



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

Annual Report and Financial Statements For the Year Ended 31 December 2024

Choices

A charity registered in England as Choices Islington
Registered charity number 1124209
Company limited by guarantee number 6517231

Introducing Choices

Our vision

For no-one in London to face a pregnancy crisis, pregnancy loss or parenting pressure alone.

Our mission

To provide the gold standard of support for anyone facing a pregnancy crisis, pregnancy loss or parenting pressure.

Our goal

To work with our clients to improve their resilience and ability to: cope with a pregnancy crisis, pregnancy loss or parenting pressure; to make their choices healthily, and to have confidence to face the future with hope.

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

Our values

Empathy:	Standing alongside each other with warmth, care and respect
Resilience:	Helping each other to build resilience and have hope for the future
Professionalism:	Working to the highest professional standard

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.

Our name

We are now known as Choices and use the URL choicescharity.org. Our registered name remains Choices Islington. This change was made in 2024 to provide clarity for clients and referrers and to demonstrate the expansion of our services across London and sometimes further afield.

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

London

N1 1DN

Email

info@choicescharity.org

Website

www.choicescharity.org

Telephone

020 7700 4475

Trustees/Directors

Hannah Carter

Matt Davis (Treasurer)

Elizabeth Dulley (Chair)

Damilola Makinde

Lizzie Osborne (resigned in 2024)

Chloe Selby

Celia Wyatt

Company Secretary

Sophie Guthrie-Kummer

Bankers

Charities Aid Foundation Bank

CCLA Investment Management Limited

National Westminster Bank PLC

Independent Examiner

Christopher Clarke

Our charitable aim

Is to support women through the vulnerable time of pregnancy and beyond, whatever choices they make. We aim to help women build resilience to face the challenges they experience and find hope for the future. We work with women through unplanned pregnancy, pregnancy loss, child separation and parenting under pressure, offering counselling in prison and the community and practical support through parenting courses and baby clothes and equipment services.



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.

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.

Our Impact in 2024

In 2024 we saw:

584

clients who used a Choices service
(clients can come more than once for different services)

432

number of unique individual clients

2261

total number of sessions with a client

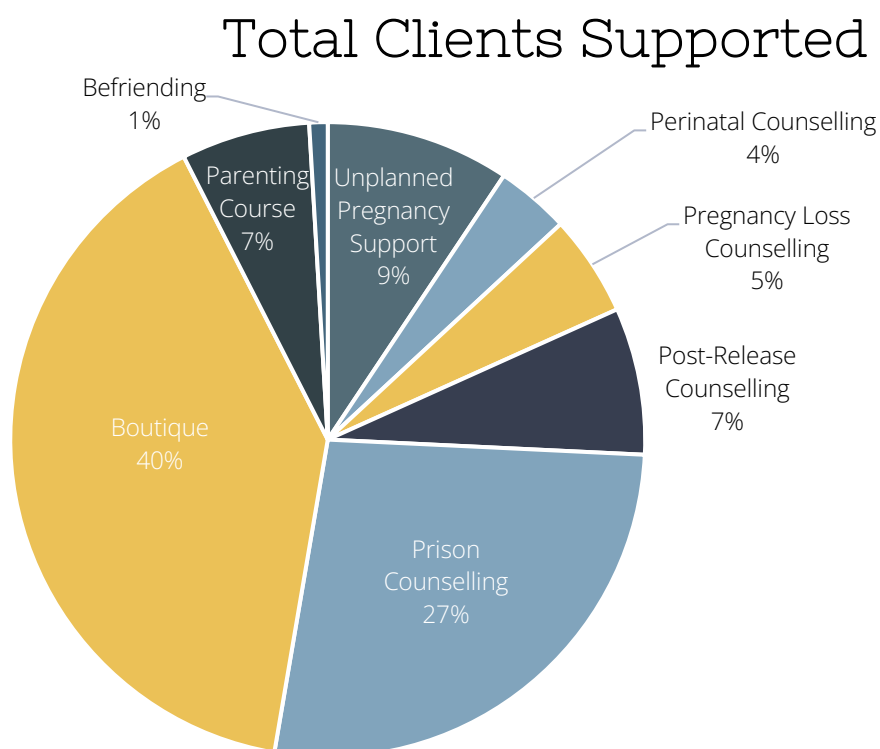
Breakdown of type of clients:

230

Counselling clients

202

Practical Parenting Support clients



100%

Prison referrers describe Choices as
'Professional'

100%

Boutique referrers describe Choices as
'Non-Judgmental'

100%

Counselling referrers describe Choices as
'Collaborative'

A story from prison: reflections of a Choices counsellor

Janette is a biracial female, residing in HMP Bronzefield. Although this is her first time in prison and she has never 'needed counselling before', she started therapy with Choices last year. It was apparent when I first met her, that she was dysregulated. I checked in with her and realised that the loud, chaotic environment she had now found herself in was overwhelming her. She shifted in her seat nervously, looking out the small window on the door. I told her I'd noticed she seemed unsettled, and she said the noise was bothering her. We spent time in that session looking at grounding exercises and coping strategies.

Many of the clients in prison feel a sense of unease. It helps us as counsellors to have a deeper understanding of working with trauma, understanding that clients might continuously feel under threat. I validated what was going on for Janette, helped her regulate and get her to a place of stability, where she was able to engage and utilise the therapy space.

Janette wanted therapy because two years ago she suffered a late miscarriage. She has since split from her husband and said she felt she had never processed her loss. Not just the loss of her relationship, or her baby, but also the life she imagined she'd have. We talked about her seemingly fixed viewpoint, that she saw counselling as being for the 'weak'. That prior to coming to prison she wouldn't have imagined needing or wanting therapy, as she believed she was 'strong'. But after a few sessions, she disclosed that it was helping. It was a space for her to air her fears and feel less alone. Far from what she first imagined, therapy was a source of comfort and support, when previously, she'd seen it as a negative.

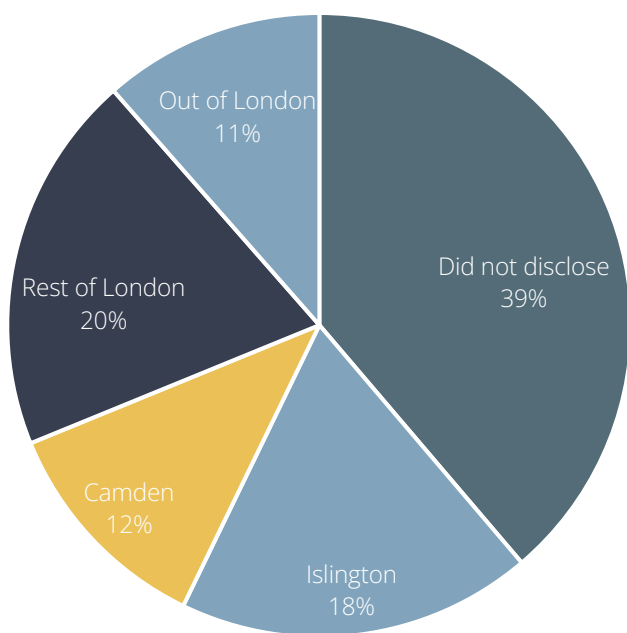
With Janette it was important I established a connection and prioritised her needs. Like many of the women I work with in prison, it sounded as though most of the relationships she'd had with caregivers, partners or friends, were based on dysfunction. It was therefore essential that I modelled a stable relationship for her - a relationship of trust and safety, where her needs were a priority.

It can take time to fully understand the different and multifaceted needs of each of our clients; in therapy, we take time with each one to understand and adapt how we work on a case-by-case basis to help to process and minimise feelings of shame and trauma. Within the prison setting, shame is a core issue. Part of a therapist's role is to help our clients understand, process and minimise those potential feelings of shame and fear about past traumatic events. In my experience empathy is an antidote to shame. I believe shame causes a person to believe they are alone, so it's essential to develop empathy for others, particularly in a place like a prison, where these feelings are intensified, living in a highly judgmental and unaccepting environment. Showing them compassion and understanding, when it seems so many in society have turned their back on them for the things they've done 'wrong', develops rapport and better engagement among those who use our service.

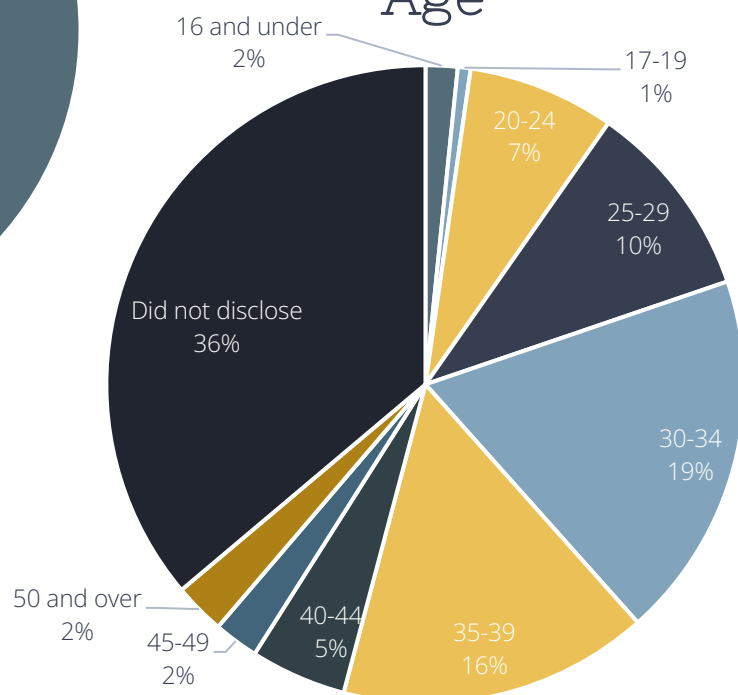
About our clients

Choices sees clients in all our services from across London boroughs, with the majority - a third - being in Islington and Camden, which reflects our traditional base as Choices' office has always been situated in Islington. Another 20% came from another London borough, 11% from outside of London entirely. It is notable that a number of clients do not give us their demographic details, which is something we are working to change as it obviously helps us to understand who we serve and where our blind spots are. The mix of ethnic backgrounds our clients identify as being from is also evident - there is no one dominant group. The biggest group (at 18%) identified as 'white British', followed by those who identified as 'Black, African and Caribbean' and other (11%). Another 7% identified as 'white other' and 4% as 'Black British'. Finally, 8% of our clients identified as 'Asian' (Bangladeshi, British, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani or other). Again, we would like to capture more detailed data on this as a number do not disclose their ethnicity. There are equivalent gaps in our knowledge about our clients' faith or religious affiliations, but we do know that 19% identify as Christian and 4% as Catholic (which might be higher than other mental health charities and indicate the perceived need people of faith feel to be able to express their faith in counselling with a counsellor who has a framework for faith). Another 15% expressed another religious background (the highest constituent being Muslims at 11%) and 5% said they had no religion, and a further 2% identified as atheist. The vast majority of our clients are women but we do sometimes see men in our counselling services (men come with a partner and on their own for an appointment to discuss an unplanned pregnancy) and in the Boutique. Our clients come to us across all ages, with the majority being under 50 and all over 16. As part of our commitment to being a trauma-aware organisation, we continue to explore which groups are under-represented in our services, and how we can address this.

Borough



Age



Our Services and their Impact

The goal running through all of Choices' work is that we support our clients to be able to harness and use their own resilience to respond to the challenges with pregnancy, loss and parenting that they face. As a result of the counselling and practical support we offer, we expect that they are better equipped to make choices healthily and face the future with hope. All our services are monitored using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Clients are asked at the beginning, middle and end to evaluate their agreement to statements using this scale. We then monitor how many give a score of 5 or 6 (a high level of agreement) at the end of counselling in response to key statements. These results are shared as a percentage for each service in the following pages. For the ongoing counselling services, we also use NHS-approved psychometrics which indicate levels of anxiety and depression in clients before and after counselling. We measure the percentage change from beginning to end of all clients' scores cumulatively.

About Choices' Counselling Services

Our counselling services enable 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 of our counsellors are qualified or are completing their training (registered with an accredited provider). All staff are fully qualified and volunteers are usually on placement while training but some volunteers are qualified but offer their time because they support and are committed to the work (usually staying on after a placement). Choices is an organisational member of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

Community Counselling

Unplanned Pregnancy Counselling

Our vision is for anyone facing the dilemma of an unplanned pregnancy to be offered immediate, free, compassionate and non-judgmental support with a trained counsellor to think through their thoughts and feelings about their situation. Over the years, the feedback we get from those who use our service tells us how valued and valuable it is. Clients say they couldn't find anything similar elsewhere and that it was often the first place they felt listened to and were able to listen to themselves without feeling any coercion. This is why we offer them the space.

40

Clients supported

57

One-off sessions

"I had not decided what to do by the end of the session but I highly appreciated the space. The person I talked to seemed to really care, gave me a lot of space to talk, and helped me express and think about my feelings and thoughts. She had zero judgment and I felt really supported. She can't make a choice for me but I knew that, and I still benefitted a lot from the session because of how supportive it felt. Also really good that it's an hour and a half so you don't feel pressure."

Unplanned Pregnancy Counselling Client

Every year, our clients tell us how grateful they are to have found Choices at such a critical time in their lives. They also comment that they had no idea that this service existed. In 2024, we saw far fewer people than the year before. We believe this fall in numbers followed a documentary on the BBC exposing bad practice in 'crisis pregnancy centres' around the UK. Despite having been visited by the journalist ourselves, Choices was not given any positive press for working ethically and professionally; the documentary didn't discriminate. Instead, we have seen an increase in statutory agencies directing members of the public away from the voluntary sector for support in this area, in case of the risk of bad practice – leaving organisations such as Choices with little or no platform to reassure those who desperately need our services of our professionalism. We continue to work hard to create links with referrers and other professional bodies to ensure more people are able to access this support at such a crucial time. This year, again, we saw a number of clients as couples, which explains the higher number of clients than sessions.

We endeavour to respond rapidly (within 24 hours) to every query and offer an appointment within the next day or so. We also work hard to ensure clients are reassured they will be given space to explore their own feelings and thoughts, and will not be judged or coerced to make a decision. Choices is conscious that many will bring biases and judgments about an organisation with a faith ethos operating in the area of unplanned pregnancy and abortion, and we are always clear that it is our faith ethos that underpins our compassionate and non-judgmental response to our clients.

70% felt equipped to face their situation and make a decision

100% felt welcome and at ease

100% didn't feel judged by their counsellor

Pregnancy Loss and Perinatal Counselling

Choices has been offering a service supporting women (and sometimes men) who are facing difficulties processing their feelings, thoughts and responses following a pregnancy loss, particularly an abortion since we started. This established counselling service, which operates on a low-cost model, offers 24 weekly sessions and we work online and in person. The service is supported by trainee counsellors who have chosen to have their clinical placement with Choices, as well as members of staff.

Over the last few years, we developed our Perinatal Counselling service, supporting expectant parents and in some instances very new parents who are dealing with birth trauma or perinatal mental health concerns with [low-cost counselling](#) throughout pregnancy until around 37 weeks where our counsellors negotiate a break. We then offer around six sessions of counselling in the first four months after birth. The offer is bespoke for each client, in recognition of the different experiences faced by each individual. 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.

In the last year, we have brought both services together into one, run by one counselling manager who oversees volunteers who are able to work with any of the presenting issues that bring clients to Choices. This has streamlined and made us more efficient as we continue to meet demand.

22	Post-Abortion clients supported
5	Post-Miscarriage clients supported
16	Perinatal clients supported
493	Sessions held in total with all clients

"I absolutely loved my counselling experience, it helped me so much. My counsellor was so kind, understanding, and knew exactly how to guide me along this journey. The service was also so helpful because it was affordable for me because I have a low income."

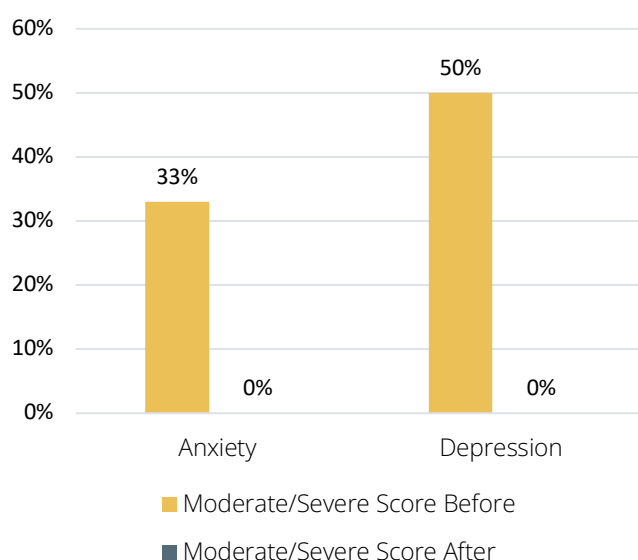
Post-Abortion Client

100% are able to understand their emotions

100% feel significant and valuable

100% feel able to face future challenges

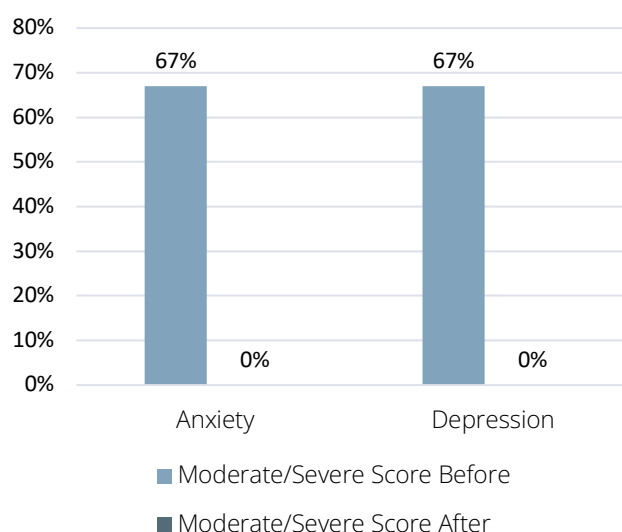
Pregnancy Loss Counselling Psychometrics



Most of our pregnancy loss clients self-report as feeling depressed and anxious when they come to Choices. Increasingly, we are also seeing clients with 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. Clients to the perinatal counselling service are in a similar bracket, and most come with presenting issues such as; unplanned pregnancy, relationship breakdown, financial challenges, domestic violence/ emotional & psychological abuse.

Counselling continues to have a significantly positive impact. Using NHS approved psychometrics – GAD-7 and PHQ-9 scales for Anxiety and Depression respectively – we saw that from the start of counselling in the post- abortion service to the end, our clients' moderate and severe anxiety reduced by 33% and depression reduced by 50% such that all clients ended counselling experiencing only mild or low/no anxiety or depression. The same was true in the perinatal counselling service, where scores for moderate and severe depression and anxiety were both at 67% at the outset and no clients had moderate or severe anxiety or depression by the close of their counselling. It must be noted that the pool of clients who actually completed end evaluations was very small during the year so may not be representative. This may be because the ending is broken up, or that clients feel in a very different place after having their baby, so we are exploring other methods of gathering accurate data from this vulnerable and often very pressurised cohort of clients.

Perinatal Counselling Psychometrics



"My counsellor is amazing! She has supported and guided me through during dark times. I don't know where I would have been without her support. I was in a vulnerable and scary place where I was isolated, which was not good. Being able to have someone to help me build awareness and resilience has been great."

Perinatal Counselling Client

A story from Community Counselling

Nevaeh first came to Choices in early 2022 with an unplanned pregnancy. She was in her early 30's and already had two older children from a previous long-term relationship and she felt she was still grieving the breakdown of that relationship.

The partner in the pregnancy was a friend and not someone she felt could necessarily support her with a child. She came to Choices for a session with one of our counsellors to discuss her unplanned pregnancy and afterwards expressed that she would like more support from Choices, saying that she would like 'someone to walk through this with her'. She was very grateful for the session and in her feedback said 'I appreciate this time, it's been helpful and it was just what I needed.' In a follow up conversation with one of our counsellors Nevaeh commented:

'It made me realise I could do this, I remember coming out of the session feeling much surer about my decision. I can't imagine going through the process without this support. I've already got a few people that I've recommended Choices to.'

Nevaeh subsequently made the decision to continue with the pregnancy and started having Perinatal Counselling with Choices the following month. She had 24 sessions during her pregnancy and in the first few months after giving birth to her son. During the counselling she came to terms with the fact that her previous relationship had been abusive and she started to be able to process the impact this had had on her – and the impact that was having on how she felt about this pregnancy with a new partner. When the counselling ended she commented that she now felt 'stronger, but not her strongest'. At the end of the work her counsellor supported her to self-refer to a local organization that provides specialist counselling around abusive relationships as this was an area she felt she needed to explore with more support. When reflecting on her experience of counselling she said:

'It's been amazing and I'm so grateful. I think it's so helpful to women that are in difficult relationships, especially with pregnancy. I genuinely feel that if I didn't have this process available - the support around my decision to continue the pregnancy – I don't know how I would make and stick with this decision. 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.'

Although the client's psychometric scores (which measure depression and anxiety) didn't change much during counselling – she reflected that the practical challenges she faced were still present but she felt much better equipped to deal with them emotionally.

In early 2023 Nevaeh contacted Choices again as she was again pregnant. This was also an unplanned pregnancy, and she felt she needed the space Choices could provide to process this again. Her son was now 9 months old and his father was the partner in this current pregnancy. Since we'd last had contact with Nevaeh she had experienced some violence in this relationship, so we helped her to go to a local service that supports those experiencing intimate partner violence.

Soon after that session to discuss her unplanned pregnancy, Nevaeh came for Perinatal Counselling – she had 8 counselling sessions during her pregnancy.

Nevaeh then came to our Boutique after being signposted by her counsellor and midwife. She was supported with clothing and equipment for her newborn and 18-month-old children. In her feedback she said she felt this supported her with the financial stress of parenting. The Boutique volunteers also introduced her to Little Haven – the stay and play group that takes place in King's House (where Boutique is based, and run by KXC, a church partner).

After the birth of her daughter, Nevaeh came back for 12 further sessions of Perinatal Counselling in 2024. She continued to use this space to reflect on her relationship with the partner in the pregnancy and the pressures of having four children, two of them under two.

When reflecting on this period of counselling she said 'Being offered the counselling space at a time that was right for me and enabled me to explore life with four children, [and] two under two. I had the space to build my confidence.'

She went on to say she now felt 'Proud and unstoppable.'

When asked if she had any feedback on this service she said: 'Don't stop offering this counselling service because it is a brilliant resource and helps people going through difficult times. It's great support that meets client with their needs - Boutique, counselling etc.'

One of Nevaeh's counsellors reflected:

'My client has developed her self-awareness through her counselling experiences here at Choices. She has had three rounds of counselling and support with unplanned pregnancy. Due to her curiosity in her process and investing time into understand who she is and who she wants to become, her sessions reflected that work outside therapy back to me within sessions. This client did not necessarily want to end this round of counselling but did so with the knowledge that she has built up good resources for managing and coping with her life situation right now. She was able to have a good ending that was positive for her.'

Choices Prison Counselling supports female prisoners facing pregnancy loss, child bereavement and child separation concerns – abiding issues for women in prison. Hosted by the Mental Health Teams at HMPs Bronzefield, Downview and Send, this service is subcontracted by the CNWL NHS trust, which delivers healthcare to the women's prisons we work in. The counselling team has five members of staff and a number of volunteer counsellors in each prison. The support of two major grants, from City Bridge Trust and the National Lottery, have enabled us to expand rapidly in this much-needed work. The post-release counselling service has also continued to grow solidly and now is also beginning to support women known more broadly in the Criminal Justice System, not just directly released from prison.

Clients Supported

41	Bronzefield	55	Downview
19	Send	32	Post-Release

1457 Sessions held

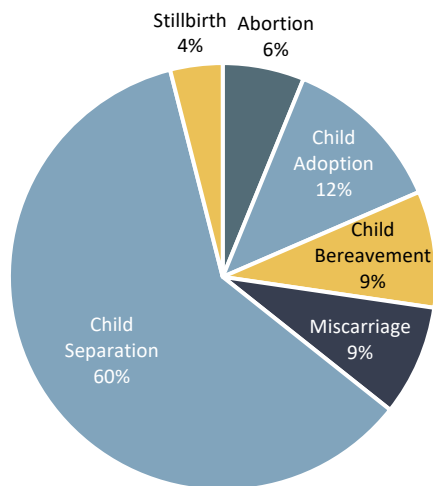
We offer our clients 24 sessions but sometimes due to factors such as transfers to other prisons or release, we are not able to see them for the full number of sessions. Where we know the potential end date, we contract for shorter periods of therapy. We are also able to offer brief therapy of one or two sessions to clients who are facing a difficult anniversary. Our evaluations show the positive impact counselling is having. Even where scores appear quite low, it must be remembered that this is such a vulnerable group, most of whom experience multiple traumas in their lives, so showing positive gains at all, is a real testament to the power of this service.

76% feel they can now be honest with themselves about their emotions

59% feel the counselling has improved their self-confidence

47% feel that counselling has helped them identify their strengths and good qualities

Referring Problem

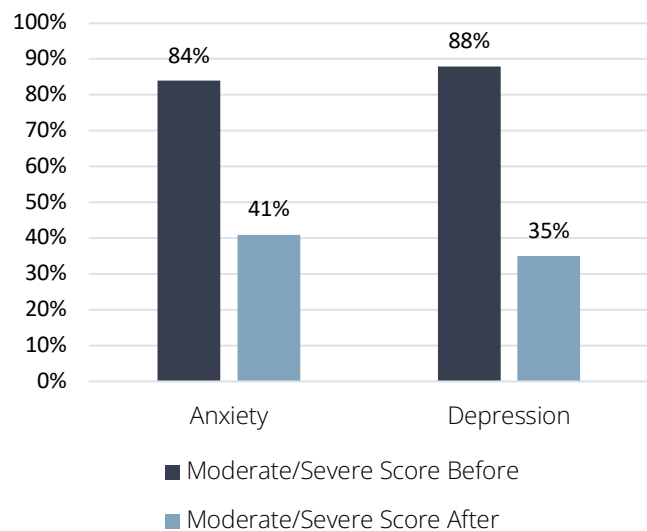


The psychometric evaluations our clients filled out before and after counselling demonstrated a very positive experience of counselling. 84% of clients scored as having moderate and severe anxiety before and only 41% after, while 88% of clients had moderate to severe depression before, a figure that fell to 35% after. These are a fall of 43% and 53% respectively – huge gains for this very vulnerable client group.



Of the clients who disclosed a referring problem, child separation is by far the largest referring issue we work with in the prison estate (60% of clients). At least 38% of the women we work with have experienced adverse childhood experiences such as sexual and domestic abuse and 67% have experienced abuse as an adult. The work that our service offers works directly with the consequences of these experiences.

Prison Counselling Psychometrics



'Talking through my feelings for the first time and knowing that I'm allowed to have them is invaluable.'

'I would suggest counselling to anyone who is struggling'

Prison Counselling Clients

This service exists to support those who are parenting in adverse circumstances, including on low income, in insecure housing, and single parenting. We offer a baby clothes and equipment service – the Choices Boutique – and well-regarded attachment-based parenting courses.

Boutique

The Choices Boutique is a baby and children's clothing and equipment bank. We receive donations of good quality, second-hand items and offer them to families who can use them. In its third year in a community building called King's House run by a partner church (KXC) the Boutique is open one day a week for appointments and we receive and sort donations on another day. This service has continued in its popularity and a number of clients come more than once, for instance when children grow out of clothes, or when they need something new or additional.

Sharing this community space at King's House means we can refer on to the KXC Little Haven baby and toddler group which also runs on Wednesdays, and Growing Hope, a charity which supports families with children with additional needs. Additionally, we are able to refer on to our other services from Boutique, including to our Circle of Security Parenting courses and we supported four women with befriending – practical and emotional support with a trained volunteer – last year. As the need for formal befriending has fallen over the past few years, we are looking at a new model next year to see if it will better support those who need more practical support by partnering with churches who might be more equipped to meet these practical needs.

170 Clients Supported

211 Appointments

"I am so thankful for the service and a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders. They made me feel welcome, relaxed and offered lots of support and help this being my first pregnancy, I am truly grateful thank you."

Boutique Client

Most of our Boutique clients are on low income, single parent families or struggling with mental health issues. A number speak English as an additional language and struggle to access support. Many of our clients are referred to us by Family Support Workers in Islington and Camden, or from further afield, but a number self-refer. The demographic of our clients attending Boutique appointments is very varied and we are pleased to be able to offer appointments within two weeks of referral. We are very grateful for a hugely dedicated volunteer team who see clients and run appointments, without whom we would not be able to run the service.

95% felt accepted and supported by their Boutique advisor

87% feel more able to provide their child/ren with the clothing and equipment they need

94% know where to turn for further support

Parenting Courses

We continue to run *Circle of Security Parenting™* courses three times a year, two in person and one online. Based on attachment theory, the course encourages parents and care givers to consider how to support their children's emotional needs. This year, we ran Circle of Security courses with two new churches – the first course of the year was run in partnership with St Saviour's Church, Finsbury Park and the third was run in partnership with St George's in the East in Shadwell. The second course was run online in an evening so working parents and couples could attend together.

Running the course in partnership with local churches has worked very well, as the church partner has hosted the space and promoted the course, which means we have not had trouble filling the courses and are operating a small waiting list. This is a model we want to continue with next year. We have continued to ask for a paid contribution towards the costs of the course from those who attended as a way of subsidising those who cannot pay.

86% feel more able and equipped to understand and manage their child/ren's emotions

71% feel they can think about what their child's behaviour is telling them before reacting

86% feel more able and equipped to cope with challenges in parenting

"It has improved my relationship with my mum as well as my child. It has also built on my understanding of what the world is like for my child and how I can respond to that effectively."

Parenting Course Client

Choices has been following a strategic plan to grow sustainably in response to demand for our services. We defined growth as: **Increased organisational resilience – being able to meet more clients while preserving staff wellbeing and without over-stretching our resources and people.** Against our focus areas, we achieved the following:

- **STAFF WELLBEING** – ensuring all our staff are doing well to hold the weight of the work. We now offer staff wellbeing days, and introduced an Employee Assistance Programme for all staff and volunteers. We have increased times of celebration with volunteers, good quality supervision, including non-clinical supervision for Boutique volunteers and greater clarity on KPIs.
- **QUALITY ASSURANCE** – being able to demonstrate the quality of our work. We have developed networks with professional bodies (e.g. BACP and statutory referrers) which we will continue to focus on; invested in training in responding to trauma, was awarded (early in 2025) a Trauma Informed Bronze Quality Mark for Choices, and continued our focus on good governance and procedure.
- **MARKETING/COMMUNICATIONS** – raising awareness about Choices and the support we offer among our client audience (building relationships with the statutory and voluntary sector) and our donor audience (clients and church networks). Having rebranded to choicescharity.org in 2024, we have focused on building our network through our mailing list, achieving an increase of 12.5% and anticipate this to increase further.
- **FUNDRAISING** – the need to ensure we are growing sustainably is crucial. Our grant funding income has risen and in launched a new 'Friends of Choices' campaign to increase our regular giving. In 2024 16 new Friends (regular givers) committed to support us, giving an annual increase of just over £6,500.

Focus Areas for 2025

We have five key focus areas for the year ahead, building on the year just gone.

- **Communications:** Developing further our marketing and communications: Choices' evolution over the years has developed to support women through the range of choices and crises they can face in pregnancy and beyond. Further, we are working with some of the most marginalised women in prison. We want to bring our marketing language and materials up to date with how the charity works in order to grow our fundraising and referral pathways.
- **Funding:** Further diversifying our fundraising pathways, increasing the number of 'Friends of Choices' and pursuing other development areas.
- **Partnerships:** expanding our network of partnerships with statutory and other services who refer clients to us, and with churches, who help us to deliver our work.
- **Client focus:** Expanding our community counselling to work with women known to the criminal justice system as a way of linking our work in prisons and community, and working with women facing the devastating reality of child separation in the community (and following pregnancy or parenting crises).
- **Building:** exploring a new venue that is fit for purpose for a charity that is not limited to Islington and has staff across London and in women's prisons outside of London.

In Spring/Summer 2025, the charity who share our building are planning to be moving out as they have outgrown the space, therefore we will also be focusing on bringing in income through a new tenant. We will be considering our needs for building space, recognising that our location in Islington is challenging to reach for team working in Surrey prisons, as well as how much office and counselling space we require.

Finance

Total incoming resources amounted to £366,263 for the year to 31 December 2024 (2023: £390,232). Total resources expended over the same period were £350,328 (2023: £305,037). The net position for the year amounted to a surplus of £15,935 (2023: surplus of £85,196). Net resources at the end of the year were £235,351, of which £13,982 is restricted and £20,067 is designated. 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 2024:

AKO Foundation, The Anchor Foundation, Anton Jurgens Charitable Trust, All Souls Church, Arundell Trust, Arsenal Foundation, Benefact Trust, Borrowes Charitable Trust, Boston Consulting Group London, City Bridge Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Joan Ainslie Trust, KXC (Kings Cross Church), M & H Maunsell Charity, Morris Charitable Trust, Mrs Smith and Mount Trust, National Lottery Community Fund (Awards for All), National Lottery Community Fund (Reaching Communities), Salluz Ltd., Souter Charitable Trust, St Mary's Hornsey Rise, St Mary's Islington and St Saviour's Finsbury Park.

The charity holds its reserves in a current bank account and in a CAF deposit account which generates interest on monies invested. This year it opened a further interest yielding account through CCLA. It is the policy of the Trustees to maintain at least four (ideally five) 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 specific training, or for laptops/capital projects, or in some circumstances, to pay for a salary). The financial management of the charity is supervised and monitored by the Finance Subcommittee of the Board and the Trustees.

Over the course of the last few years, we have received some unexpected large gifts from much-valued donors, some of whom have chosen to remain anonymous. We have also made some savings when, for instance, recruitment for key roles took longer than expected, or due to natural staff movement we have been able to restructure more efficiently. As a result, we have built up reserves which the trustees have chosen to designate towards much-needed improvements to the structure of the charity. In 2024, these funds were put towards addressing salaries and properly recompensing our staff as well and as transparently as we can sustainably, recognising that our staff are our key asset. In 2025, we plan to use some of our reserves by investing in a salary for new role focused on development – reaching new audiences and donors.

The people who make it happen

Trustees

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the strategic direction, finances and policies 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, passion for the work of Choices and vision. New trustees are appropriately trained and inducted.

Team

Choices is run by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who is accountable to the Board. The CEO manages all the project managers (who run our services) as well as an Operations Manager and a Fundraising Manager. Other than the Operations Manager, all staff are part-time, and each service is supported by volunteers. Over the course of 2024, we also worked with freelance consultants, namely our bookkeeper of several years (and recruited another bookkeeper to cover her maternity leave at the end of the year) and a grant fundraiser, as well as a freelance individual giving fundraiser and a social media consultant (both covering our fundraising manager while she was on maternity leave).

Volunteers

Choices continues to benefit from talented and committed volunteering and we have grown again to have nearly 50 volunteers this year, giving time across all our services. 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 register, which is reviewed at least annually, and is operationally reviewed quarterly. 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;
- 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 2024, 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 2024.

Approved by the Board and signed on its behalf by;



Sophie Guthrie-Kummer

Chief Executive Officer and Company Secretary

24 February 2025

I report on the accounts of the company for the year ended 31 December 2024, which are set out on pages 23 to 30.

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

12 March 2025

Statement of financial activities

(incorporating the income and expenditure account)

for the year ended 31 December 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds 2024	Total Funds 2023
		£	£	£	£
Income and endowments from:	2				
Donations and legacies		118,522	140,529	259,051	306,503
Other fundraising activities		20,664	-	20,664	12,543
Income from investments		2,329	-	2,329	1,422
Income from charitable activities		83,503	-	83,503	69,597
Other income		716	-	716	167
Total income and endowments		225,734	140,529	366,263	390,232
Expenditure on:	3				
Expenditure on Raising Funds		31,385	3,411	34,796	14,683
Expenditure on Charitable Activities		163,539	151,993	315,532	290,354
Total expenditure		194,924	155,404	350,328	305,037
Net income/(expenditure)		30,809	(14,875)	15,935	85,196
Opening balances brought forward		190,560	28,856	219,416	134,220
Total funds carried forward		221,369	13,982	235,351	219,416

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.

Balance Sheet

for the year ended 31 December 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2024 £	Total Funds 2023 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible fixed assets	4	-	-	-	-
		-	-	-	-
Current assets					
Rent deposit	5	4,000	-	4,000	4,000
Accrued income and prepayments	5	2,667	-	2,667	14,073
Debtors	5	20,449	-	20,449	22,056
Cash at bank and in hand		222,676	13,982	236,658	187,972
		249,792	13,982	263,775	228,101
Liabilities					
Creditors-amounts falling due in 1 year	6	(8,424)	(20,000)	(28,424)	(8,685)
Net current assets		241,368	(6,018)	235,351	219,416
Total net assets		241,368	(6,018)	235,351	219,416
Funds of the charity					
Unrestricted	7			201,302	167,493
Designated				20,067	23,067
Restricted				13,982	28,856
				235,351	219,416

The company is entitled to exemption from audit under Section 477 of the Companies Act 2006 for the year ended 31 December 2024 and the members/guarantors have not required the company to obtain an audit of its financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2024 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 6 May 2025 and signed on their behalf by:



Elizabeth Dulley
Chair of Trustees

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 December 2024

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.

Notes to the Financial Statements

for the year ended 31 December 2024

2. Income

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2024 £	Total Funds 2023 £
a Donations and legacies				
Donations	102,687	-	102,687	110,502
Grants from trusts	8,500	140,529	149,029	188,532
Gift Aid	7,336	-	7,336	7,470
	<u>118,522</u>	<u>140,529</u>	<u>259,051</u>	<u>306,503</u>
Grants received, included in the above, are as follows:				
Anton Jurgen	-	5,000	5,000	-
Arsenal Foundation	-	1,250	1,250	-
Anchor Foundation	-	-	-	7,000
Arundell Trust	500	-	500	-
Benefact Trust	-	5,000	5,000	9,725
Borrows Charitable Trust	-	-	-	7,000
City Bridge Trust	-	49,908	49,908	34,929
Garfield Weston	-	5,000	5,000	-
Henry Smith Foundation	-	3,500	3,500	15,000
Joan Ainslie Trust	5,000	-	5,000	5,000
Leathersellers	-	-	-	7,500
Morris Trust	-	3,000	3,000	-
National Lottery Community Fund	-	67,871	67,871	97,378
Schroder	-	-	-	3,000
Souter Charitable Trust	3,000	-	3,000	2,000
	<u>8,500</u>	<u>140,529</u>	<u>149,029</u>	<u>188,532</u>
b Other fundraising activities				
Donation for office space	14,925	-	14,925	12,543
Fundraising Events	5,739	-	5,739	-
c Income from investments				
Bank Interest	2,329	-	2,329	1,422
d Income from charitable activities				
Education practitioner training	300	-	300	85
Community counselling	7,122	-	7,122	8,258
Prison counselling income	75,006	-	75,006	61,255
Parenting Course income	1,074	-	1,074	-
e Other income	716	-	716	167
	<u>107,211</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>107,211</u>	<u>83,729</u>
Total incoming resources	<u>225,734</u>	<u>140,529</u>	<u>366,263</u>	<u>390,232</u>

3. Expenditure

a. by fund

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total Funds 2024 £	Total Funds 2023 £
Expenditure on Raising Funds				
Event costs	5,255	202	5,457	95
Fees and subscriptions	26,130	3,208	29,339	14,588
	31,385	3,411	34,796	14,683
Expenditure on Charitable Activities				
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total expenditure 2024 £	Total expenditure 2023 £
Bank charges	66	-	66	66
Bookkeeping costs	6,850	402	7,252	5,254
Charitable donation - Centres Network	1,000	-	1,000	-
Fees and subscriptions	3,316	427	3,743	2,782
Freelancer costs	14,400	-	14,400	-
Independent Examination costs	-	150	150	150
Insurance	936	-	936	847
Office expenses	3,306	1,580	4,886	5,596
Premises costs	15,411	5,136	20,547	30,886
Publicity	19	50	70	372
Resources	978	442	1,420	4,938
Staff costs	102,354	135,582	237,936	215,250
Staff development/training	7,539	-	7,539	10,116
Supervision costs	6,723	7,255	13,978	12,150
Telephone and communication	340	860	1,200	1,677
Volunteer expenses	301	110	411	270
	163,539	151,993	315,532	290,354
		-		
Total Expenditure	194,924	155,404	350,328	305,037

b. Expenditure on Charitable Activities - by project

	Community Counselling	Parenting Support	Prison Counselling	Central costs	Total Charitable Expenditure 2024
Charitable Activities					
Bank charges	-	-	-	66	66
Bookkeeping costs	-	-	-	7,252	7,252
Charitable donation - Centres Network	-	-	-	1,000	1,000
Fees and subscriptions	-	-	-	3,743	3,743
Freelancer costs	-	-	3,150	11,250	14,400
Independent examination costs	-	-	-	150	150
Insurance	-	-	-	936	936
Office expenses	-	-	1,259	3,627	4,886
Premises costs	-	-	4,056	16,491	20,547
Publicity	-	-	50	19	70
Resources	10	1,167	243	-	1,420
Staff costs	42,165	14,874	111,867	69,029	237,936
Staff development/training	73	73	877	6,515	7,539
Supervision costs	4,370	-	9,608	-	13,978
Telephone and communication	-	-	-	1,200	1,200
Volunteer expenses	-	20	110	281	411
Total Expenditure on Charitable Activities	46,619	16,135	131,220	121,559	315,532

Expenditure by project: previous year comparatives

	Community Counselling	Parenting Support	Prison Counselling	Central costs	Total Charitable Expenditure 2023
Charitable Activities					
Bank charges	-	-	-	66	66
Bookkeeping costs	-	-	-	5,254	5,254
Fees and subscriptions	-	-	-	2,782	2,782
Independent examination costs	-	-	-	150	150
Insurance	-	-	-	847	847
Office expenses	-	-	-	5,596	5,596
Premises costs	-	-	-	30,886	30,886
Publicity	-	-	165	206	372
Resources	4,542	-	46	350	4,938
Staff costs	44,319	14,627	72,440	83,863	215,250
Staff development/training	-	-	5,665	4,451	10,116
Supervision costs	5,040	-	7,110	-	12,150
Telephone and communication	-	-	-	1,677	1,677
Volunteer expenses	103	-	70	98	270
Total Expenditure on Charitable Activities	54,004	14,627	85,496	136,226	290,354

c. Employees

	2024	2023
Gross salaries and wages	220,104	200,428
Employer's National Insurance	12,682	10,686
Employer's pension contributions	5,149	4,136

There are no employees who received emoluments in excess of £60,000 (2023:nil).

Key management personnel: Sophie Guthrie-Kummer, Chief Executive Officer

4. Tangible fixed assets

None to report.

5. Current assets

	2024	2023
Rent deposit	4,000	4,000
Accrued income	-	11,406
Prepayments	2,667	2,667
Debtors	19,231	19,406
Gift aid recoverable	1,218	2,651
	27,116	40,130

6. Creditors

	2024	2023
Amounts due within one year	2,571	4,500
Tax and pension contributions payable	5,853	4,184
Deferred income and accruals	20,000	-
	28,424	8,685

7. Movement of Funds

	Opening balance	Income	Expenditure	Transfers	Closing balance
Unrestricted general funds	167,493	225,734	(191,924)	-	201,302
Designated funds	23,067	-	(3,000)	-	20,067
Total unrestricted funds	190,560	225,734	(194,924)	-	221,369
Restricted funds					
Boutique	10,976	14,250	(15,684)		9,542
Counselling	-	8,500	(8,500)		-
Enterprise Development	-	-	-		-
Parenting Support	-	-	-		-
Prison counselling	17,881	117,779	(131,220)		4,440
Total restricted funds	28,856	140,529	(155,404)	-	13,982
Total funds	219,416	366,263	(350,328)	-	235,351

8. Related Party Transactions

	2024	2023
Total donations of Trustees were	1,525	2,380

Sophie Guthrie-Kummer, employed as Chief Executive Officer, paid Choices Charity £989 in 2024 (2023: £508) as a donation for use of office space.

9. Trustee Expenses

None claimed.