



Soul Sisters: Empowering People Annual Report

The trustees present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 29 March 2024. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) (effective 1 January 2019).

Soul Sisters: Empowering People is a CIO with registered charity number 1194597 established in Rochdale, Lancashire.

The organisation has developed a Foundation Model Constitution, whose only voting members are our charity trustees.

As stated in our Constitution, the object of the CIO, to be carried out for the public benefit in Lancashire, is: to relieve the needs of and support those at risk of, or suffering the effects of, domestic violence/domestic abuse (to include sexual, physical, emotional and economic abuse) and their children, particularly but not exclusively through the provision of one-to-one sessions, peer support, group sessions, mentoring, advocacy and signposting services.

Our Activities:

- Soul Sisters: Empowering People works primarily within the borough of Rochdale, providing support to women, men and their families.
- Our support is accessed both online and in-person through peer support groups, creative classes, skills workshops, book clubs, meditation and self-care sessions, walking groups, mentoring and one-to-one support.
- We have a small team of volunteers who run online sessions and provide support to both beneficiaries and the charity's trustees.
- Our advocacy team provide beneficiaries with the knowledge and skills needed when seeking external professional help - from solicitors or paralegals, for example, as well as relevant guidance and assistance for court attendance and legal processes.
- We signpost to external organisations who can provide specialist support not offered by our team.
- We share information about our services via word of mouth, local authorities, community partnerships, local news stories, our website, social media, podcasts, and our mailing list.



Public Benefit:

The trustees confirm that they have referred to the advice contained in the Charity Commission's general guidance on public benefit when reviewing the charity's aims and objectives, and in planning future activities. In particular, the trustees have considered how planned activities will contribute to the aims and objectives they have set.

Our Governance:

At the time of the charity's registration, Soul Sisters had four founding trustees. We appointed two more during our first year, who then stayed with the charity until 2023 when Jo Baldwin stepped down. During 2024 we saw changes in the board membership with three of the founding trustees stepping down and six new trustees appointed. The charity now operates with seven trustees. Trustees have joined us through established connections with other charitable organisations, volunteering or skills-sharing with other trustees and volunteers, or applying directly to the charity's founder, Asma Begum.

Existing trustees consider the skills, knowledge and experience offered by applicants alongside the organisation's requirements, and vote to accept new board members at monthly board meetings held either online or in person. As per our Constitution, the only people eligible to be the charity's board members are its trustees, who are appointed for an initial term of three years.

We have created a **strong, experienced, female-led team** with key skills amongst our trustees and volunteers including organisational strategy and compliance, charity governance, administration, coaching, mentoring and community organisation. We have several male volunteers who offer their expertise and experience directly to male service users. Our current all-female board is considering recruiting male trustees.

Several of our trustees have experience working within charitable organisations, and some hold trustee roles at other charities. Their governance skills and guidance have been invaluable in leading the charity during its first two years.

We have two patrons who are public advocates for supporting those who have suffered domestic abuse, both of whom have personal experience. Located in the South of England and Ireland, our patrons assist in promoting and hosting key events for our charity.



Key Legal and Administrative Information:

Charity name: Soul Sisters: Empowering People

Registered charity number: 1194597

Charity's principal address: Unit 37367
PO Box 4336
Manchester
M61 0BW

Trustees:

Francesca Barker-Mills - Chair	(appointed 26/06/2024)
Gaby Marsden - Secretary	(appointed 26/06/2024)
LaToya Robinson	(appointed 26/06/2024)
Khyati Patel	(appointed 26/06/2024)
Rosannah Jones	(appointed 26/06/2024)
Asma Begum	(appointed 01/01/2020)
Lilly James	(appointed 22/10/2024)
Lisa Birtles - Vice Chair	(appointed 01/01/2021, resigned 01/07/2024)
Emma Cottam - Treasurer	(appointed 01/08/2020, resigned 26/06/2024)
Marie Flaherty - Secretary	(appointed 01/01/2021, resigned 01/07/2024)
Christine Aspin	(appointed 01/04/2021, resigned 17/04/2024)
Jo Baldwin	(appointed 01/04/2021, resigned 03/10/2023)

Patrons: Luzia Antonio
Jo Baldwin



Chair's Note

Francesca Barker-Mills, Chair of the Board of Trustees, Soul Sisters Empowering People

"As Chair of the Board of Trustees for Soul Sisters Empowering People, it is with immense pride and gratitude that I introduce this year's Annual Report for 2023–2024. This document represents not only the hard work and dedication of our team but also the transformative impact Soul Sisters has had on individuals and families affected by domestic abuse.

At Soul Sisters, we believe in building a world where no one lives in fear. Our work centres on empowering survivors, raising awareness, and creating systemic change. This year has been a testament to the power of community, collaboration, and resilience. From securing vital new spaces in Rochdale to delivering creative workshops, advocacy programmes, and community campaigns, we have seen first-hand how trust, respect, inclusion, and empowerment can rebuild lives.

Our flagship projects, such as *Chorus of Power*, have provided survivors with the confidence to share their stories and amplify their voices, creating a ripple effect of awareness and education. We have forged meaningful partnerships with local authorities, cultural organisations, and community groups, ensuring survivors have access to the resources, support, and networks they need to thrive.

However, as this report illustrates, the challenges we face are significant. Financial pressures continue to affect the charitable sector, and the need for our services grows every day. Despite this, our commitment to supporting survivors remains unwavering. We are actively working to professionalise our leadership, expand our volunteer base, and secure sustainable funding to ensure the long-term future of Soul Sisters.

This year's achievements have been made possible thanks to the tireless efforts of our trustees, volunteers, and community partners. To each person who has contributed their time, energy, and resources to our mission, thank you. Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive community where survivors are empowered to live without fear.

As we look ahead, I am filled with hope for what we can achieve together. With your continued support, Soul Sisters will not only meet the needs of our community but also lead the way in creating a future free from domestic abuse,"

Francesca Barker-Mills



Our Foundation:

Soul Sisters became a Registered Charity in May 2021, after operating as a community group since 2020. The organisation was founded by Asma Begum, who had lived experience of domestic abuse. Asma had begun to publicly share her own story through “Truth to Power Cafe” events held around the country. The positive response led to her creation of a support group for other women, like herself, who were looking for help, to make new connections, develop female friendships, rebuild self-confidence, reach out to others for support, deal with legal advice, family courts, obtain financial advice and support, and more.

In December 2020, Asma and her Soul Sisters story was featured in a local news article - www.rochdaleonline.co.uk/news-features/2/news-headlines/137946/domestic-abuse-support-group-worked-through-lockdown-to-empower-women

Asma and her work for the charity has continued to receive recognition. Asma was invited to write the foreword for the publication ‘Women Leading in our New World’ (Proper Books, 2022) which supports the charity, and she has also appeared at multiple speaking and networking events to share her story and raise awareness of Soul Sisters: Empowering People. Asma has contributed to the book titled ‘How Can I Help My Anxious Child’ (Proper Books, 2024) to promote the charity and advocate for children in need of protection from abuse, and their education. She addresses the challenges faced by children who are victims or offspring of perpetrators, focusing on how to raise them with honesty, transparency, and age-appropriate conversations, just as she does with her own son. Asma also advocates for children and mothers who share similar experiences to her own, where she made the difficult decision to leave the perpetrator in order to break the cycle of abuse and protect her then-18-month-old son.

Our Vision: **Life Without Fear**

Our Values:

- **Trust** - we ensure our Soul Sisters community feel safe and knows they are in a place of trust.
- **Respect** - we encourage the Soul Sisters community to respect and appreciate each other’s qualities, feelings, wishes and rights without judgement.
- **Inclusion** - we welcome and support everyone who needs us. Our diverse team is representative of the community we serve.
- **Compassion** - we care deeply about our community, we listen with care and treat everyone with kindness and dignity.
- **Empowerment** - we enable our community to step into their personal power, live/work without fear and actively support each other.



Our Strategic Pillars:

We empower people affected by Domestic Abuse to Live Without Fear.

We do this by:

- **Providing Support**
- **Providing Domestic Violence Awareness and Education**
- **Creating Positive Policy & Legislative Change**
- **Fundraising**
- **Volunteering**

Introduction

This year has been transformative for our charity. Through creative initiatives, advocacy work, and community engagement, we have continued to grow and provide crucial support to individuals affected by domestic abuse. Our organisation is dedicated to supporting **all women and men**, recognising that victims of abuse often require time to build trust before they feel safe enough to share their situations. We have witnessed this first-hand, with individuals attending our sessions for months or even years before reaching out to us for direct support and guidance. This reflects the importance of creating a safe, inclusive, and nonjudgmental environment for all who seek help. Below is a summary of our achievements and milestones during the 2023–2024 financial year.

1. Key Achievements

Securing Office and Creative Spaces

This year, we successfully secured two office spaces in a community building within Champness Hall, located in the Town Center. These spaces we use as an office and a creative room, designed to store resources and items essential to our work. Through effective negotiations, we secured these spaces at a peppercorn rent, along with two car parking spaces.

Being situated within a building that hosts other community interest groups and charities allows us to collaborate more effectively, creating a one-stop hub where individuals can access a variety of support services. The premises are well-equipped, featuring a lift, heating, running water, and toilet facilities. A secure door with a buzzer system provides added safety, especially as we operate on the second floor.

In addition, we managed to arrange discounted internet, gas, and electricity, ensuring our operational costs remain low. We were also fortunate to receive generous donations from Touchstones, which closed for redevelopment. They provided us with high-quality furniture, including sofas, filing shelves, computer desks, chairs, tables, and children's chairs.



These resources have significantly enhanced our ability to support individuals affected by domestic abuse. The space enables us to hold confidential one-to-one sessions, trustee meetings, and business planning sessions in a comfortable and professional environment.

Volunteer Support and Training Space

The office also serves as a dedicated space for our volunteers to work, receive training, and provide one-to-one support. It offers a warm and welcoming environment where volunteers can check in with the Volunteer Coordinator and access resources.

For many, the office provides more than just a workspace—it's a place where they can save on their own electricity and water while benefiting from a structured routine. Coming into the office helps break the isolation of working from home, allowing them to socialise and build connections with fellow volunteers.

This sense of community, combined with the practical support the space offers, is vital in ensuring our volunteers feel valued, supported, and equipped to carry out their roles effectively.

Civic and Community Leadership Programme

Our trustee, Asma, took part in this leadership development programme, equipping her with the tools to enhance our organisation's strategic planning and governance. Strong leadership ensures we remain focused on providing effective support for survivors of domestic abuse and their families.

Rebranding and Social Media Campaign

In January 2024, we rebranded to better reflect our mission and launched a campaign to increase awareness of domestic abuse, its warning signs, and how to access help. This rebranding strengthens our identity and extends our reach to individuals who may not have previously known about our services.





Volunteers Week

During Volunteers Week, we took the opportunity to say a huge THANK YOU to the brilliant volunteers at Soul Sisters: Empowering People.

We are incredibly fortunate to have a dedicated board of trustees and an amazing team of volunteers who work tirelessly to support anyone who comes to us in need of advice, guidance, and support.

As a small charity with big ideas, our volunteers are the backbone of our organisation, helping us turn our vision into reality. Their commitment, passion, and hard work make a real difference in the lives of those we serve, and we couldn't do it without them.

Celebrating Volunteers and Trustee Week

A big thank you to **Action Together** for funding our Volunteers Week celebrations! While coordinating a group activity like bowling proved challenging, we found meaningful ways to show our appreciation to our incredible team.

We treated our trustees to a lovely brunch as a token of gratitude for their unwavering support and dedication. In addition, we sent out mindful and wellbeing boxes to all our volunteers, complete with thank-you cards and certificates to acknowledge their contributions. These gifts were a heartfelt way to express our appreciation for the vital role they play in our charity's mission.

2. Community Engagement

Creative Sessions

Our Monday crochet, knitting, and macrame workshops not only provided an outlet for creativity but also served as a therapeutic activity for women experiencing domestic abuse. Creative activities are proven to reduce stress, promote emotional healing, and foster connections among participants, many of whom share their experiences and support each other.

Ladies' Creative Group

This group has been vital in building a supportive community where participants feel safe to express themselves, gain confidence, and rebuild their lives after trauma.

Wednesday Wellbeing Sessions

Themes such as unplugging, mindfulness, and self-care encouraged participants to focus on their mental health, which is often deeply impacted by domestic abuse. These sessions are



a direct response to the emotional toll of abuse, helping participants reconnect with themselves and find calm amidst the chaos.

Book Club

Featuring *Secrets of Divine Love*, the book club created a safe space for reflection, healing, and connection. The group was led by a volunteer who herself joined as a service user while caring for her mother, demonstrating the transformative power of our programmes in turning recipients into contributors.

3. Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns

Supporting All Women and Men

Our inclusive approach ensures that everyone feels welcome and supported, regardless of their background or circumstances. We understand that it can take time for individuals to build the trust needed to share their experiences of abuse. We've seen cases where participants attend our sessions for months or even years before confiding in us and seeking our guidance. By fostering a safe and inclusive environment, we empower individuals to open up when they are ready.

Activism, Education, and Awareness

In April 2023, we secured Arts Council funding for **Chorus of Power**, a performance piece amplifying the voices of women who have experienced abuse. By highlighting these stories through art, we raised awareness about the long-term effects of abuse and the strength of survivors.

The Chorus of Power project was a transformative initiative co-created by Asma Begum (founder of Soul Sisters: Empowering People) in collaboration with Producer Jen Heyes (Cut to the Chase Productions). Rooted in the Japanese philosophy of Kintsugi—the art of repairing broken pottery with gold to embrace flaws and imperfections—this project gathered the creativity and talents of women survivors, artists, and activists to share personal stories of domestic





abuse. The aim was to facilitate healing, raise awareness, and drive policy change by creating a platform to amplify real, diverse experiences of abuse.

Objectives and Approach

The project was inspired by our founder's lived experience as a survivor of abuse and her interactions with various professionals such as doctors, legal staff, and police officers. These experiences exposed systemic injustices and cultural stigmas surrounding abuse, igniting her desire to create a platform for change. The Chorus of Power also incorporated Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed principles, using creative expression to help participants and audiences connect emotionally with these stories.

This initiative sought to:

- Empower survivors to share their stories and amplify their voices.
- Educate professionals, policymakers, and the community about the complexities of abuse.
- Offer women survivors a space to heal, gain confidence, and build skills.
- Advocate for legislative and policy changes to better support survivors.

Participants and Representation

The cast and participants were women from diverse backgrounds across Northwest England, including Somali, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Iraqi, Ethiopian, and local British communities in Rochdale, Bolton, and Manchester. All performers were either survivors, advocates for survivors, or individuals with personal connections to abuse. Their stories explored themes such as coercive control, consent, and physical abuse.



Impact and Achievements

The Chorus of Power was the first phase of a planned trilogy, with future phases set to include male survivors and young people affected by domestic abuse. This project created a safe, inclusive environment where participants:

- Developed skills in acting, singing, dancing, directing, costume design, and production.
- Built friendships and support networks through regular rehearsals and a dedicated WhatsApp group.
- Gained access to spaces they may not have experienced before, such as prominent creative venues across Manchester and Rochdale.

Women expressed a sense of empowerment and gratitude for the opportunity, with many keen to remain involved in future phases. For some, this was their first time travelling outside their local area or engaging with creative spaces, which they found inspiring.



Community and Institutional Support

The project successfully engaged key partners and supporters, including:

- Local and regional arts organisations: Touchstones (Rochdale), HOME (Manchester), Octagon Theatre (Bolton), Royal Exchange Theatre (Manchester), and Factory International.
- Funders and sponsors: Manchester Forever, Autotrader, GoFundMe donors, and match funding from Rochdale Borough Council.
- Local authorities and stakeholders: Representatives from the Mayor's office,



housing associations, council staff, and police.

Their collective support enabled us to provide participants with snacks, lunches, travel expenses, and childcare, ensuring accessibility and removing barriers to participation.

Organisational Growth and Learning

As one of our largest and most ambitious projects to date, Chorus of Power represented significant growth for our organisation. We developed our capacity to:

- Manage a larger budget and track multiple funding streams.
- Organise events, coordinate partners, and engage stakeholders.
- Produce high-quality artistic work at a grassroots level.

Additionally, we facilitated meaningful connections with other local organisations and were invited to share our experiences at the Rochdale Borough Council Network AGM. This has positioned us strongly for future collaborations and projects.

Audience Feedback

The performances received positive feedback from audience members, including professionals, policymakers, and community members. Attendees reported a deeper understanding of the complexities of abuse, with many recognising the need for ongoing conversations and systemic changes.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Chorus of Power project has been instrumental in its first phase in raising awareness, building skills, and advocating for change around domestic abuse. It served as a powerful reminder of the importance of centering survivor voices in discussions about policy and community healing.

This project is just the beginning. With the lessons learned and relationships established, we look forward to the next phases of this initiative, which will continue to shine a light on untold stories and drive meaningful change.

The performance at Touchstones in Rochdale was filmed by REELMCR and has been uploaded to our YouTube channel @soul sisters_empoweringpeople.

Our founder, Asma, was invited to speak at the **Factory International Future Culture Leaders** programme. It was an incredible opportunity to engage with an inspiring group of individuals shaping the future of culture.



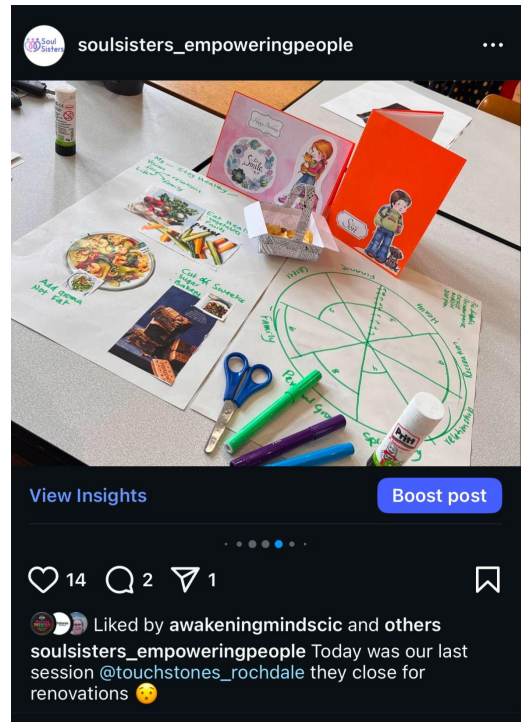
Final Session at Touchstones and Vision Board Workshop

Our final session at Touchstones Rochdale marked a bittersweet moment as the venue prepared to close for renovations. Despite this, our founder, Asma, ensured the momentum continued by running an inspiring session focused on the Wheel of Life and Vision Boards.

The session provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on their goals, aspirations, and personal growth while fostering creativity and collaboration. It was a wonderful experience to see the women working together, sharing ideas, and forming new connections.

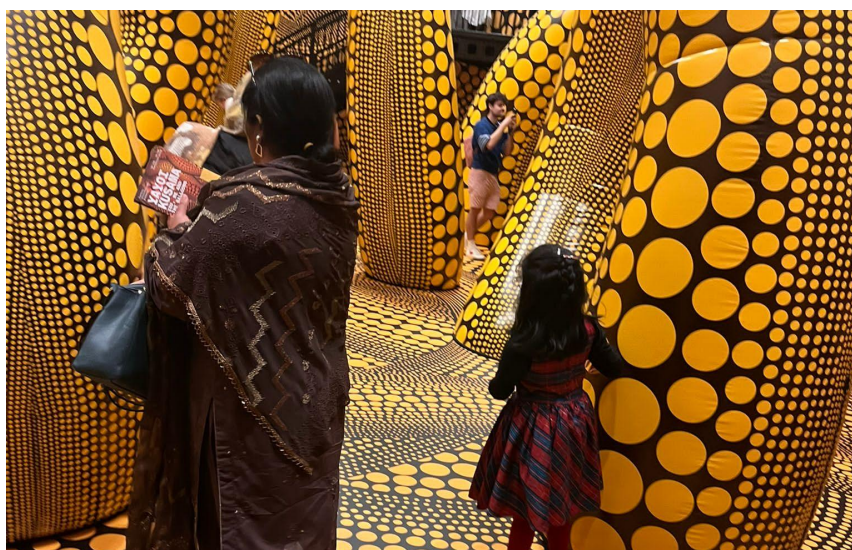
We were also joined by Nichelle from Action Together, who actively participated and engaged with the group, building relationships with the women and offering additional support.

This session highlighted the power of community and collaboration, leaving everyone inspired and motivated for the next steps in their personal journeys.



Visit to Yayoi Kusama Exhibition

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Bushra from Culture Coop for the opportunity to take some of our group to the **Yayoi Kusama: Me, You and the Balloons** exhibition at Factory International, free of charge.





This experience reinforced our belief that everyone deserves equal access to arts and cultural spaces. Diversity and inclusivity are vital to ensuring these spaces reflect and welcome all communities.

The exhibition provided an inspiring and memorable experience for our group, broadening their horizons and creating a sense of belonging in creative environments.

16 Days of Activism Campaign

This campaign focused on educating the public about the many forms of abuse, including coercive control and financial abuse. We shared information on recognizing signs of abuse and provided resources on how to support victims, empowering communities to take action.

Social Media Outreach

We used our platforms to dispel myths about abuse and shared practical advice for survivors. This helped bridge the gap between survivors and the resources available to them. During 2023-24 we saw an 125% increase in engagement on Instagram and a 180% increase in our reach on Facebook compared to 2022-23. We continued to increase our following on X (formerly Twitter), reaching almost 250 by March 2024. Our LinkedIn page was developed we and began to post more frequently, creating a small cohort of senior level professionals across the UK and generating increased engagement with our posts.

Empowerment Sessions on Domestic Abuse at Falinge Park High School

We were thrilled to deliver empowerment sessions at Falinge Park High School as part of their Community Day – for the community, by the community. This was a dream come true for our organisation as we stepped into schools to raise awareness and inspire young minds.

Our founder, Asma, delivered three impactful sessions with girls ranging from Year 7 to Year 10, focusing on women's empowerment, self-confidence, and resilience. The sessions were well-received, with the final group becoming visibly emotional as they connected with Asma's story of overcoming adversity and finding confidence. Her inspiring journey resonated deeply with the students and created a space for them to feel empowered to share and speak up.

In addition to the sessions, we hosted a stall later in the day where we engaged with adults, teenagers, and young children through conversations and activities. Our Gigantic Connect 4 game was a huge hit, sparking fun, laughter, and some spirited competition—especially between two brothers who declared a “best-of-three” match! Connecting with their mum and other families led to meaningful conversations that emphasised the importance of community engagement.

We are grateful to Falinge Park High School for inviting us to be part of their Community Day and for the opportunity to empower young people and engage with the wider community.



Events like these bring us closer to achieving our mission of creating confident, empowered individuals who can lead change.

4. Support Services and Sessions

Mental Health Sessions

These were delivered in Bengali, Urdu, and English, specifically targeting South Asian women who often face barriers to accessing mental health care due to cultural stigma. Many participants were survivors of domestic abuse who found these sessions to be a vital step in their healing journey. By offering sessions in multiple languages, we built trust within the community and encouraged early intervention, helping women avoid reaching a crisis point.

Talk Money Campaign

Financial abuse is a common but often overlooked aspect of domestic abuse. After successfully running a Talk Money Week campaign, we launched monthly financial literacy sessions. These helped women understand their financial rights, build independence, and learn the importance of collecting evidence to protect themselves legally.

Family Court Mothers' Group

In response to high demand, we began providing advocacy and McKenzie friend support to women navigating the family court system. Many survivors face significant challenges in court, including retraumatization and power imbalances, and our support has been critical in empowering them to advocate for themselves and their children.

New Parents Event

On 19th July we hosted our second New Parents event at Aspire to Inspire. This initiative aimed to bring together new parents in Rochdale, offering support, resources, and connections within the community.

As part of our commitment to supporting new parents, we distributed 12 care packages filled with helpful items and information. We also invited local services to contribute leaflets, ensuring parents received a range of resources tailored to their needs.

We were grateful for the community's support in spreading the word and helping us make this event a success. Special thanks go to Action Together for their assistance in amplifying our outreach. Events like this strengthen our mission to create a supportive and inclusive environment for new families in Rochdale.



5. Partnerships and Collaborations

Culture Coop Partnership

Collaborations like the living dress workshop and Factory International visits allowed women and their children to experience creative and cultural opportunities, providing joy and respite from the stresses of domestic abuse.

Healthwatch Rochdale Collaboration

Together, we ran a menopause focus group for BAME women, gathering data to advocate for better healthcare. The link between domestic abuse and early perimenopause due to chronic stress was a key focus, raising awareness about the long-term physical effects of abuse.

Flourish Together Panel

Flourish Together has been instrumental in our journey, offering guidance on funding and strategy. Asma's participation on their 10th-anniversary panel showcased our growth and reinforced our commitment to supporting women and men.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Walk and Talk

We were honoured to take part in the Greater Manchester Police-hosted Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Walk and Talk, a powerful event focused on addressing the root causes, impacts, and consequences of misogyny in our society.

This significant gathering, held in Rochdale's Broadfield Park, brought together senior leaders from the police, local council, and other key organisations to foster collaboration and develop effective strategies to combat the pervasive issues of domestic violence, domestic abuse, and misogyny.

The discussions provided an invaluable platform to share perspectives, strengthen partnerships, and advocate for meaningful change. By participating in initiatives like this, we reaffirm our commitment to raising awareness and working toward a society that is safer, fairer, and more equitable for everyone.

Chief Superintendent Nicky Porter of GMP's Rochdale district said: "On Monday, we held a walk and talk in Broadfield Park. We did this to listen to people's lived experiences surrounding crimes that disproportionately impact on women and girls, such as domestic abuse, rape, and serious sexual offences.

"It was all about listening and understanding what really impacts on women and girls, so policy makers and people like myself in a position of influence locally, can try and make



those systems and processes better that underpin and support women and girls in their hour of need.”

Time to Shine Event

We were honoured to collaborate with Finding Nyah and Blinded Faith at the inspiring Time to Shine event hosted at the Millennium Powerhouse. This empowering session brought together an incredible lineup of guests, speakers, and hosts, creating an uplifting and motivating atmosphere throughout the day.

We are deeply grateful for being invited to be part of this event and for the generous donation towards the vital work we are doing.

Our mission is clear: WE WANT PEOPLE TO LIVE WITHOUT FEAR

Collaborating with organisations like Finding Nyah and Blinded Faith strengthens our shared commitment to empowering individuals and creating a safer, more supportive society.

6. Volunteer and Team Development

New Volunteer Roles:

We identified gaps in our team and began recruiting for roles like fundraisers, a new chair, and a bid writer. These positions are essential for securing sustainable funding and expanding our capacity to serve survivors of domestic abuse.

Volunteer Support

When our longest-serving volunteer faced personal loss, it was a reminder of the importance of community. Supporting our volunteers during difficult times reflects our values and ensures they remain empowered to help others.

New Research Volunteer

This role enhances our ability to gather evidence, measure impact, and advocate for policy changes that benefit survivors.

7. Fundraising and Grants

Zakat (Islamic charitable giving) and Donation Campaigns

These campaigns allowed us to support our services while engaging communities who want to contribute to tackling domestic abuse.



Funding Achievements

With Arts Council and National Lottery funding, as well as matched funds from various sources, we secured resources to continue offering creative programmes and support services for survivors.

8. Impact Summary

Total Individuals Helped - This year, we supported **154** unique individuals through our programmes.

Feedback - Received from attendees of our weekly group sessions:

Online Goal-Setting Session

"The [session's] focus was on setting goals, encompassing personal, professional, business, and financial aspects. Sister Asma highlighted the importance of specificity and realism in goal-setting and shared insights on tracking progress. It served as a timely reminder to avoid unrealistic goals and maintain focus to prevent losing track midway due to perceived lack of success."

Monday Creative Group

"It was really good. Feeling proud as learnt how to do the rib stitch. It's good being able to take time to socialise as it improves my mental health. Currently working with Thinking Ahead mental health service and they have noticed an improvement in my mental health (through the GAD 7 questionnaires and other questionnaires which I do each week), when I have taken time to attend Soul Sisters. As it gives more of a work-life balance then."

Key Themes:

Creative and Advocacy Programmes - Empowered women and men to reclaim their narratives and build confidence.

Mental Health and Financial Literacy Support - Addressed the psychological and economic effects of domestic abuse, empowering individuals to take control of their lives.

Court and Advocacy Services - Enabled individuals to navigate complex legal systems with confidence and dignity.



9. Looking Ahead

To ensure our organisation's long-term success and impact, we are focusing on:

Professional Leadership - Our First Paid CEO Position

As part of our long-term sustainability strategy, hiring a paid CEO will allow us to grow sustainably, build strategic partnerships, and better serve survivors of domestic abuse. This is critical for ensuring the organisation can expand its services, secure more funding, and build a lasting legacy. By professionalising leadership, we aim to address the growing demand for our domestic abuse services and ensure the continuity of our mission.

Volunteer Recruitment

Expanding our volunteer base with clear roles will strengthen our capacity to provide support and advocacy.

Enhanced Services

We aim to expand our creative and support programmes to reach more survivors, particularly those in underserved communities.

Increased Awareness

Continuing our campaigns to educate communities about domestic abuse, reduce stigma, and empower survivors.

We remain deeply committed to addressing the multifaceted challenges of domestic abuse, supporting survivors, and creating a safe, empowering community for all.



Financial Review

Financial Position

The financial position of the charity as at 29 March 2024 was showing:

	£
Unrestricted funds	86
Restricted funds	13,943
Total funds	<u>14,029</u>

At 29 March 2024, the charity had negative free reserves of £424 (2023 - negative £269).

Reserves Policy

The charity has funding in place in restricted funds to cover the operating costs of the charity for a further 6 months and the charity is tendering for more funding. These operating costs would usually in unrestricted funds.

As a charity entirely staffed by volunteers and without leases and minimal creditors, our current level of reserves comprises our unrestricted funds of £86 at the year end, maintaining a small buffer of reserves to enable us to continue to cover costs and volunteers' expenses whilst making efforts to research other funding sources and opportunities.

Declaration

This report has been approved by the board of trustees and signed on their behalf.

A Begum

Asma Begum (Trustee)

Date: 26/01/2025

SOUL SISTERS: EMPOWERING PEOPLE

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 29 MARCH 2024**

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2024 Total funds £	2023 Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM					
Donations and legacies		<u>1,665</u>	<u>23,595</u>	<u>25,260</u>	<u>15,196</u>
 EXPENDITURE ON					
Charitable activities					
Charitable		<u>1,266</u>	<u>20,447</u>	<u>21,713</u>	<u>9,395</u>
 NET INCOME					
Transfers between funds	8	<u>399</u> <u>(44)</u>	<u>3,148</u> <u>44</u>	<u>3,547</u> <u>-</u>	<u>5,801</u> <u>-</u>
Net movement in funds		355	3,192	3,547	5,801
 RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS					
Total funds brought forward		<u>(269)</u>	<u>10,751</u>	<u>10,482</u>	<u>4,681</u>
 TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD		<u><u>86</u></u>	<u><u>13,943</u></u>	<u><u>14,029</u></u>	<u><u>10,482</u></u>

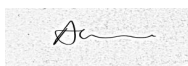
The notes form part of these financial statements

SOUL SISTERS: EMPOWERING PEOPLE

BALANCE SHEET 29 MARCH 2024

	Notes	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2024 Total funds £	2023 Total funds £
FIXED ASSETS					
Tangible assets	4	510	-	510	-
CURRENT ASSETS					
Debtors	5	71	1,181	1,252	-
Cash at bank		<u>105</u>	<u>13,943</u>	<u>14,048</u>	<u>11,292</u>
		176	15,124	15,300	11,292
CREDITORS					
Amounts falling due within one year	6	<u>(600)</u>	<u>(1,181)</u>	<u>(1,781)</u>	<u>(810)</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>(424)</u>	<u>13,943</u>	<u>13,519</u>	<u>10,482</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>86</u>	<u>13,943</u>	<u>14,029</u>	<u>10,482</u>
NET ASSETS		<u>86</u>	<u>13,943</u>	<u>14,029</u>	<u>10,482</u>
FUNDS	8				
Unrestricted funds				86	(269)
Restricted funds				<u>13,943</u>	<u>10,751</u>
TOTAL FUNDS				<u>14,029</u>	<u>10,482</u>

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees and authorised for issue on 26 January 2025 and were signed on its behalf by:



A Begum - Trustee

SOUL SISTERS: EMPOWERING PEOPLE

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 29 MARCH 2024

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Basis of preparing the financial statements

The financial statements of the charity, which is a public benefit entity under FRS 102, have been prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102) 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019)', Financial Reporting Standard 102 'The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland' and the Charities Act 2011. The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

Income

All income is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities once the charity has entitlement to the funds, it is probable that the income will be received and the amount can be measured reliably.

Expenditure

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to that expenditure, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably. Expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and has been classified under headings that aggregate all cost related to the category. Where costs cannot be directly attributed to particular headings they have been allocated to activities on a basis consistent with the use of resources.

Tangible fixed assets

Depreciation is provided at the following annual rates in order to write off each asset over its estimated useful life.

Fixtures and fittings - 15% on reducing balance

Taxation

The charity is exempt from tax on its charitable activities.

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 restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

Further explanation of the nature and purpose of each fund is included in the notes to the financial statements.

2. TRUSTEES' REMUNERATION AND BENEFITS

There were no trustees' remuneration or other benefits for the year ended 29 March 2024 nor for the year ended 29 March 2023.

One of the Trustees received £1,500 for professional services other than as a trustee (2023 - £Nil).

Trustees' expenses

There were £1,593 of trustees' reimbursed expenses paid for the year ended 29 March 2024 to three trustees for office supplies, telephone, training and travel (2023 -£719).

3. COMPARATIVES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
INCOME AND ENDOWMENTS FROM			
Donations and legacies	<u>1,936</u>	<u>13,260</u>	<u>15,196</u>
EXPENDITURE ON			
Charitable activities			
Charitable	<u>3,059</u>	<u>6,336</u>	<u>9,395</u>
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)	(1,123)	6,924	5,801
Transfers between funds	<u>(306)</u>	<u>306</u>	<u>-</u>

SOUL SISTERS: EMPOWERING PEOPLE

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 29 MARCH 2024**

3. COMPARATIVES FOR THE STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES - continued

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	Total funds £
Net movement in funds	(1,429)	7,230	5,801
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS			
Total funds brought forward	1,160	3,521	4,681
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	<u>(269)</u>	<u>10,751</u>	<u>10,482</u>

4. TANGIBLE FIXED ASSETS

	Fixtures and fittings £
COST	
Additions	<u>600</u>
DEPRECIATION	
Charge for year	<u>90</u>
NET BOOK VALUE	
At 29 March 2024	<u>510</u>
At 29 March 2023	<u>-</u>

5. DEBTORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade debtors	<u>1,252</u>	<u>-</u>

6. CREDITORS: AMOUNTS FALLING DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR

	2024 £	2023 £
Bank loans and overdrafts (see note 7)	<u>1,181</u>	-
Other creditors	<u>600</u>	<u>810</u>
	<u>1,781</u>	<u>810</u>

7. LOANS

An analysis of the maturity of loans is given below:

	2024 £	2023 £
Amounts falling due within one year on demand:		
Bank overdrafts	<u>1,181</u>	<u>-</u>

SOUL SISTERS: EMPOWERING PEOPLE

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 29 MARCH 2024**

8. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS

	At 30.3.23 £	Net movement in funds £	Transfers between funds £	At 29.3.24 £
Unrestricted funds				
General fund	(269)	399	(44)	86
Restricted funds				
Action Together - 100 Stories of Strength Podcast	692	(177)	-	515
Keep It Safe Training	100	-	-	100
Near Neighbour	49	(14)	-	35
MIND Seed Funds	3	(3)	-	-
Action Together Volunteers Celebration Grant	466	(58)	-	408
Chorus of Power - Autotrader Foundation	828	(828)	-	-
GMCVO - Culturally Appropriate Mental Health Fund	6,410	(90)	-	6,320
GM Perinatal/PIMH Peer support	1,000	(167)	-	833
Chorus of Power - Cartwheel Arts	500	(500)	-	-
Chorus of Power - Go Fund Me	703	(703)	-	-
Co op Community Fund Award	-	459	-	459
Chorus of Power - Arts Council England	-	(44)	44	-
National Lottery	-	5,273	-	5,273
	<u>10,751</u>	<u>3,148</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>13,943</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>10,482</u>	<u>3,547</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>14,029</u>

Net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	1,665	(1,266)	399
Restricted funds			
Action Together - 100 Stories of Strength Podcast	-	(177)	(177)
Near Neighbour	-	(14)	(14)
MIND Seed Funds	-	(3)	(3)
Action Together Volunteers Celebration Grant	-	(58)	(58)
Chorus of Power - Autotrader Foundation	-	(828)	(828)
GMCVO - Culturally Appropriate Mental Health Fund	-	(90)	(90)
GM Perinatal/PIMH Peer support	-	(167)	(167)
Chorus of Power - Cartwheel Arts	-	(500)	(500)
Chorus of Power - Go Fund Me	121	(824)	(703)
Co op Community Fund Award	1,264	(805)	459
Chorus of Power - Arts Council England	11,810	(11,854)	(44)
Chorus of Power - HOME Manchester	400	(400)	-
National Lottery	10,000	(4,727)	5,273
	<u>23,595</u>	<u>(20,447)</u>	<u>3,148</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>25,260</u>	<u>(21,713)</u>	<u>3,547</u>

SOUL SISTERS: EMPOWERING PEOPLE

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 29 MARCH 2024**

8. MOVEMENT IN FUNDS - continued

Comparatives for movement in funds

	At 30.3.22 £	Net movement in funds £	Transfers between funds £	At 29.3.23 £
Unrestricted funds				
General fund	1,160	(1,123)	(306)	(269)
Restricted funds				
Action Together - 100 Stories of Strength Podcast	877	(185)	-	692
The Good Things Foundation - Digital Skills Funding	2,300	(2,606)	306	-
Keep It Safe Training	100	-	-	100
Near Neighbour	241	(192)	-	49
MIND Seed Funds	3	-	-	3
Action Together Volunteers Celebration Grant	-	466	-	466
Chorus of Power - Autotrader Foundation	-	828	-	828
GMCVO - Culturally Appropriate Mental Health Fund	-	6,410	-	6,410
GM Perinatal/PIMH Peer support	-	1,000	-	1,000
Chorus of Power - Cartwheel Arts	-	500	-	500
Chorus of Power - Go Fund Me	-	703	-	703
	<u>3,521</u>	<u>6,924</u>	<u>306</u>	<u>10,751</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>4,681</u>	<u>5,801</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>10,482</u>

Comparative net movement in funds, included in the above are as follows:

	Incoming resources £	Resources expended £	Movement in funds £
Unrestricted funds			
General fund	1,936	(3,059)	(1,123)
Restricted funds			
Action Together - 100 Stories of Strength Podcast	-	(185)	(185)
The Good Things Foundation - Digital Skills Funding	2,900	(5,506)	(2,606)
Near Neighbour	-	(192)	(192)
Action Together Volunteers Celebration Grant	466	-	466
Chorus of Power - Autotrader Foundation	1,001	(173)	828
GMCVO - Culturally Appropriate Mental Health Fund	6,690	(280)	6,410
GM Perinatal/PIMH Peer support	1,000	-	1,000
Chorus of Power - Cartwheel Arts	500	-	500
Chorus of Power - Go Fund Me	703	-	703
	<u>13,260</u>	<u>(6,336)</u>	<u>6,924</u>
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>15,196</u>	<u>(9,395)</u>	<u>5,801</u>

SOUL SISTERS: EMPOWERING PEOPLE

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued FOR THE YEAR ENDED 29 MARCH 2024

9. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

There were no other related party transactions for the year ended 29 March 2024 except for the transactions already disclosed in note 2.

10. RESTRICTED FUNDS

Action Together - 100 Stories of Strength Podcast

As part of a wider project, Soul Sisters were awarded funds to write, record, edit and publish a series of podcasts telling women's stories of strength, adversity and their road to happiness and success. We were able to purchase software subscriptions to aid in podcast editing and uploading, promotion and to purchase recording equipment, in addition to purchasing small gifts to participants who shared their stories.

Good Things Foundation

In 2022, Soul Sisters received funding to run Digital Skills and Employability Training in Middleton and Rochdale for people on low and limited incomes, who were not in work, education or training. The project also targeted people who were not native English speakers and who were provided with additional support. The project also supplied attendees with a tablet and 6 months of data to support them in finding work upon completion of the course.

Keep It Safe Training

This money was donated by a local community radio station, Crescent FM, to enable Soul Sisters to run a hate-crime awareness training session for our beneficiaries.

Near Neighbours

This funding supported Soul Sisters in our early days by enabling us to purchase a laptop and an annual subscription to Zoom in order to run online peer support groups, in addition to monies for in-person sessions which covered the costs of refreshments, materials and volunteers' expenses. We also used funds to purchase promotional materials to raise awareness of the charity, and organised surprise Care Packages to be sent out to service users and volunteers to celebrate International Women's Day 2022.

Mind Seed Funding

Soul Sisters was awarded seed funding, on a pre-loaded debit card, before we had access to a bank account, to help get the organisation up and running. It enabled us to buy resources for and run community group sessions, both face-to-face and online.

Action Together Volunteers Celebration Grant

This funding, linked to Volunteers Week 1-7 June 2022, aimed to help Soul Sisters celebrate our Volunteers and Trustees by holding a team outing and presenting some volunteers with award certificates for their contribution to the charity's activities.

GMCVO Culturally Appropriate Mental Health Fund - Innovation Grant

"The fund is all about tackling health inequalities that marginalised ethnic communities face when trying to get help from mental health services, in terms of access, experience and outcomes." Soul Sisters applied to provide Mental Health sessions in both Bengali and Urdu, as well as in English. Sessions were to be held both online and in person in Rochdale/Middleton. Additionally, Soul Sisters aimed to develop a Podcast covering mental health topics, in Urdu/Bengali.

GM Perinatal/PIMH Peer Support

This funding was received to enable Soul Sisters to organise and run in-person and online Perinatal and Parent-Infant Mental Health awareness sessions in Greater Manchester, providing advice and information and setting up access to peer support for new and expectant parents.

Chorus of Power

All three funds - Auto Trader Foundation; Cartwheel Arts; GoFundMe are related to the Chorus of Power arts project. Receiving these funds was a condition of obtaining funding from The Arts Council. "Chorus of Power: Kintsugi" gathered together the creativity and talent of women survivors to shine a light on their personal stories, with the intention of healing and changing policy that currently exists around domestic abuse. We believe this project will go a long way to making that happen. Chorus of Power is inspired by Kintsugi, the Japanese art of putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold, a metaphor for embracing your flaws and imperfections, one that leaves you stronger than before.

Co op Community Fund Award

This funding helped the charity increase public awareness of our charity, increase donations, and recruit volunteers. Through this funding it also allowed the purchase of promotional marketing materials and the use of digital marketing tools.

SOUL SISTERS: EMPOWERING PEOPLE

**NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - continued
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 29 MARCH 2024**

10. RESTRICTED FUNDS - continued

National Lottery

This funding was granted to assist in the operational funding to enable Soul Sisters to continue to provide services to our local community and help us to grow and develop our offering. Also, ensuring we could continue to pay for essential, high-value items including office rental, key software subscriptions, professional services and insurances, in addition to day-to-day expenditure including purchase of equipment and materials for events and group sessions, and reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses for our volunteers and trustees.

**INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF
SOUL SISTERS: EMPOWERING PEOPLE**

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Soul Sisters: Empowering People

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of Soul Sisters: Empowering People (the Trust) for the year ended 29 March 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under Section 145 of the Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under Section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Trust as required by Section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records; or
3. the accounts do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

✓ Hill

Vivien Hill FCA

Wyatt Morris Golland Ltd
Park House
200 Drake Street
Rochdale
Lancashire
OL16 1PJ

26 January 2025