



# Herts Domestic Abuse Helpline

08 088 088 088



The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service

**ANNUAL REPORT  
& ACCOUNTS  
2023-24**

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# Chair's Summary

It is always a pleasure for me to look back on our achievements over the past year and this year is no different.

One of the significant highspots was, in March 2024, to be recognised with a High Sheriff's Award, noting the contribution the Helpline makes to the County both in supporting victim-survivors and also in volunteering. This came with a much appreciated cheque for £2,000.



*Photo shows L to R - Sally Burton DL, (our new Patron); Chris Roach, Chair; Hayley Star, Helpline Manager and Mel North, Helpline Administrator.*

Last May, and following on from receiving the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2022, we were very pleased to be invited to the first King's Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. Our Trustee, Kay Carnell, and one of our longest serving volunteers, Lesley Lilley, represented us and were excited to meet the King!



*L to R - Lesley Lilley, Volunteer Call Taker and Kay Carnell, Commercial Trustee at Buckingham Palace.*



*Ian Taylor, Trustee and Chris Roach, Chair at the Cathedral*

We participated in the first St Albans Cathedral Community Showcase event on 10th June where 60 organisations and charities were present, talking to the public and networking. We supported causes such as International Women's Day and the 16 Days of Activism.

We started to undertake more domestic abuse training around the county, most notably through partnership working with Watford and Stevenage Football Clubs, Home-Start and Pay Point.

# Chair's Summary cont'd

We continue to maintain a strong presence on our website and social media in order that as many people as possible know of our existence. We have recently launched a TikTok account which is already attracting new followers.

In order to be as inclusive as possible we advertise in hard copy media and have print resources available for those who do not or cannot access the internet. We offer a language line service for those whose first language is not English and a confidential email service for those who find it more convenient or easier to write down their concerns than talk about them.



The Helpline receives no core funding and we have to work hard to generate income to enable us to keep the service free to callers. We are dependent on grants and fundraising to cover operating costs. We are very grateful to all the individuals and organisations which supported us last year. More details can be found in the Treasurer's report.



It is important to remember that the work we do in signposting callers to sources of help and advice supports every other domestic abuse organisation in Hertfordshire as well as many other organisations such as mental health services, social services and solicitors.

We were delighted to welcome Sally Burton DL, a former High Sheriff and keen supporter, as one of our Patrons with effect from 1st April 2024 and were also pleased when one of our volunteer call takers, Jo Ward, joined us on the Board as a Trustee. 'In June 2023 we said goodbye to Alice Bromwich who left us to further her business.

As always, my thanks go to our staff and volunteer call takers who have worked so hard to continue to provide such a vital service. I must also thank the Trustees for their continued time and commitment to the Helpline.

Christine Roach. Chair. For the Board of Trustees



# About Us

The Helpline is a confidential, free, support and signposting service for anyone affected by domestic abuse. Established in 2002, it first became a registered charity in January 2011. In 2019 it became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Our operations team and volunteer call takers currently work from home.

As well as supporting around 2,400 callers a year, plus many more through our website and email service, the Helpline works in partnership with countywide statutory, voluntary and community organisations which, together, all aim to improve the lives of anyone affected by domestic abuse as well as those seeking help to change their behaviour.

## Vision & Mission

Our Vision is for the world to be free of domestic abuse.

Our Mission is to eliminate domestic abuse through awareness and education, and to support those in need through our confidential listening and signposting service across Hertfordshire.

Whether directly serving victims, perpetrators or their families, or indirectly to professionals, we provide a safe space for people to discuss their situation. Through our comprehensive and unique understanding of local resources, we provide the information they need to take control, to feel empowered to take the next step. Our commitment is to always 'put the caller at the heart of our service'.

# The Picture Nationally

06

(Source: Gov.UK)

**1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men experience domestic abuse in their lifetime**

**20% of children in the UK have lived with an adult perpetrating domestic abuse.**

**An estimated 2.1 million people aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2023**

**There were 590 domestic homicides recorded in the year ending March 2023**

**The police recorded 1,453,867 DA related incidents and crimes in England and Wales in the year ending March 2023**

# The Picture in Hertfordshire

## (Source: Hertfordshire Constabulary)

In the year ended 31st March 2024, Hertfordshire Constabulary recorded 19,478 DA crimes and incidents compared to 20,748 the previous year, which is a 6.1% year on year reduction. However, in June 2023 the Home Office changed the rules in how some crime is recorded meaning some crimes, such as Section 5 Public Order Act, are no longer a notifiable offence and some others are no longer recorded separately. This has meant that although the year end data reflects a reduction in recorded crime, there is no significant change in the overall number of victims of crimes. In 2022/23 there were 8,558 victims of crime and in the year 2023/24 this reduced slightly to 8,447 which is 1.3% fewer, a somewhat smaller reduction than the 6.1% of crimes.

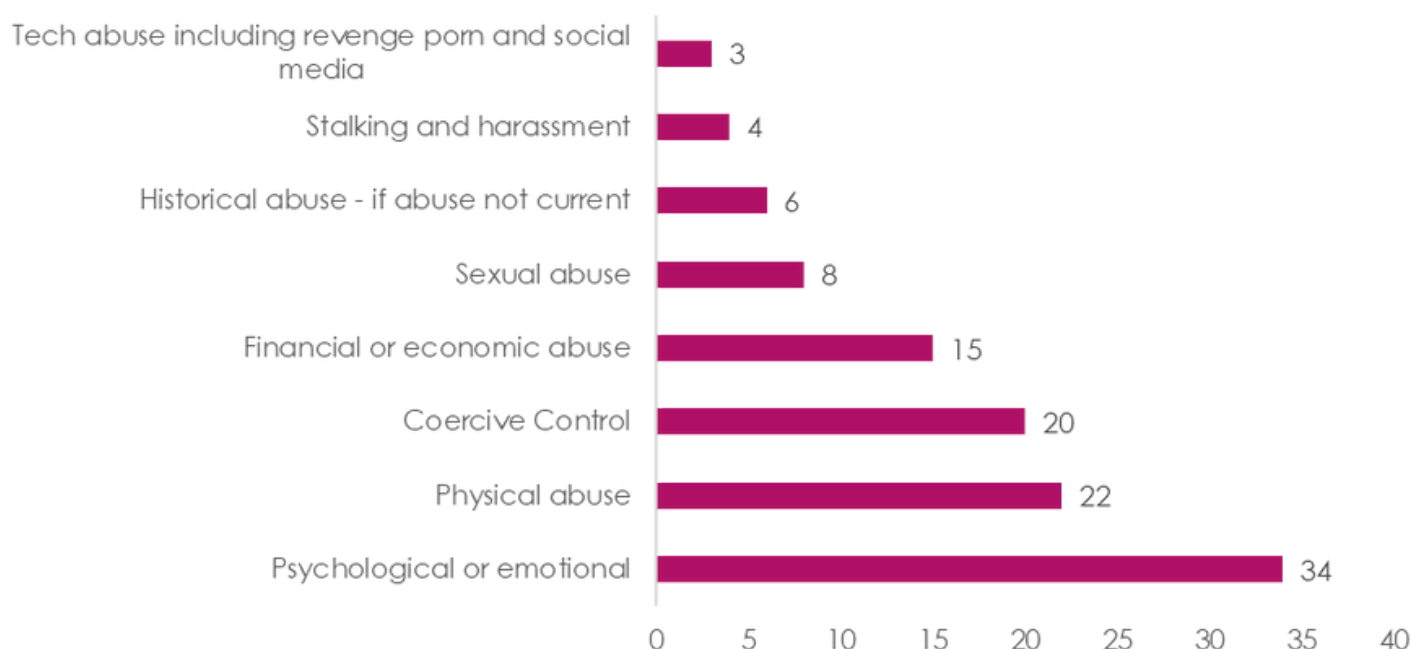
This past year Hertfordshire Constabulary introduced a new initiative called Rapid Video Response (RVR). This enables victims to communicate with an officer via a video link who will gather evidence, assess risk and determine what level of service fits the victim's needs. Victim satisfaction has seen a marked increase when RVR has been utilised. In addition, and in line with other forces, Hertfordshire Constabulary is undertaking a review of protective orders such as DVPNs and DVPOs, Stalking and Harassment Protection Orders and other powers and initiatives like Clare's Law (the Domestic Abuse Disclosure Scheme), and has seen a recent uptake in requests for disclosures or a 'right to know.'

The Trustees follow the Charity's Constitution and operational policies are reviewed regularly. The Trustees regularly review the risks to which the charity is exposed and take actions to mitigate them.

## How call data is assessed

Callers' details are not asked for. On occasions, callers volunteer some information and we do record this, though not personal contact details. For example, they may disclose their ethnicity, that they are disabled, LGBTQ or elderly, whether drugs and alcohol or mental health issues are a concern, whether they are experiencing coercive and controlling behaviour or they may be seeking legal or financial advice. This anonymised data is reviewed regularly by the Board and may help the county to commission future domestic abuse and other services. An example of a typical month is shown below.

### Type of Abuse





## Call Numbers 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

The total number of calls and emails was 2,273 compared to 2,349 for the previous year. This represents a 3.3% drop or just a 77 call difference. This means around 190 people are accessing our services each month from across Hertfordshire.

Over half of our calls (61%) continued to be from female victim-survivors with 6% being from male victim-survivors. We continued to take calls from professionals, family members and the general public. The most commonly disclosed types of abuse were emotional and/or psychological followed by physical abuse.

Women's centres including Watford Women's Centre and SADA (Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse) were the top signposts for the year followed by the IDVA service (Independent Domestic Violence Advisor) and refuge providers such as Safer Places, Welwyn and Hatfield Refuge and SADA refuge

There were some common themes when observing victim-survivor stories and the barriers they face in accessing support. Records of those disclosing mental health issues, those with disabilities and financial struggles, as well as barriers for those in the BAME community also featured strongly in reports over the past year.

Our Helpline Manager attends all active DA forums within the county, as well as Domestic Abuse & Violence Against Women & Girls Strategic Partnerships Team meetings run by Hertfordshire County Council. This forges a better collaborative approach, enabling us to keep abreast of current developments and share Helpline statistics with partners.

# Volunteers

The Helpline Trustees extend their gratitude to the dedicated volunteers who generously contributed their time to the Helpline this year. With 35 call takers on board, their invaluable support is essential for the service to function effectively. The challenging work they carry out is exceptional, and we are immensely appreciative of their efforts. Achieving 77% Helpline coverage, our call takers also provided extra hours through double coverage during peak periods, totalling 2,940 volunteering hours in Hertfordshire.

Between September 2023 and March 2024, we conducted two training sessions to enlist more volunteer call takers. The training includes online modules and face-to-face sessions to ensure new applicants are well-prepared to assist those in need.

Additionally, we held bi-monthly team meetings throughout the year to enhance volunteer knowledge.



*Our Helpline manager delivering an awareness session to Stevenage FC.*



*Volunteer call takers and staff meet during the 16 days of activism.*

# Trustees and Staff at 31st March 2024

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**Duncan Sales**

*President*

Duncan is a retired Detective Inspector Herts Constabulary and founder of the Helpline in 2002.



**Penny Williams, JP, DL**

*Vice President*

Penny, a former trustee, now Vice President. Penny was a JP for 27 years serving mainly in the family courts in the latter years.



**Chris Roach**

*Chair*

Chris became Chair in 2015. She has worked in the public and private sector including roles in drug and alcohol misuse, community safety, community engagement, grants management and also worked for the NHS.



**Kay Carnell**

*Trustee &  
Commercial Lead*

Kay enjoyed a long career with BP, spanning 35 years. She has extensive business experience, particularly in sales, marketing and business development, and has operated in many countries worldwide.





**Sherry Thakur**

*Trustee*

Sherry is Solicitor and Partner at JKC Lawyers in Watford. Much of her work involves domestic abuse issues. Sherry also provides JKC's 24 hour legal helpline.



**Denise Powell**

*Trustee &  
Treasurer*

After 38 years working in technical and managerial roles in the corporate world, Denise has chosen to spend her retirement using her skills to support charities and not for profit organisations, including the Helpline, Soroptimist International and Computer Friendly. In addition to being the Helpline's Treasurer, Denise is also a volunteer call-taker.



**Jo Ward**

*Trustee*

Jo has over thirteen years experience in business support, project coordination, social media management, and mentoring. As an entrepreneur, Jo has successfully run a business support company, providing tailored services to over 50 clients. She is actively involved in mentoring through Young Enterprise.



**Ian Taylor**

*Trustee*

Ian is a highly experienced Business Advisor and Financial Services professional, with more than thirty years' expertise in senior executive roles with Barclays and BNP Paribas. He is also a Board Member of St Albans City of Expertise CIC, a special business interest group.





**Mick Ball**

*Associate Trustee*

Mick retired as Det. Chief Superintendent from Herts Constabulary in 2018 after 34 years of service. Amongst his duties he was Chair of the County Domestic Abuse Partnership Board. Mick now has a civilian role with the Police as Lead for Strategic Planning and Analysis



**Hayley Star**

*Helpline Manager*

Hayley has been the Helpline Manager since February 2021. Hayley is a Sunflower J9 champion and Police Standards champion. She has attended the Triple R course and completed the Freedom programme. She is also a Mental Health First Aider.



**Mel North**

*Helpline  
Administrator*


Mel joined the Helpline in March 2023. Previously, she worked in Telecommunications, Criminal Record Bureau at Derbyshire Police and in Financial Services.

The Board met 4 times during 2023-24. The last Annual General Meeting was held in June 2023. Our meetings are usually held face to face at various locations across the county.


Our patrons are:  
Lady Dione Verulam  
The Viscountess Trenchard  
Sarah Beazley  
Sally Burton

# The Difference We Make

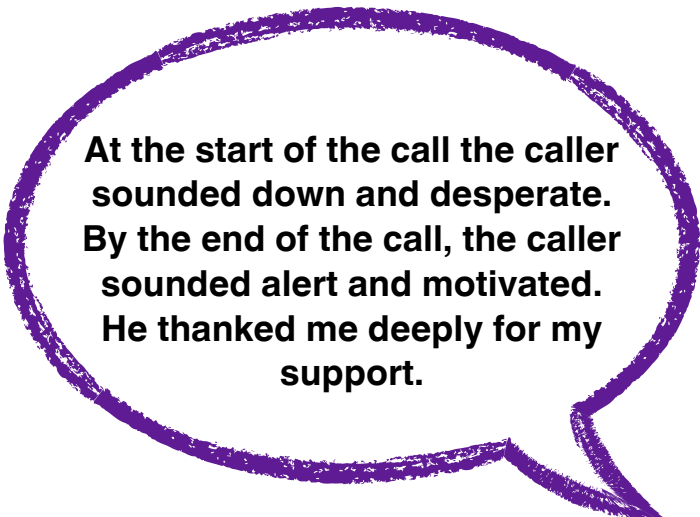
Our statistics are interesting, but it's also really important to recognise the difference we are making to people's lives. Here is some of the feedback our call takers received in 2023-24



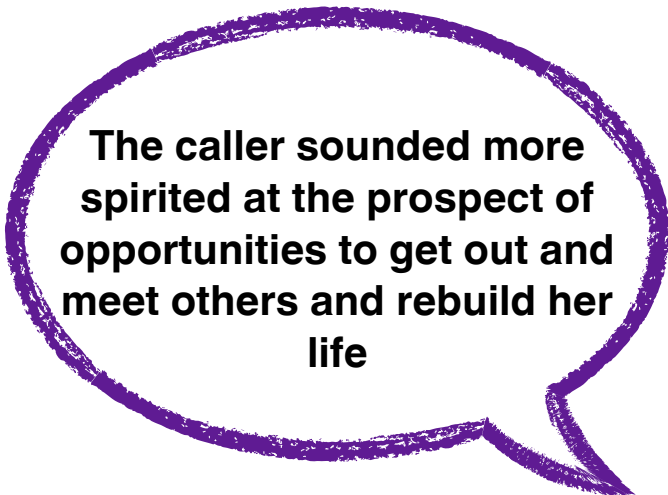
**She was grateful to be heard and validated, and was pleased there are listening services out there**



**She said it was good to talk to someone else to see a clearer picture**



**At the start of the call the caller sounded down and desperate. By the end of the call, the caller sounded alert and motivated. He thanked me deeply for my support.**



**The caller sounded more spirited at the prospect of opportunities to get out and meet others and rebuild her life**

# Influencing National Policy

Our Vice President, Penny Williams, attends the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Domestic Violence. Below are the topics the committee made recommendations on at the three meetings in 2023- 2024.

In July 23, two years after the Domestic Abuse Act, it is still a consideration as to whether survivors are being deemed a priority need. A key issue that was not resolved was on joint tenancies.

The meeting in December 23 focussed on meeting children and young person's online safety using the Online Safety Act and Digital Bill as a reference point.

The last meeting held in May 2024 shone a spotlight on Women in the Justice System. Nearly 60% of women in prison and under community supervision by probation services are survivors of domestic abuse and the true number is likely to be much higher given the immense barriers to disclosing. This webinar was in association with Centre for Women's Justice (CWJ) and Women in Prison. CWJ showed their new film: Stop Criminalising Survivors".

## The Domestic Abuse Act

During the last year, some updates to the Act included:

- Local authorities across England are to ensure that victims of domestic abuse and their children can access the right support in safe accommodation when they need it. £257 million new burden funding is being allocated to local authorities for delivery of their duties. They will receive £127.3 million in 2023 to 2024

# The Domestic Abuse Act cont'd

- A Bill ensuring victims of domestic abuse can receive child maintenance without contact from their abuser received Royal Assent in June 2023.
- Raneem's Law proposed in Feb 2024. The law would see every police force have an officer to look over all civil orders that are designed to stop violence against women and girls. Domestic abuse specialists will also need to be put into 999 control rooms.
- Prohibition of perpetrators of abuse from cross-examining their victims in person in family and civil courts in England and Wales.
- Invalidation of any courtroom defense of consent where a victim suffers serious harm or is killed.

## Promotional activities, social media and marketing

We continue to build our visibility via our website and social media channels. During 2023-24 an average of 900 visitors per month were viewing our website with the majority being female users aged between 25-54. On all social media channels, we are continuing to grow our followers and exceed the industry engagement rate average.

Social media followers:

Facebook: 1339

Twitter: 1645

Instagram: 1710

LinkedIn: 338



# Grant Funding in 2023-24

Our thanks to the 15 Hertfordshire County Councillors who awarded us Locality Budget grants. The funding supported us to promote our service across the whole county to enable more victim-survivors to reach out for help. Domestic abuse occurs in all districts of Hertfordshire and affects not only victims but also perpetrators, friends and family, children and work colleagues. It not only affects the health and wellbeing of victims but also impacts on the productivity of the county. We would also like to thank those who fundraised, donated and awarded us grants throughout the year. Our Treasurer's report includes details of other grants and income.

The logo for Schroder Charity Trust. It features the word "Schroder" in a large, bold, black serif font. Below it, a thin blue horizontal line separates the word from "CHARITY TRUST", which is written in a smaller, black, all-caps serif font.

**Schroder**  
CHARITY TRUST

The logo for cosaraf. It features the word "cosaraf" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. The letter "o" is replaced by a green circular graphic consisting of several concentric, slightly offset lines, creating a sense of depth or a stylized eye.

**cosaraf**

# Contacting Herts Domestic Abuse Helpline:

Telephone: 08 088 088 088 (for Helpline callers only)

Opening hours: Monday to Friday 9am to 9pm,  
Weekends and Bank Holidays 9am to 4pm

Confidential email: [Kim@mailpurple.org](mailto:Kim@mailpurple.org)

Admin email: [admin@hertsdomesticabusehelpline.org](mailto:admin@hertsdomesticabusehelpline.org)

Admin tel: 07587 237167

 [@HertsDomesticAbuseHelpline](https://www.facebook.com/HertsDomesticAbuseHelpline)

 [@HDA\\_Helpline](https://twitter.com/HDA_Helpline)

 [@hdahelp](https://www.instagram.com/hdahelp)

 [herts-domestic-abuse-helpline](https://www.linkedin.com/company/herts-domestic-abuse-helpline)



Registered Office: The Lodge  
Stanborough Road  
Welwyn Garden City  
Herts AL8 6XF

Charity Number: 1184899

## Overall Position

This report covers the full year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

In the year ended 31st March 2024, the Helpline recorded a loss of £14,190 compared to a loss of £18,936 for the 2022-23 year. This year's loss had the effect of decreasing the available funds at the end of the year to £63,179 from the starting point of £77,369. All funds are held in a current account with CAF Bank.

## Income

Income for 2023-24 was £39,198 compared to £34,710 in 2022-23. The increase seen between last year and this can be attributed to grants of £4,300 received from COSARAF (£3,800 to contribute to our Call Handling phone provision) and HCC (£500 specifically to recognise volunteers). Otherwise, although the breakdown of income is slightly different between the two years, the amount is largely static. This year, Hertfordshire County Councillors kindly awarded us £7,370 from their Locality Budget grants to support our activities, which we use for social and print media advertising to promote our services to ensure that those in need can find us. We continue to greatly value Councillors' support in this area. Some of the Locality Budget grants came in late in the financial year, and therefore the funds will be spent in next year – these contribute to the reserved funds indicated in the accounts.

## Fundraising

Fundraising was very successful in the 2023-24, totalling over £19,000. A significant proportion of this was a single donation of £10,000 for which we are immensely grateful. We received an unrestricted donation from the Schroder Charity Trust of £4,000 which we used to cover staff salaries. We were also pleased to receive donations from John F Kennedy School (£1,474), St Albans Cathedral (£1,000) as well as a number of smaller amounts from various fundraising initiatives (donors included Stevenage Ladies Choir, The Hub in St Albans and Homestart). Although our planned 'coffee and cake' programme was not greatly taken up, a single event run by one of our Patrons, Sarah Beazley, raised over £2,000 – we thank Sarah for organising this, and for encouraging her friends to be so generous. In a similar vein, a concert organised by St Albans Daytime Rock Choir for their friend and family, for which we were nominated as the charity recipient, raised over £800 in a single hour, which we are most grateful for. We have continued to receive regular online donations as well as other small (but highly valued) donations. Through the year we have developed some Domestic Abuse awareness training delivered by Hayley Star. Sessions have been delivered to Watford Football Club and Homestart, which raised £1,600 in total in the year.

## Expenditure

Total expenditure for the year to 31st March 2024 was £53,390 compared with £53,646 in the previous year.

There has been a small increase in staff costs, as we recognised the performance of our Manager and Administrator with small increases in salary. This was offset by a reduction in the amount spent on advertising during the year (largely due to reduction in grants that we use to cover these costs) and a small reduction in Helpline incidental expenses. Otherwise costs are largely consistent year on year, the most significant cost is our phone system, which is at the heart of our work. We continue to look for ways to reduce operating costs, but in general these are unavoidable.



# Report on Accounts for 23-24

## Processes and controls

During 2023-24, we have continued to benefit from the use of online systems for banking, billing and fundraising. CAF Donate continues to be a helpful platform for us to receive donations, we also receive donations across a number of platforms, including Paypal, Easy Fundraising and Give As You Live as well as Donr (a donate by text service). The landscape for these services is constantly changing and we continue to look for ways of making it easy for donors to donate to us.

I can report that in line with our Review Policy, the Finance Policy was reviewed and updated during the financial year.

## Outlook for 2024-25

This has been a successful year for fundraising with some significant donations that have contributed to keeping our reserves looking healthy. However, we have had to be circumspect in some spending, especially advertising, as we are acutely aware of the need to ensure that those reserves continue to stay at their current level.

We are conscious that relying on grants is both time consuming and precarious, and once again we go into a new financial year with no committed funding. We remain enormously grateful to our regular supporters for their donations, to our fundraisers for their activities and to our grant-givers, but the absence of formal funding means that action is still needed to identify sustainable sources of income to ensure that the Helpline activity can continue. Sources of income continue to be sought to cover our day to day activities to mitigate the risk that we have identified from initial budgets for the year, that before the end of the next financial year we might need to be starting to consider the financial viability of maintaining the line. We are very much aware that costs are continuing to rise which is an additional cause for concern. The search for such funding is a key activity in the Trustees' plans, and we continue to explore all possibilities to identify sources of some unrestricted funding.

Denise Powell  
Trustee Treasurer

