

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

**UK registered charity number 1196883**

**Period from inception to 31 March 2024**

### **Mission**

Our mission is to significantly improve the conviction rate for sexual offences by empowering survivors to speak up, fostering a sense of community, and collaborating with police and criminal justice agencies to identify and prosecute perpetrators. Currently, fewer than 3% of reported rapes result in charges, highlighting a critical confidence deficit in the criminal justice system that perpetuates silence and injustice.

### **The Problem We Are Addressing**

“The victims of rape must carry their memories with them for the rest of their lives. They must not also carry the burden of silence and shame.” (Raine, 1998).

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.

### **Our Solution: A New Platform for Justice**

We-Together is developing a secure digital platform that allows survivors to report their experiences of sexual violence safely. Our platform will identify a cluster of victim-survivors with a common perpetrator. The cluster will then be reported to The Hydrant Programme who will disseminate the information to the relevant police force for investigation.

Key features of our platform include:

- **Privacy and security:** Survivors can report securely and confidentially or using a simple interface. These details will only be released to the police if a cluster is identified.
- **User Empowerment:** A "panic" button is embedded to protect privacy, and no post-submission edits are allowed to safeguard sensitive data.
- **Support Integration:** Links to support services and resources for survivors. Although our mission does not include support provision, we do think that sign posting to relevant services is essential.

We have been survivor led at every stage of our evolution and have formed a survivor group, led by one of our trustees with lived experience. The group was closely involved with the design of the platform, ensuring that it meets the needs of users. We have also worked with GDPR experts and the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to ensure that perpetrators can be legally named to the police when clusters are identified.

### **Project Phases and Outcomes**

Our project is being developed in three phases:

1. **Phase 1 – Pathfinder:** Testing a proof of concept with specialist partners and survivors, incorporating feedback from the survivor group to refine the platform.
2. **Phase 2 – Pilot:** Refining the platform in a pilot area with enhanced security and usability features, informed by ongoing collaboration with survivors and law enforcement.
3. **Phase 3 – Rollout:** Launch in England & Wales with adjustments based on user feedback and advisory recommendations.

### **Activities and Achievements during the year**

The trustees have been working on various sub-projects in support of the main aim and have achieved the following:

- Establishment of a Survivor group to guide the detailed construction (question flow) of the platform.
- Appointment of a highly experienced trustee responsible for technology.
- Review of legal and regulatory requirements applicable to data collection, storage and dissemination.
- Refinement of platform architecture to deal with the legal and regulatory requirements.
- Establishing links with the Police through the Hydrant Programme.

### **Trustees**

The charity was established on 19 March 2019 when the founding trustees were appointed. Limited activity took place during the pandemic.

Chitra Balakrishna, Trustee responsible for technology (Appointed 1 December 2023)

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

Geoff Benge, Founding Trustee (Appointed 19 March 2019)

James Kidwell, Trustee – Treasurer (Appointed 14 January 2022)

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

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 and the trustees are working with a software development company, based in Cambridge.

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: 67 Kingston Deverill, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 7HG

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 2024

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

#### Receipts and payments account

Year ended	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2024 £		31 March 2023 £	31 March 2023 £
	Unrestricted	Total		Unrestricted	Total
	Funds	Funds		Funds	Funds
<b>Receipts</b>					
Voluntary receipts	8,517	8,517		8,049	8,049
Total receipts	8,517	8,517		8,049	8,049
<b>Payments</b>					
Governance and administrative expenses	1,211	1,211		1,045	1,045
Promotional material costs and fund raising expenses	1,608	1,608		388	388
Web site	217	217		70	70
Total payments	3,306	3,306		1,503	1,503
<b>Excess of receipts over payments</b>	5,482	5,482		6,546	6,546
Bank account balance as at 31 March 2024 & 2023	12,028	12,028		6,546	6,546

#### Statement of Assets and Liabilities

As At:	31 March 2024 £	31 March 2024 £		31 March 2023 £	31 March 2023 £
	Unrestricted	Total		Unrestricted	Total
	Funds	Funds		Funds	Funds
<b>Cash Funds</b>					
Bank current account	12,028	12,028		6,546	6,546
<b>Total assets</b>	12,028	12,028		6,546	6,546
<b>Liabilities</b>	-	-		-	-
<b>Net assets available to the charity</b>	12,028	12,028		6,546	6,546