

## **Annual Report for We-Together**

**UK registered charity number 1196883**

**Period from inception to 31 March 2023**

### **Mission Statement**

We-Together's aim is to realise a permanent, meaningful increase in the conviction rate of sexual offenders across England and Wales. We aim to do this by using a unique technological solution to identify serial predators. This will increase reporting by victims, and increase the likelihood of identifying and prosecuting serial perpetrators.

### **The Extent of Sexual Offending**

The failure of the United Kingdom's criminal justice system to hold to account perpetrators of rape and other forms of sexual assault is apparent. If any six women gather together, statistically one of them will have survived raped. It would need a meeting of 62 rapists to find one who had been convicted of the rape of an adult female. The figures are even worse for other types of sexual abuse, including where the victim identifies as male or is underage. That is the imbalance between victim and perpetrator. By definition, sexual crime is shrouded in secrecy and shame. Victims tend not to report it to the police, and even when they do there's often no physical evidence. The police have a thankless task.

Even if assault does not result in physical injury, the psychological impact can be severe and victims may take a long time to recover. The psychological effect of sexual assault varies widely between individuals – what would be minor assault to one person can be severely traumatising to another. We shouldn't underestimate the traumatic effect of even apparently superficial minor assault on an individual.

Many victims never recover fully. Studies indicate that victims of sexual assault form a large, if not the largest, proportion of people suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Complex PTSD. Studies show a statistically significant association between sexual abuse and a range of life-long diagnoses including: anxiety, eating, and sleep disorders, together with a significant increase in the risk of suicide.

The most widely accepted data is that produced by the Office for National Statistics Crime Survey for England and Wales. The data showed that for 2018-2019 2.9% of adults experienced sexual assault. This is very similar to the ONS published data for 2016-2017 where it was reported that 3.1% of women and 0.8% of men experienced sexual assault. These figures equate to 510,000 women and 138,000 men sexually assaulted as adults in a single year. These numbers are far greater than the number reported to the police, although this has increased to a record high of 40,572 women in the year ending September 2021. The numbers speak for themselves. A fundamental renovation of our approach to sexual crime is necessary, and cannot be delayed.

### **Why Prosecution Rates are Low**

The process of bringing a sexual criminal to justice begins with reporting, and there are many reasons why victims choose not to report: shame; denial and minimisation; fear of

the consequences; low self-esteem; feelings of helplessness; a history of being sexually victimised; or indeed disbelief that abuse actually took place (e.g., if the victim was drugged at the time). Thus, although there has been a real increase over recent years in the number of offences reported to the police, there remains a very real discrepancy between this number compared to the crime-survey data.

However, reporting is only the initial stage of the process of bringing a sexual criminal to justice. The second step in increasing conviction-rates is to improve the number and effectiveness of police investigations into reported offences. Incredibly, the number of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) cases being referred by the police to the CPS is declining. Of those referred, the CPS has charged a falling proportion of cases across the three years 2016–19. In rape-flagged cases, the number of receipts has decreased from 6,611 in the year ending March 2017 to 5,114 in the year ending March 2019 – a 22.6% decrease. Of those cases received from the police, the number of cases the CPS prosecutes has decreased from 3,671 to 1,758 (a 52.1% decrease). In 2019 more than 20,000 women decided not to proceed with a rape investigation, even when the suspect had been identified.

There are additional obstacles to the CPS going forward with prosecution. Among these are lack of investigative resources, the time needed to reach a decision, the withdrawal of the complaint (as already noted) and formalised conviction-targets.

However, by far the most salient reason for low prosecution-rates is lack of evidence. By its very nature, sexual assault often does not produce any physical evidence or corroborating witnesses. Without such evidence, and with the only evidence coming from the victim, police will often consider that there is insufficient evidence to proceed with a prosecution. Crucially, current procedures do not normally allow the disclosure of a suspect's details and therefore it is not possible to identify other potential victims. However, in a number of high profile cases where there have been multiple victims, it has been possible for patterns of abuse to be identified by the police, leading to successful identification and prosecution, where individual accusations at a much earlier stage failed. We are facing a crisis of confidence among sexual abuse victims who do not believe there is any prospect of justice within the current system. This is one important reason why they often do not report offences to the police. When they do, there is only a small likelihood of any subsequent investigation resulting in the CPS prosecuting the case. And when prosecution takes place, juries will often return a not-guilty verdict. It is one person's word against another. A technological solution is needed which addresses both of the problems – low reporting and lack of evidence. These together allow thousands of sexual criminals to evade justice.

### **The Objectives of We-Together - Levering Technology for Justice**

The aim of We-Together is to secure a permanent, meaningful increase in the conviction-rate of sexual offenders across the United Kingdom. This will be accomplished by:

- increased reporting by victims;
- increased likelihood of identifying and prosecuting serial perpetrators; leading to
- increased conviction-rate.

We-Together will increase the sexual-offender conviction-rate by introducing a sophisticated, GDPR-compliant, highly secure analytical system. It will allow victims to self-report, independent of the police. All information entered will be securely encrypted to ensure privacy and no personal identifiers will be available to anyone within the charity. This new reporting mechanism – the first of its kind – will use relational database analysis to identify multiple (two or more) victims with the same potential abuser. Once a cluster of victims has been identified the police will be sent contact information allowing them to contact the identified victims. In almost all cases the victims will, at this stage, be unknown to each other. Victims will only be contacted by the police if they are identified as being part of a cluster who have had common features of abuse, e.g., time, place, method of grooming, football coach etc. If the police then contact victims because they are part of a cluster, the victim will know that the abuse they suffered was not directed to them alone but that there were also other victims. This will help overcome some of the reasons for the current state of non-reporting.

When presented with a cluster of victims unknown to each other but with a common identifier it will be easier for the police to investigate successfully. This may also identify less severe offences which may be precursors to a major offence (e.g., the kidnap, rape and murder of Sarah Everard), The amount of corroborating evidence from more than one victim will greatly increase the probability of a case being presented to the CPS and that case being prosecuted. At trial, the testimony of more than one independent victim will be less likely to be undermined by defence counsel. They will also be less able to call into question a victim's character. Trials involving multiple victims are also likely to result in a guilty verdict from a jury as possible prejudicial views will carry much less weight. We-Together will facilitate the work of the CPS in two ways. First, by increasing overall levels of reporting. Second, it will allow currently unlinked cases of serial abuse to be identified, increasing the likelihood of investigation and providing the evidential basis for successful prosecutions to be brought.

### **The We-Together Technology**

Our technological solution is being developed by a specialist ground-breaking Cambridge University-associated IT organisation, building on their current system architecture. Users will enter data via a web-site or app. AI embedded in the system will constantly analyse all newly entered details against those previously entered. Criteria will be analysed and a weighted scoring system used to determine matches indicating a common perpetrator. The analytical systems will also be able to indicate if there are potential malicious entries. The prototype database is almost ready, and a multidisciplinary team is currently developing the front-end. Features such as privacy policies, links to support organisations (We-Together is NOT a support organisation) and details such as a panic button for instant exit are included. Hover boxes offer encouragement and explanation where appropriate. Capacity for audit and research is presumed.

We-Together is beginning to be promoted by social media. In the general media, a national publication has already requested a feature article. We have just this week recruited an actor known on the international stage as our first Ambassador. We will ally ourselves with support organisations and existing services, such as counselling services and GP surgeries. The Metropolitan Police have shown great interest in our project, as has the Office of the Victims Commissioner.

## **Social Impact – Success Criteria**

Being part of a cluster of victims will reduce the feelings of shame, feelings of hopelessness and fear that individuals experience. Knowing that there are other victims will also help to overcome feelings of denial, while in cases of drugging or inebriation, knowing of others will reassure the victim of the accuracy of their memories.

*We-together* will secure justice for far more victims of sexual crime than is currently the case. This is its primary objective, in relation to which all other potential benefits are secondary. However, although these benefits are secondary, they are not negligible: the broader social impact can be expected to be immense.

First, effective prosecution of perpetrators across the country will ease the already immense strain on mental-health services. Victims are more likely to make a full recovery if they know that the perpetrator has been held accountable. Not only will victims be less at risk of suicide, but overall emotional wellness will be improved, and counselling resources, which are already strained, should, to some extent, be freed up.

Second, an increase in conviction-rates will have a corresponding deterrence effect: potential perpetrators will be far less likely to assume they will get away with it. Potential victims will be safer, and we can expect that the number of victims will decline overall. There should be a shift in culture.

In addition, We-Together, working to support the work of the police, should help strengthen public confidence in their ability to act in sexual offence cases. This is particularly relevant at the present, when the reputation of the police services in the UK, particularly in relation to their commitment to the safety of women, is at an all-time low.

## **Date of establishment and first trustees appointed**

The charity was established on 19 March 2019 when the founding trustees were appointed. Limited activity took place in the two years after that because of the pandemic.

### **Trustees**

Alison Benge, Founding Trustee and Secretary to the Board (Appointed 19 March 2019)

Geoff Benge, Founding Trustee and Treasurer (Appointed 19 March 2019)

James Kidwell, Chairman (Appointed 14 January 2022)

Dr Judith Miller, Trustee responsible for co-ordinating external advisors and support network (Appointed 19 March 2019)

Dean Nicholson, Trustee responsible for diversity

Perry Power, Trustee responsible for the Charity's Social Media presence (Appointed 6 September 2022)

## **Trustee Board and Governance**

The Trustee Board is the governing body of the charity and will be responsible for taking all major decisions affecting the direction and control of the charity.

Matters requiring the consultation and approval of all Trustees are as follows:

- Appointment and removal of trustees
- Appointment of advisors and ambassadors
- The Annual accounts of the charity
- The Budget forecast of the charity
- The policies of the Charity (e.g. Safeguarding)
- Any significant items of expenditure or commitments (e.g financial leases)
- Any significant publicity statements

## **Trustee Board meetings**

The Trustee Board aims to meet at least once per month. Meetings may take place by means of a conference or video call.

The secretary will send all trustees an agenda prior to each meeting and will prepare brief minutes of the meeting which reflect the actions agreed and decisions taken at the meeting.

From time to time the Board may delegate responsibility to an individual or a smaller working party to complete a task (e.g. Social media, marketing material, meetings with advisors).

## **Financial management**

The charity is run on the basis that all trustees and advisors are providing their services pro bono. Reasonable expenses incurred on behalf of the charity will be reimbursed.

The charity expects to incur capital expenditure in respect of the construction of the database – for which Kynesim (a software development company, based in Cambridge) have been instructed to commence work, initially on a pro-bono basis, although this will change as and when funding permits.

The charity expects to incur operating expenses in relation to database hosting, web site maintenance, professional services in relation to accounting and registration, promotion (social media and other), appropriate insurances and the cost of holding meetings.

As part of its fundraising initiatives, the charity has set up a GoFundMe account which aims to crowdfund part of its operating cost requirement. It is also the mechanism through which visitors to the web site may contribute.

The Chairman and Treasurer are empowered to approve and pay all day-to-day expenditures.

**Other information pertaining to the charity**

Registered address: 6 Queens Road, Enfield, Middlesex, EN1 1NE

Web site: <https://we-together.co.uk/>

Linkedin: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/we-togetheruk/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/wetogetheruk/>

Email: [info@we-together.co.uk](mailto:info@we-together.co.uk)

GoFundMe: We-Together

Bankers: Lloyds Bank

**We- Together (Registered charity number 1196883)**

Financial Statements for the period from inception to 31 March 2023

The Financial Statements are prepared on the basis of the Statement of Recognised Practice (SORP) for smaller charities.

**Receipts and payments account**

	Unrestricte d	Total
	Funds	Funds
Receipts	£	£
Voluntary receipts	8,049	8,049
Total receipts	8,049	8,049
Payments		
Governance and administrative expenses	1,045	1,045
Promotional material costs	388	388
Web site registration	70	70
Total payments	1,503	1,503
Excess of receipts over payments	6,546	6,546
Bank account balance as at 31 March 2023	6,546	6,546

**Statement of Assets and Liabilities**

	Unrestricte d	Total
	Funds	Funds
Cash Funds	£	£
Bank current account	6,546	6,546
Total assets	6,546	6,546
Liabilities	-	-
Net assets available to the charity	6,546	6,546