it is open one day a week for appointments and we receive and sort donations on another day.

Most of our clients are on low income, single parent families or struggling with mental health issues. Many of our clients are referred to us by Family Support Workers in Islington and Camden, but a number self-refer because they need the extra support.

The Choices Boutique opened at its new location in Kings House (Kings Cross in central London) in March 2022 and this new location provides a great space for clients to feel connected and welcomed in.

The Boutique continues to be a springboard into accessing some of our other parenting services, such as the Circle of Security Parenting™ course or the opportunity to be befriended. We also work closely with Growing Hope, a charity providing therapy to children and young people with additional needs. Sharing this community space at Kings House means we can work closely with these partners, including the KXC Little Haven baby and toddler group which also runs on Wednesdays.

We ran 162 boutique sessions to the end of 2022 – an increase in numbers from last year and including a gap in services while we moved the location of the Boutique. Choices Boutique is managed by one staff member and three volunteers who all joined in the last year.

A number of our Choices Boutique clients return for repeat appointments and keep in touch, such as one who also receives befriending support. She is a single parent with an older son who has autism and a young daughter aged two.

She said:

*'I have known Choices for four years. The support has been amazing. From baby Boutique to practical support, it has just been superb. The kindness is so gifted here. what is amazing about Choices is no matter whatever religious or general background you come from you are treated with so much respect so thank you for everything.'*

We also have some volunteers who also benefit from the Boutique. One has two children and is both a client and volunteer with Choices. She took a break from volunteering when she had her baby but has been collecting items from Boutique as well as recycling some of our unsuitable donations for sewing projects. We are excited that she is coming back to volunteering and discussing ways she can make it work to bring her child along too.

We continue to run **Circle of Security Parenting™ courses** in partnership with Growing Hope three times a year. This COS course is based on attachment theory and runs over 7-8 weeks. This year Choices ran all three courses (the final one alongside Growing Hope) while one of their staff members was being trained to run it. Over these three courses we have supported 21 parents, with the help of one volunteer.

Most of our clients for COS courses come from referrals from Growing Hope, other Choices services or local partner churches. The age range is wide and we have supported parents in their 20s to 50s over the past year. Parents mainly identify as White British, Mixed, Black British or Asian British. Almost all of our attendees in 2022 were female. Parents attending the courses shared issues such as single parenting, children with a SEND diagnosis and intervention from social services. Parents attending have been from Islington, Haringey and Camden. Two of the three courses were run online, the third was in person.

At the outset most parents say they feel pretty confident with their parenting ability and skills, however, at the end of the course 100% of parents respond with scores of 5 and 6 (out of a 1-6 scale) to all the questions, and comment that they feel much more confident.

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We ran a one-off reunion session for one of the courses, where the attendees came to share their reflections on COS and meet with each other. This played a dual role in supporting them with ongoing parenting challenges, and enabling them to be more connected with each other, growing their support networks with other parents. It is now our goal to run follow-up sessions each year.

Our clients said:

*"I really responded to the idea of 'being good enough.' While I feel I am good at delighting in my kids and offering a secure base, I also know I make lots of mistakes as a parent. Knowing that I can 'repair' these mistakes is a huge comfort to me."*

*"I'm overwhelmingly pleased that I went on this course. The facilitators were great and very kind and understanding of every parent's individual needs. I also enjoyed meeting a lot of new parents, who were lovely and very welcoming. This course has allowed me to build my confidence as a parent and has given me further strengths to parent my little ones to the best of my ability. I would just like to say a massive thank you to the facilitators, who were just fantastic!"*

## Summary of operations

Choices' business strategy continues to be to grow to meet the demand for our services, and to ensure growth is sustainable, backed up by organisational resilience.

Following the years of lockdowns and related challenges to our operations, we have been pleased to be able to move our Boutique service into a community premises managed by a partner church, KXC. This has enabled us to welcome clients into an attractive, open and airy space, and been better able to signpost them to other services using the same space as well as further afield. Despite the challenges, we have successfully evolved and now offer mixed-mode counselling, such that the majority of our clients now see their counsellors via an online platform.

Our work in the women's prison estate has also continued to grow as the service has expanded into a third prison, and we have trialled offering counselling to women post release. Our relationship with the NHS mental health teams who host us in the prisons has also solidified further – culminating in being included in the CNWL (Central and North West London) NHS Trust's successful bid to run health services in the prisons for the next seven years, and Choices becoming a sub-contractor to provide our services.

However, all of our staff have felt the pressure of supporting marginalised and vulnerable people on a shoestring budget. We identified that our biggest needs as an organisation trying to grow sustainably were:

- To support Staff:
  - Recruit Services Manager to enable Choices' services to run smoothly and pressures on staff to be relieved (and to release our Operations and Fundraising Manager, as well as our Director, to focus on fundraising)
  - Create more avenues for supporting staff wellbeing
  - Consider staff training needs
- To raise more money:
  - Create new Fundraising Manager role to enable focused time on fundraising
  - To start a Major Gifts fundraising strand
  - Find new ways to grow earned income
- To serve more clients:
  - Advertise services with healthcare and sector stakeholders
  - Advertise the work of Choices through church and other networks (eg Christian Medical Fellowship) through speaking engagements

These have developed into our organisational goals for 2023.

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Grant fundraising was a challenge through the year. We changed our approach to begin to apply for much larger multi-year grants as we had strong enough reserves to cope with a planned deficit for the year. A mixture of a tough fundraising climate, and perhaps the fact that we held our reserves to tide us over against the tough climate, saw us being turned down for a number of grant applications. However, the risk paid off and we secured two multi-year grants from the City Bridge Trust and National Lottery (Reaching Communities) at the end of the year, which has enabled us to embark more fully on this strategy of growth and to advertise for a new Services Manager role in early 2023.

Thanks to a little more profile-raising work (speaking in churches and a supporters' event in September 2022), we also received a higher amount of regular giving and some very generous one-off donations last year. Our Christmas Appeal also raised just over its target of £20,000. All of this meant that our deficit as we closed 2022 was not as significant as we expected and we have been able to designate some funds to much-needed upgrades to technology/laptops, training for staff and towards expanding an important role.

Lease negotiations have continued over the past year and we have entered into a license agreement with another charity, Growing Hope, to share our office space. Both charities currently work part-time in the office and part-time at home, which works for both and provides a form of earned income for Choices.

Thanks to a grant from the Enterprise Development Programme, we have also spent the last year exploring the feasibility of charging for running the Circle of Security Parenting™ course as a way of subsidising other charitable activities. With the increasing challenge of fundraising from grants and not wanting to be overly reliant on any one stream of income, we look to increase our earned income (so far made up of low-cost counselling and rent). Following the feasibility study, we aim to trial the parenting course in the first quarter of 2023.

We continue to take safeguarding very seriously and offered another update training to all staff and volunteers, while the two designated safeguarding leads went on a more advanced training course to ensure we are up to date with best practice.

### Future Plans

- As outlined above, the three-tiered goal: to support staff; to raise more money; to serve more clients

In addition:

- Pilot the paid-for Circle of Security Parenting™ course as a sustainable revenue stream
- 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

### Finance

Total incoming resources amounted to £219,674 for the year to 31 December 2022 (2021: £214,356). Total resources expended over the same period were £226,961 (2021: £193,589). The net position for the year amounted to a deficit of £(7,287) (2021: surplus of £20,766). Net resources at the end of the year were £134,220, of which £10,421 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 2022:

**Ako Foundation, All Souls Church, Arundell Trust, Barnabas Trust, Benefact Trust, Borrows Charitable Trust, City Bridge Trust, Enterprise Development Fund, Henry Smith Foundation, KXC (Kings Cross Church), M & H Maunsell Charity, The Leathersellers Company, National Lottery Community Fund, The Prince of Wales Charitable 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 and up to nine months where it is deemed necessary. Where reserves are being held, these will be designated for a specific purpose (such as for

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specific training, for laptops etc). 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 3. 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, who is accountable to the Board. The Executive Director manages all the project managers (who run our services) and a Fundraising and Operations Manager. All staff are part-time, and each service is supported by volunteers.

#### Volunteers

Choices continues to benefit from talented and committed volunteering and we have had around 30 volunteers again giving time across all our services, including in the office, offering administrative support, and at events. 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 who are not fully trained use Choices as a placement opportunity as part of their counselling/psychotherapy training at reputable institutions accredited with registered professional bodies.

### 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-19 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. We are 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;

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2022

- 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 2022, 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 2022.

Approved by the Board and signed on its behalf by;



**Sophie Guthrie-Kummer**

Executive Director and Company Secretary

25 April 2023

# Report of the trustees

## (incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2022

I report on the accounts of the company for the year ended 31 December 2022, which are set out on pages 15 to 21.

### 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

19 March 2023

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2022

## Statement of financial activities

(incorporating the income and expenditure account)

for the year ended 31 December 2022

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2022 £	Total Funds 2021 £
<b>Income and endowments from:</b>					
Donations and legacies	2a	133,243	48,484	181,727	186,869
Other fundraising activities	2b	12,640	-	12,640	6,036
Income from investments	2c	140	-	140	1
Income from charitable activities	2d	25,166	-	25,166	21,450
<b>Total income and endowments</b>		<b>171,189</b>	<b>48,484</b>	<b>219,674</b>	<b>214,356</b>
<b>Expenditure on:</b>					
	3				
Expenditure on Raising Funds		11,854	1,225	13,079	10,432
Expenditure on Charitable Activities		176,620	37,262	213,882	183,157
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>188,474</b>	<b>38,487</b>	<b>226,961</b>	<b>193,589</b>
<b>Net income/(expenditure)</b>		<b>(17,284)</b>	<b>9,997</b>	<b>(7,287)</b>	<b>20,766</b>
Opening balances brought forward		<b>141,083</b>	<b>424</b>	<b>141,507</b>	<b>120,741</b>
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>		<b>123,799</b>	<b>10,421</b>	<b>134,220</b>	<b>141,507</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 2022

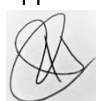
## Balance Sheet

for the year ended 31 December 2022

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2022 £	Total Funds 2021 £
<b>Fixed assets</b>					
Tangible fixed assets	4	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-
<b>Current assets</b>					
Rent deposit		4,000	-	4,000	4,000
Accrued income and prepayments		2,667	-	2,667	3,443
Debtors	5	3,420	-	3,420	3,809
Cash at bank and in hand		117,724	41,623	159,348	146,198
		127,811	41,623	169,435	157,451
<b>Liabilities</b>					
Creditors-amounts falling due in 1 year	6	(4,013)	(31,202)	(35,215)	(15,943)
<b>Net current assets</b>		123,799	10,421	134,220	141,507
<b>Total net assets</b>		123,799	10,421	134,220	141,507
<b>Funds of the charity</b>					
Unrestricted	7			102,674	141,083
Designated				21,125	-
Restricted				10,421	424
				134,220	141,507

The company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 December 2022 and the members/guarantors have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2022 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 25 April 2023 and signed on their behalf by:



Hannah Carter



# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2022

Chair of Trustees

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 December 2022

### 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 2022

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2022

## Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 December 2022

### 2. Income

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2022	Total Funds 2021 £
<b>a Donations and legacies</b>				
Donations	86,671	-	86,671	80,151
Grants from trusts	36,500	48,484	84,984	97,260
Gift Aid	10,072	-	10,072	9,457
	<u>133,243</u>	<u>48,484</u>	<u>181,727</u>	<u>186,869</u>
Grants received, included in the above, are as follows:				
Ako Foundation	5,000		5,000	2,500
Anchor Foundation			-	4,500
Arundell Trust	500		500	
Barnabas Trust		1,600	1,600	-
Benefact Trust		3,775	3,775	-
Borrows Charitable Trust	1,000		1,000	1,000
Charities Aid Foundation			-	11,675
City Bridge Trust		11,643	11,643	-
City of London			-	10,000
Enterprise Development Fund		11,550	11,550	-
Fitton Trust			-	200
Garfield Weston Foundation			-	7,500
Henry Smith Foundation	30,000		30,000	30,000
Leathersellers			-	7,500
Marsh Charitable Trust			-	500
Mayor's Community Fund			-	900
Morris Charitable Trust			-	2,500
National Lottery Community Fund		19,916	19,916	485
Pilgrim Trust			-	5,000
Rank Foundation			-	10,000
Souter Charitable Trust			-	2,000
Voluntary Sector Mental Health Fund			-	1,000
	<u>36,500</u>	<u>48,484</u>	<u>84,984</u>	<u>97,260</u>
<b>b Other fundraising activities</b>				
Donation for office space	12,640	-	12,640	6,036
<b>c Income from investments</b>				
CAF bank deposit interest	140	-	140	1
<b>d Income from charitable activities</b>				
Education practitioner training	-	-	-	225
Community counselling	5,166	-	5,166	6,225
Prison counselling income	20,000	-	20,000	15,000
	<u>25,166</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>25,166</u>	<u>21,450</u>
<b>Total incoming resources</b>	<u>171,189</u>	<u>48,484</u>	<u>219,674</u>	<u>214,356</u>

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2022

## 3. Expenditure

### a. by fund

#### Expenditure on Raising Funds

Event costs	1,575	-	1,575	424
Fees and subscriptions	9,538	1,225	10,763	9,144
Bank charges	742	-	742	864
	<b>11,854</b>	<b>1,225</b>	<b>13,079</b>	<b>10,432</b>

#### Expenditure on Charitable Activities

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total expenditure 2022 £	Total expenditure 2021 £
Bank charges	83	-	83	107
Bookkeeping costs	4,317	403	4,720	4,507
Charitable donation - Centres Network	-	-	-	525
Fees and subscriptions	2,621	-	2,621	2,474
Freelancer costs	-	-	-	750
Independent Examination costs	150	-	150	150
Insurance	883	-	883	399
Office expenses	1,823	589	2,412	2,466
Premises costs	20,680	2,138	22,818	23,185
Publicity	446	-	446	115
Resources	1,592	8,749	10,341	1,732
Staff costs	131,138	23,459	154,598	136,125
Staff development/training	3,652	312	3,964	1,258
Supervision costs	7,465	1,515	8,980	6,760
Telephone and communication	1,324	-	1,324	1,486
Volunteer expenses	445	97	542	1,118
	<b>176,620</b>	<b>37,262</b>	<b>213,882</b>	<b>183,157</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>188,474</b>	<b>38,487</b>	<b>226,961</b>	<b>193,589</b>

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2022

## b. Expenditure by Charitable Activities - by project

	Community Counselling	Parenting Support	Prison Counselling	Central costs	Total Charitable Expenditure 2022
<b>Charitable Activities</b>					
Bank charges	-	-	-	83	83
Bookkeeping costs	-	-	-	4,720	4,720
Fees and subscriptions	-	-	-	2,621	2,621
Independent examination costs	-	-	-	150	150
Insurance	-	-	-	883	883
Office expenses	-	-	-	2,412	2,412
Premises costs	-	-	-	22,818	22,818
Publicity	-	50	-	396	446
Resources	-	1,937	130	8,275	10,341
Staff costs	23,317	20,160	49,168	61,952	154,598
Staff development/training	-	-	-	3,964	3,964
Supervision costs	4,020	-	4,960	-	8,980
Telephone and communication	-	-	-	1,324	1,324
Volunteer expenses	-	97	125	320	542
<b>Total Expenditure on Charitable Activities</b>	<b>27,337</b>	<b>22,244</b>	<b>54,383</b>	<b>109,918</b>	<b>213,882</b>

In prior years, costs not incurred directly in the provision of counselling projects were shown apportioned equally by project, but are now shown as central costs.

	Community Counselling	Parenting Support	Prison Counselling	Central costs	Total Charitable Expenditure 2021
<b>Charitable Activities</b>					
Bank charges	-	-	-	107	107
Bookkeeping costs	-	-	-	4,507	4,507
Fees and subscriptions	-	-	-	2,474	2,474
Freelancer costs	-	-	-	-	-
Independent examination costs	-	-	-	150	150
Insurance	-	-	-	399	399
Office expenses	-	-	-	4,066	4,066
Premises costs	-	-	-	22,036	22,036
Publicity	-	-	23	92	115
Resources	-	1,772	373	1,149	3,294
Staff costs	16,953	20,460	42,293	55,189	134,894
Staff development/training	-	-	-	1,538	1,538
Supervision costs	3,192	-	3,568	-	6,760
Telephone and communication	-	-	-	1,486	1,486
Volunteer expenses	111	14	1,105	100	1,330
<b>Total Expenditure on Charitable Activities</b>	<b>20,256</b>	<b>22,246</b>	<b>47,362</b>	<b>93,294</b>	<b>183,157</b>

## c. Employees

	2022	2021
Gross salaries and wages	145,014	127,376
Employer's National Insurance	6,671	5,080
Employer's pension contributions	2,913	2,439

There are no employees who received emoluments in excess of £60,000 (2021:nil).  
Key management personnel comprise Sophie Guthrie-Kummer, Executive Director.

# Report of the trustees

(incorporating the directors' report) for the year ended 31 December 2022

## 4. Tangible fixed assets

None to report.

## 5. Debtors

	2022	2021
Gift aid recoverable	2,666	3,398
Counselling income	362	412
Other accrued income	392	-
	<u>3,420</u>	<u>3,809</u>

## 6. Creditors

	2022	2021
Amounts due within one year	627	985
Tax and pension contributions payable	3,386	2,656
Deferred income and accruals	31,202	12,303
	<u>35,215</u>	<u>15,943</u>

## 7. Movement of Funds

	Opening balance	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Closing balance
Unrestricted general funds	141,083	171,189	(188,474)	(21,125)	102,674
Designated funds	-	-	-	21,125	21,125
<b>Total unrestricted funds</b>	<u>141,083</u>	<u>171,189</u>	<u>(188,474)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>123,799</u>
Restricted funds					
Counselling	-	3,775	(3,775)		-
Enterprise Development	-	11,550	(7,663)		3,887
Parenting Support	424	10,778	(11,202)		-
Prison counselling	-	22,382	(15,847)		6,534
<b>Total restricted funds</b>	<u>424</u>	<u>48,484</u>	<u>(38,487)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>10,421</u>
<b>Total funds</b>	<u>141,507</u>	<u>219,674</u>	<u>(226,961)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>134,220</u>

**Reasons for transfers:** £21,125 was designated out of surplus reserves for additional prison counselling staff training, new laptops, and funding for one year of an additional 1.5 days/week for the Therapeutic Parenting Support Manager.

## 8. Related Party Transactions

None.