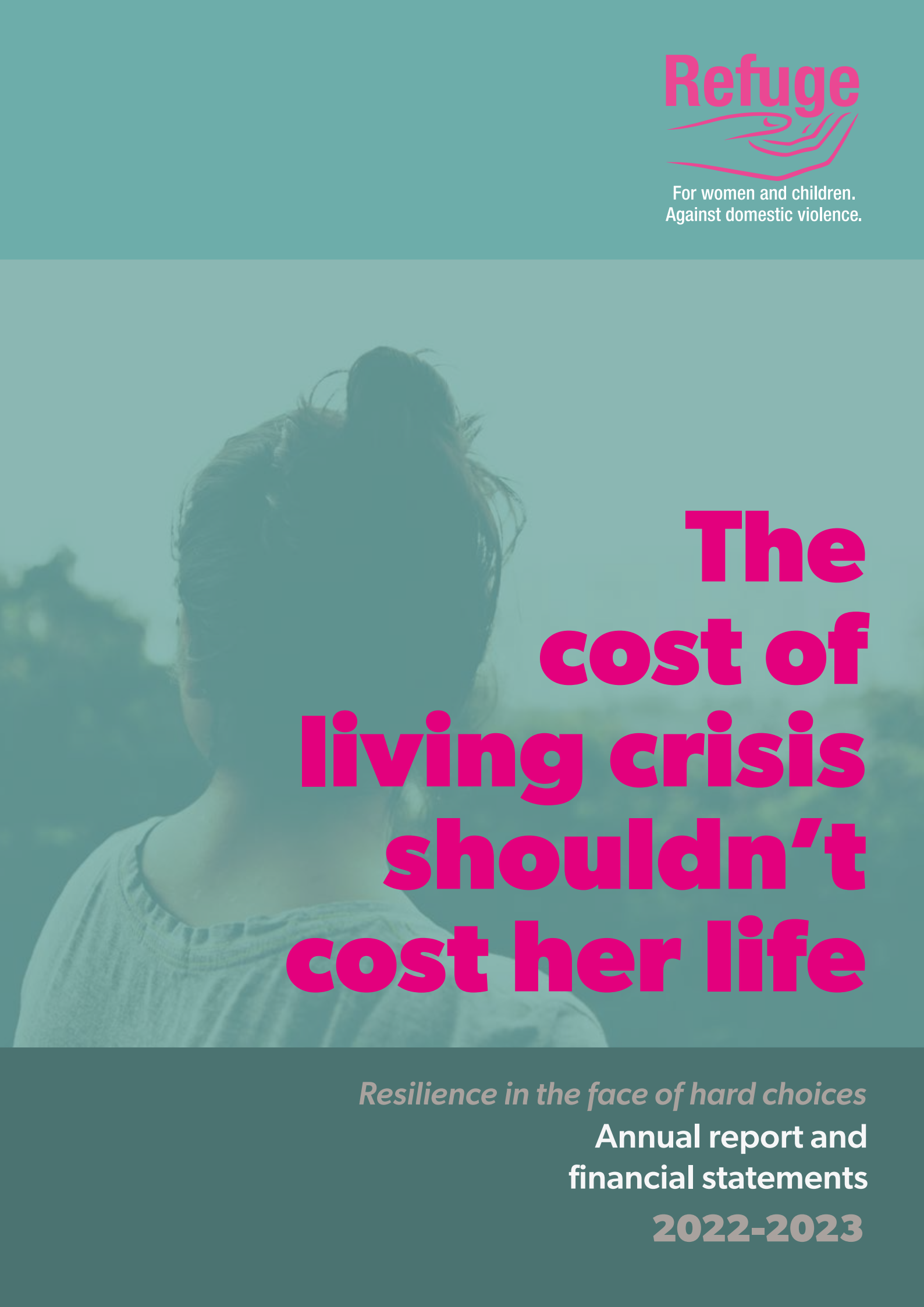




For women and children.
Against domestic violence.



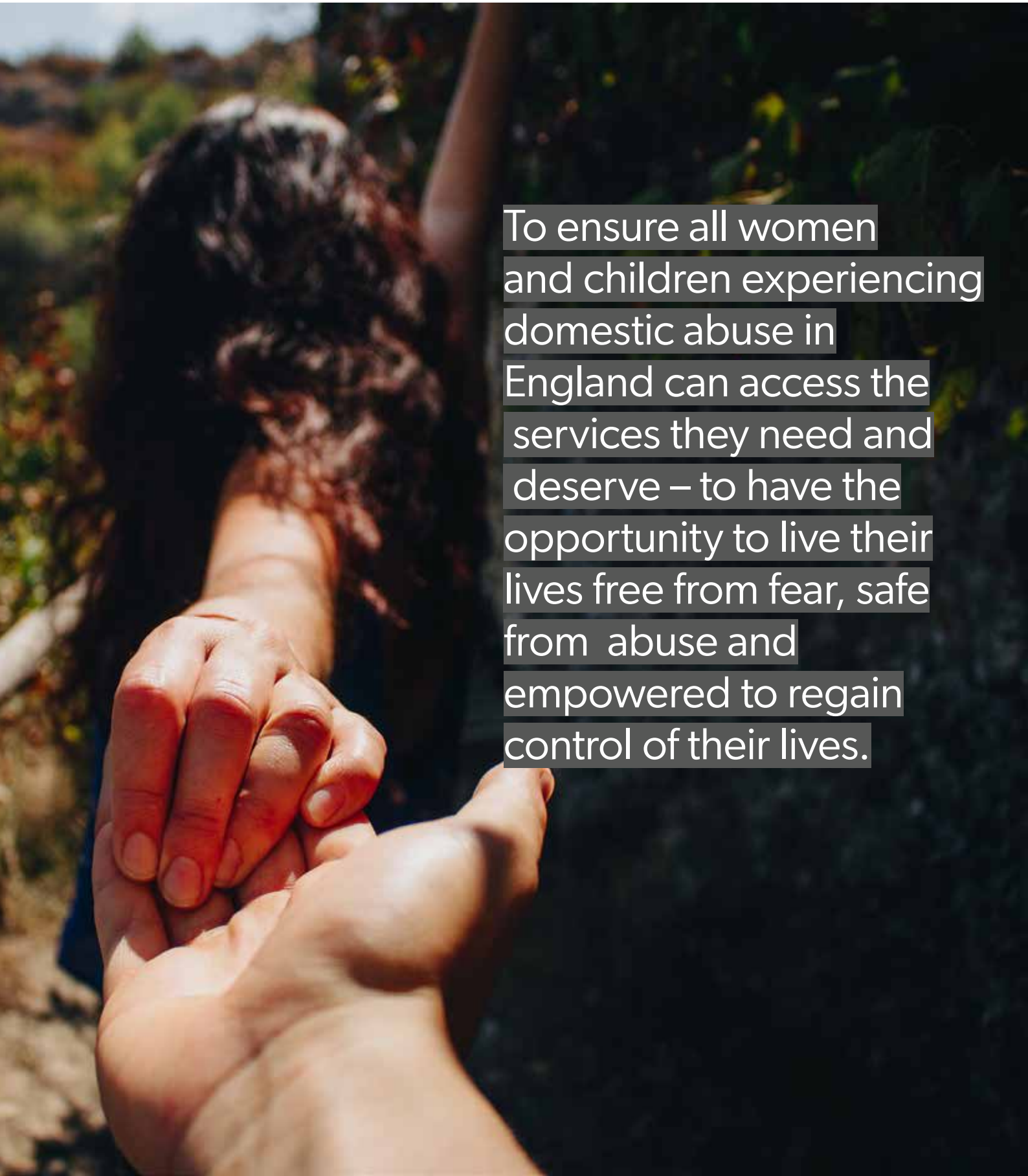
The cost of living crisis shouldn't cost her life

Resilience in the face of hard choices

**Annual report and
financial statements**

2022-2023

Our work this year



To ensure all women and children experiencing domestic abuse in England can access the services they need and deserve – to have the opportunity to live their lives free from fear, safe from abuse and empowered to regain control of their lives.

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What we've delivered this year
This wasn't the year we'd hoped for. It has been a huge test of resilience – for survivors, for Refuge and for our sector. The cost of living crisis, on the back of the COVID-19 pandemic, has brought additional pressures for everyone.

Women's options have diminished, with greater economic barriers making it even harder to leave an abuser.

We're tackling the triple impact of greater demand, increased costs and lower income. And, after years of economic and political turbulence, the wider support infrastructure that survivors depend on is diminishing.

Our staff and volunteers have a deep desire to be there for survivors. But they've been exhausted since the pandemic. The work of supporting more survivors to escape more complex abuse is straining our resources beyond their limits.

Looking ahead
We're now facing hard choices. Despite the growing demand, we will have to consolidate in the year ahead. But we remain persistently impatient. We will continue to provide the best quality services we can. That's what women need and deserve.
But we can't do it alone. Domestic abuse demands a response from the whole of society, not just services like ours. Until domestic abuse and violence against women and girls is no longer tolerated, Refuge will keep campaigning, collaborating and delivering the high-quality services that survivors should expect.

Why we're here

On average two women a week in England and Wales are killed by a current or former partner

Nearly 30% of women have experienced domestic abuse during their lifetime

Women and children approach us with different and often concurrent disadvantages

- 70% experienced psychological violence
- 51% experienced physical abuse
- 33% experienced economic abuse
- 32% experienced technology-facilitated abuse
- 28% had their lives threatened by their abuser
- 25% were injured when they accessed our services
- 22% experienced sexual violence
- 19% had mental health difficulties
- 13% said they were feeling suicidal by the time they approached us
- 11% disclosed needs related to prescription medication, 10% to drugs and 3% to alcohol
- 6% had no recourse to public funds
- 144 were victims of modern slavery

Every two minutes someone turns to Refuge for help

We supported 26,095 women and children
1,423 (5%) accessed our refuge provision
24,672 (95%) accessed our community-based services

51,952 people were supported by our National Domestic Abuse Helpline via phone, live chat, email and our British Sign Language interpretation service

75% were survivors of domestic abuse
10% were concerned friends, family members, neighbours or colleagues
8% were police, social workers, healthcare staff or other professionals

We maintained 314 units of safe accommodation within 44 refuges across 14 local authorities

We received 18,226 community-based referrals and 1,004 accommodation referrals
We supported survivors through the returning of 145 guilty verdicts for their perpetrators

We continued to improve women's safety and wellbeing at the point of leaving our service

99% felt confident they knew how to access help in future
97% said they were no longer living in fear
96% said they felt safer when they left our services
94% achieved the changes they wanted in their lives
94% said their quality of life had improved
76% were supported to find a safe new home (where this was a requested need)
49% reported an end to all abuse and controlling behaviour

Our supporters campaigned alongside us

180,669 actions were taken by our supporters
81 companies collaborated with us
10 celebrity ambassadors, 4 champions and 37 other celebrities and influencers raised awareness and support
7 survivor ambassadors and 8 members of our survivor panel campaigned for change alongside Refuge and many other survivors worked with us behind the scenes

Our social media content was seen 106 million times with:

96.4 million Twitter post impressions
4.5 million Facebook post impressions
2.3 million TikTok views
1.9 million Instagram post impressions
818,000 LinkedIn post impressions

Our funders helped us deliver more than we can with limited statutory funding alone. 18,934 people signed up to a fundraising event. We raised £8,475,881 in voluntary income. £111,072 of gifts in kind and pro bono services were donated by partners. We spent 85p in every £1 on our life-changing frontline services and surrounding costs.



Why we're here



Message from our chair Hetti Barkworth-Nanton

This wasn't the year we'd hoped for

Supporting survivors of domestic abuse is difficult and traumatic work. In recent years it has become more challenging and more complex. Perpetrators are using economic and technology-facilitated abuse to control women in more pervasive ways. Commissioners and other service providers are trying to meet local need in a context of ongoing austerity. Women are facing domestic abuse alongside housing, health, mental health and immigration disadvantages. Our frontline workers are trying to support women in the absence of adequate wrap-around services.

Our work has become even harder

The cost of living crisis has brought additional pressures for survivors, our sector and our services. Women's options have diminished, with greater economic barriers making it even harder to leave an abuser. We're responding to many more complex cases.

And this increased demand coincides with our own cost challenges, with funding pressures for those who commission our services, and with real constraints on the generosity of our donors.

The year of recovery, stability and growth we needed didn't happen

In the face of these challenges, our staff and volunteers continue to show a passionate and authentic determination to be there for women and children who need our help. Our supporters continue to show incredible commitment to raising funds and boosting public awareness. Our work stands out because of this deeply ingrained, shared desire to listen to, believe and empower survivors as they rebuild their lives.

I'm immensely proud of the whole Refuge team

This year our staff and volunteers have grown the scale and quality of our services. They've amplified our voice with more active, impactful campaigns. They've engaged and secured the commitment of our amazing donors and supporters. And they've transformed how we work, focusing on our culture, values and behaviours to get closer to the diverse and inclusive organisation we need to be. While we know we're learning, and we won't always get it right, I am proud to see people in our teams stepping up, speaking up, and supporting each other.

We are better together

Our partnerships are strengthening us and the wider sector. This year, more than ever, it's rare that we campaign, influence or shape our services without collaborating. By learning together, we've found ways to innovate and raise quality

across our services. Our work with organisations created by and for the communities of survivors they serve, many of which struggle to secure statutory funding, has extended our reach. Together, despite the economic and political turbulence our sector is facing, we're maintaining momentum in our collective call for policies designed to prevent domestic abuse and for legislation that gives survivors greater protection.

Survivors are our inspiration

This year has been a huge test of resilience – for survivors, for Refuge, and for our sector. But we remain persistently impatient. Until domestic abuse and violence against women and girls is no longer tolerated, Refuge will keep campaigning, collaborating and delivering the high-quality services that survivors deserve

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Why we're here



Message from our chief executive Ruth Davison

The cost of living crisis is costing lives

This year, the cost of living crisis is having a catastrophic impact on survivors. And it's affecting our teams as well as the women and children we serve. Our staff and volunteers are tired. They've been exhausted since the pandemic. The work of supporting more survivors to escape more complex abuse is straining our resources beyond their limits.

Refuge is working within a broken ecosystem

We're tackling the triple impact of greater demand, increased costs and lower income. And the vital support that survivors depend on – decent mental health services, a functioning NHS, consistent social services, a trustworthy police service, accessible family courts – are just not working.

When women and children are fleeing domestic abuse, they need high-quality services. They need to feel immediately safe. They require expert support with the multiple forms of abuse that survivors are increasingly subjected to by perpetrators. Refuge does difficult work and we're used to working in crisis. But we're trying to function in a broken ecosystem, we're overstretched, and we've never been needed more.

Despite how busy and traumatic our employees' job are, we are hopeful that we're seeing the positive impact of investment we've been able to make in recent years. In our recent employee survey, our staff reported levels of engagement higher than typical for not-for-profit organisations, with 90% proud to work at Refuge.

We know there is more to do. A critical priority is helping our colleagues reach a better work-life balance, especially when their values and commitment drive them to fill the gaps left by the failings in other services.

We continue to be there for survivors

We've raised the quality of our services, opening a new, trauma-informed refuge in London and developing new ways of providing safe accommodation in Warwickshire. And we're working in partnership with 'by and for' organisations across London to co-ordinate services that reach women within specific communities. We're setting new standards that offer choice and dignity to more women and their families.

We've maintained our focus on prevention, influencing policy and legislation. This year we joined with the young, survivor-led campaign #MakeItMandatory to urge the government to make education on domestic abuse and coercive behaviour mandatory in post-16 education. And, as the only specialist service working on technology-facilitated abuse, we've collaborated with other expert organisations to call for amendments to the Online Safety Bill, creating a Code of Practice to hold tech companies to account.

Alongside Women's Aid, we've supported Latin American Women's Aid in securing a landmark High Court ruling that a woman should not be served court papers at her refuge or be required to provide a refuge address to court. These practices disproportionately impacted migrant women and endangered families in need of safe refuge.

We've found greater strength and confidence in our voice this year, influencing debate through creative, memorable, high-impact stunts alongside our media presence and discussions with public bodies.

We're facing harder choices

In recent years we've plugged gaps, developed our expertise and delivered services in response to what women and children need. We've expanded the specialist and community-based services that 95% of survivors call upon, relying on short-term funding from cash-strapped commissioners and private donors. We're now facing hard choices. Despite the growing demand, we will have to consolidate in the year ahead.

“Refuge does difficult work. And we're used to working in crisis. But we're trying to function in a broken ecosystem, we're overstretched, and we've never been needed more.”

We will continue to provide the best quality services we can. That's what women need and deserve. But we can't do it alone. Domestic abuse demands a response from the whole of society, not just services like ours.

We need your continued support

Join us in campaigning for statutory funding for the community-based services that are a lifeline for the majority of survivors. Join us in our recommendation that local authorities, the criminal justice system and health services work together to commission specialist community-based services at a level that meets local need. Join us in calling for a strengthened legislation that prioritises survivors' needs and recognises the seriousness of the crimes committed against them.

We will continue to provide the best quality services we can. That's what women need and deserve. But we can't do it alone. Domestic abuse demands a response from the whole of society, not just services like ours. Together we need to secure the will, the resources and the commitment to eradicate domestic abuse.

R Davison



Why we're here



Message from our director of people & culture

Lornette Pemberton

People who work for Refuge go above and beyond

We know that our staff and volunteers are exceptional people. Some are survivors themselves. All have a deep desire to be there for others. And we know that the demands of their work, especially on the frontline, are difficult to balance. Our people carry the true cost in their workloads and, sometimes, in their wellbeing.

We've faced this challenge for many years. As a sector, we're one of the most underfunded and under supported. There are hard limits on what we can invest. That's why our 2022-25 strategic plan is supported by a budget that focuses on the objectives that underpin our work: leadership, behaviours and culture; infrastructure, systems and processes; survivors' voice and safeguarding; funding and support.

Our people should feel respected, valued and safe

We know our people often feel stretched beyond capacity. And we know it can be hard to raise concerns when everyone feels this way. Tackling this issue has been the focus of our work in recent years. We're doing more to listen. And we're practising different ways to enable our people to speak up about their concerns.

In Autumn 2022, we ran our employee engagement survey. Having run it previously in 2019, we looked for changes in people's experiences. And we were pleased to see some of the biggest improvements:

- Over 20% more of our staff believe we will take action on the survey, compared with 2019.
- Around 15% more observe senior leaders making an effort to listen and providing a clear vision of our direction.
- Around 90% of our staff – 10% more than 2019 – say they are proud to work for Refuge and want to do the best work they can.

We've also learned more about how our staff are experiencing the extraordinary challenges we've faced since 2019:

- The number of staff who feel they can comfortably cope with their workload, or strike the right balance between work and homelife, has dropped by over 10%.
- The number who feel communications are good between different teams has dropped by 10%.
- The number who feel their manager takes time to coach and develop them has dropped by 6%.

We're learning by listening

Our employee engagement survey is just one of the ways we've been listening and gathering feedback from our staff and volunteers. What we're learning has helped us shape our action plan for ongoing improvement.

A clear concern is workload management. In response, we've initiated full reviews of our casework policies and practices, our on-call procedures and guidelines, and our recruitment and retention processes.

We are also experimenting with how we communicate across Refuge, looking for better ways to connect across teams, support managers, use our platforms, and share information without overloading people. And we're providing regular reminders of how people can voice their views and concerns.

Our managers play a vital role in setting expectations for our people and checking in on what they need, reminding staff and volunteers of the support, wellbeing and communication channels open to them. We're providing our managers with greater support, guidance, learning and development.

And we're investing in a survivor engagement team that is supporting survivors to have their voice heard, influence change and improve our services. Our journey towards the culture we want for Refuge is underway. You can learn more about our progress later in this report.

“Our people have a deep desire to be there for survivors. And this year they've often felt stretched beyond capacity. It can be hard to raise concerns when everyone feels this way.

We're doing more to listen. And we're finding new ways for people to speak up.

Abigail's* story

“Simply put – I wouldn't have been able to leave my abuser if this cost of living crisis was happening when I was trying to flee ten years ago. I felt trapped as it was. One of the elements of abuse he used against me was financial. Alongside the physical and emotional abuse, this economic abuse had a big impact when it came to leaving, he controlled everything.

When you find the courage to leave it's not easy and it's so frustrating when the system lets you down – this cost of living crisis is still impacting me. I was left in thousands of pounds of debt from my abuse after I fled, which I've finally paid off, but it took years. With the economy as it is now, I know I wouldn't ever have been able to pay that debt back. I would've been forced to stay with him.



What we've delivered this year

Our strategic priorities 2022-2025

We continue to provide the best quality services we can



That's what women need and deserve. And when we combine this with influencing policy, mobilising the public and working in partnership, we have the best chance of achieving real change for survivors.

OUR VISION

Refuge is committed to a world where domestic abuse and violence against women and girls is not tolerated and where women and children can live in safety.

Refuge believes that domestic abuse and violence against women will only end when we create gender equality.

OUR MISSION

We aim to empower women and children to rebuild their lives, free from violence and fear.

We provide a range of life saving and life changing services. We put the experiences of survivors at the heart of our work and help amplify their voices.



Our strategic priorities

1. Provide emergency specialist accommodation, community-based and specialist support services.

By 2025 we will:

- Build foundations that allow us deliver, and measure, high quality, high impact services.
- Continue to respond to emergent need, and to pioneer new services where they are required.
- Develop services that support children and young people.

2. Deliver high quality services and set quality standards for domestic abuse services.

By 2025 we will:

- Remain the leading specialist organisation addressing domestic abuse.
- Increase the quality, scale, and range of properties we are able to offer survivors.
- Continue to develop and evolve our sector-leading specialist tech and economic abuse services.
- Review and develop quality standards that allow us to improve how we measure our impact.

3. Drive policy change to ensure sustainability of domestic abuse services.

By 2025 we will:

- Amplify the voices of our survivors and use our data and expertise to advocate for changes to policy, practice, and legislation that will better address domestic abuse.
- Help prevent domestic abuse by raising awareness of the different manifestations.

4. Prevent violence against women and girls through awareness raising and changing harmful and pervasive societal attitudes.

By 2025 we will:

- Mobilise the public to raise awareness, financial resources, and create real change through public campaigns.
- Challenge and change societal norms by growing our feminist movement.
- Drive culture change which in turn leads to policy change.
- Ensure as many women as possible know how to access our specialist services.

5. Build partnerships to share and grow our expertise and expand our impact.

By 2025 we will:

- Work with local commissioners to support commissioning practice and expand our service offer.
- Form national and local partnerships and alliances to upscale our impact and provide thought leadership to develop and improve sector responses in emerging areas of work.
- Advocate for sustainable, ringfenced funding for long term service provision.

What we've delivered this year

Priority 1 Provide emergency specialist accommodation, community-based and specialist support services

Our National Domestic Abuse Helpline

Nearly 40,000 women turned to our National Domestic Abuse Helpline this year

When women contact us, they can expect expert support delivered by a dedicated team of helpline advisors and highly trained volunteers. We validate women's experiences. We empower them with information about their rights and options. We help them to plan for their next steps.

Although demand has reduced since the height of the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, it remains high. We've continued to develop tailored pathways for callers, backed up with briefings, protocols and training, so we can respond to women with different needs in different ways. And we've increased our capability around complex, technology-facilitated abuse by recruiting a dedicated tech lead to provide expert support and build our team's capacity and knowledge.

Survivors and supporters have shared their valuable insights on the design of our new look website. Easy to navigate and mobile friendly, it makes it easy for survivors and supporters to get the information they need, when they need it. Features like the 'quick escape' button and browser history clearing are vital for women whose devices may be monitored by their perpetrator.

We were shortlisted for Helplines Partnership's Helpline of the Year award, recognising our commitment to best practice, our dedication to survivors, our thriving teams and our effective processes.



Contact us online ^

Chat to us live
Open Monday – Friday, 3pm – 10pm

Support in BSL
Open Monday – Friday, 10am – 6pm

Send us a message



Our safe accommodation

1,423 women needed the safety of one of our refuges

Many survivors of abuse need support to leave their home to escape violence. These women, and their children, need a place of safety from which to make decisions about their futures. This year we've opened a new refuge in Lambeth, adding five units of safe accommodation and expanding our specialist services for Black, African, Caribbean and Black British women and children. And by joining an extensive network of specialist services, we're helping the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham provide discrete support and accommodation.

With local councils and our partners across the sector, we're also expanding and tailoring our support to reach survivors living in other types of safe accommodation. We're working with Warwickshire County Council to develop a best practice model of dispersed safe accommodation, providing 36 units across two years in each of the county's five districts and boroughs.

As a lead partner in the Ascent Pan-London Floating Support Service, we're collaborating with ten other specialist domestic abuse organisations, many of which are led by and for the communities they serve. Our partnership delivers trauma-informed, wrap-around, survivor-led support for those in safe accommodation for whom refuge accommodation is not suitable. This can include single-sex temporary accommodation, a property not known to a survivor's perpetrator, or one where a sanctuary scheme has been put in place to provide additional security measures and support. We're also delivering resettlement support to survivors moving on from refuge accommodation.

We welcomed the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' announcement, in December 2022, of £257 million council funding across two years for emergency accommodation for survivors of domestic abuse. However, it is estimated that £181 million per year is needed to ensure this lifesaving support can be accessed by everyone who needs it. Without long-term, ringfenced funding, many women and children remain at risk.

“ This refuge is a magic house. My refuge workers are my superheroes, they are my safeguards, angels. Without them, I never would be who I am today.

Now I am confident, happy. I know I can stay on my own with my boys. They did everything to make our life good. Without them, I never would be who I am now. Without the police who helped to make the first step I never would imagine that places like this exist.

For all this I will thank you for all my life.

Survivor of domestic abuse

What we've delivered this year



1 in 3 women

Have experienced online abuse in their lives.

Our community-based services

24,672 women chose to access our community-based support

We are widely known for opening the world's first refuge in 1971, a time when society didn't recognise the problem we were working to remove. In the decades since, our work has changed in response to the new and different methods abusers adopt to exert control and coercion. Of the thousands of women we support every day, many experience multiple forms of abuse, from physical violence to technology-facilitated abuse, economic abuse and coercive control. Not all want or need to flee to a refuge.

Around 95% of survivors decided to stay where they are and access support to recover and rebuild their lives. Our community-based services are delivered through specialist roles including outreach workers, Independent Domestic Violence Advocates, Independent Gender-based Violence Advocates, and Young Person Advocates.

Depending on survivors' needs, our community-based services help women to:

- understand the dynamics of domestic abuse, including technology-facilitated and economic abuse
- build self-confidence and independence and reconnect with their support network
- develop a safety plan or find safe accommodation
- improve the safety of child contact arrangements
- secure tech devices and protect their location
- access benefits and debt advice, budget and pay bills
- communicate with police, civil and criminal justice practitioners, and attend court
- access healthcare services or social care services for children
- access professional training, education or employment
- access immigration advice and support.



Our specialist services

In just one year, the number of new survivors supported by our community-based services has increased by 10%

Our frontline community-based workers are supporting many more survivors experiencing multiple forms of intersecting abuse alongside housing, immigration and mental health needs. And they're seeing a growing combination of economic and technology-facilitated abuse used by perpetrators to control survivors.

Economic abuse involves restricting a person's ability to acquire, use and maintain money. Experienced by one in six adults in the UK, this can include behaviour such as stopping them from working, taking their money, preventing them from accessing their own or joint bank accounts, or putting debts in their name.

Technology-facilitated abuse involves using online platforms and devices to control, coerce and abuse. Experienced by one in three UK women, it includes online harassment, location tracking, sharing and threatening to share intimate images without consent.

We're responding on a number of fronts to ensure we reach more survivors. We've enhanced our Tech Safety website, translating it into Urdu and adding support and guidance around economic abuse. And we've secured funding to deliver specialist training to our partners across our sector.

Lisa's* story

Lisa escaped an abusive partner after enduring nine months of gaslighting, controlling behaviour, rape threats, stalking, physical violence and financial and verbal abuse. The abuse continued after the end of their relationship, and Lisa's ex-partner also began to stalk her online. After staying in a refuge, Lisa now has her own home. She shared her experience as part of Refuge's campaigning work on the cost of living crisis:

“ The cost of living crisis is suffocating and extremely restrictive. I've managed to put myself in a situation where my money is mine to use. No one else is meant to have a say in how I can spend it, but I feel like I've gone back to when I wasn't allowed to buy something as a treat or go to lunch with my mum or buy new clothes without asking permission.

I feel like I'm trying so hard to keep my head above water. I can't afford to slip down the slope into debt but it's like I don't have much choice in the matter. I'm fighting for control over something that is meant to be in my control anyway.

What we've delivered this year

Priority 2

Deliver high quality services and set quality standards for domestic abuse services

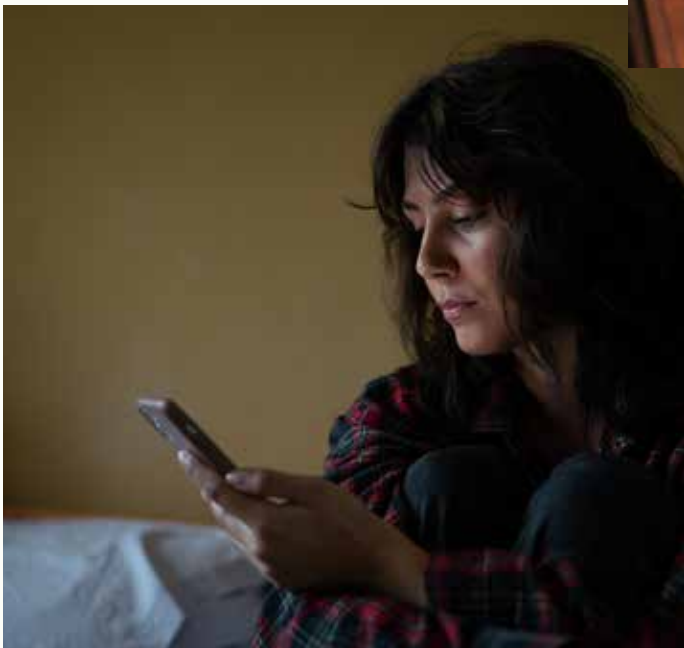
Giving survivors the service they deserve

We're here so all women and children can access the services they need and deserve

Our challenge is to deliver this, on limited resources, as demand grows in scale and complexity. And that challenge requires us to continuously review our policies, processes and measures of performance.

This year we've established accommodation standards that clarify landlords' responsibilities. We've developed a pet policy as part of our best practice model of dispersed accommodation in Warwickshire. We're revisiting our performance measures to reflect emerging operational trends post-COVID-19. And we've initiated a review of our on-call processes.

We're doing even more to deliver our services alongside others in our sector, partnering with organisations created by and for the communities they serve, including D/deaf and disabled, LGBTQ+, Black, Asian and migrant survivors. Despite their transformative reach, 'by and for' services are six times less likely to receive statutory funding than other domestic abuse services, locking minoritised women out of support¹.



Supporting children and young people

Children are now recognised as victims and survivors of domestic abuse in their own right

But there is still no statutory provision for them. We want to demonstrate what it looks like to provide children with high-quality, dedicated services. This year our newly appointed programme lead has initiated a review of our children's casework and support, data collection processes, outcomes and impact. We've set up a group to inform our change and fundraising efforts across Refuge. And, with our children support workers, we've established a peer support forum and best practice guidance.

Tackling intersecting forms of abuse

Tech abuse and economic abuse often go hand in hand

Our technology-facilitated abuse and economic empowerment service saw a 39% increase in demand between September 2022 and February 2023, compared to the same period last year. Maintaining a response to this increasing, intersectional abuse tests the resources across our sector.

As the only specialist service working on technology-facilitated abuse, our team is committed to an ongoing programme of measuring its scale and impact. And we're currently reviewing how we extend our services and generate much needed income by offering our expertise to public bodies and commissioners. With our board of trustees, we continue to develop our tech and economic strategy and map our partnership relationships, so we can do more together.

Natalie's* story

When Natalie met her ex-partner Jake, their relationship moved quickly and within six months he had moved in with her. From then, Jake subjected Natalie to physical and economic abuse and coercive control.

He isolated Natalie from her friends and family, cutting her off from her support network. He racked up thousands of pounds of debt in Natalie's name by coercing her to be a guarantor for a loan he took out and getting multiple pay day loans in her name. He also forced Natalie to be the sole provider by refusing to work. Natalie was once forced to sell some jewellery so they had enough to eat.

Following a violent incident Natalie was pointed in the direction of Refuge, where she was supported by our Advocacy service and had fantastic support from her Independent Gender Violence Advocate, Jenny*.

“Jenny was without a doubt the reason I was able to get help with all aspects of my abusive relationship. She gave me medical, economic and physical support and I wouldn't have gotten any of these without her – she pointed me in the direction of every single one of them. She came with me to court and without her I would have been totally alone.

What we've delivered this year

Priority 3

Drive policy change to ensure sustainability of domestic abuse services

The rising cost of living

The cost of living shouldn't cost her life

Finances often act as a barrier to leaving an abuser. Survivors can find themselves facing the choice between homelessness and poverty or staying with a perpetrator. Throughout this year we've sounded the alarm on the increased impact the cost of living crisis is having on survivors fleeing abuse.

With new data from our frontline staff revealing the full impact of the crises, in November 2022 we called on the government to make critical interventions within its budget statement: to urgently reform the benefit system and to create a specialist fund.

Relieved that the Chancellor decided to raise Universal Credit and other benefits in line with inflation, we were disappointed that women had to wait until April 2023 to receive this vital financial support. And the Home Office's pilot emergency fund of £300,000 to support one-off payments ran out in only a few days.

In our survey of our frontline workers:

77% reported that many women could not afford to leave their abusers
58% said survivors could not afford enough food for themselves and their children
50% reported that the cost of living crisis is leading survivors to return to their abusers

Victims and Prisoners Bill

Our response to vital and long-overdue legislation

This year we've called relentlessly for a strengthening of the Victims and Prisoners Bill. We influenced the Justice Committee's recommendations for radical changes to reflect and resource the needs of survivors of domestic abuse and violence against women and girls (VAWG). Our number one call is for the prioritising and funding of the community-based services that best reflect 95% of survivors' needs.

We are also calling for mandatory, trauma-informed training for police officers, judges and court staff around the dynamics of domestic abuse and VAWG. And we are also supporting 'by and for' organisations in their campaign for a firewall between the police and Immigration Enforcement for migrant survivors – insecure immigration status should never be a barrier to accessing support.



Technology-facilitated abuse

Online spaces continue to fail women and girls

Last year, in our Unsocial Spaces research, we reported that one in three UK women have experienced online abuse or harassment, perpetrated on social media. 14% of survivors reported non-consensual sharing of intimate images and 13% had experienced threats to share images, a criminal offence in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. This year, our freedom of information request to 43 police forces in England and Wales showed that charging rates remain woefully low at 4% of offences recorded. With police forces and technology platforms failing to respond to this crisis, we've kept our focus on the Online Safety Bill, calling for amendments that protect women and girls.

Our report Marked As Unsafe held the spotlight on online content reporting and moderation. With the insights of our pioneering tech-facilitated abuse team and detailed evidence from seventeen survivors, we revealed that the majority of women reporting abusive content do not receive a response from the most commonly used platforms, let alone the support and protection they need.

In partnership with other VAWG charities, campaigners and academics, in May 2022 we published the draft Code of Practice that we believe should be mandated within the Bill. Our Code shows technology companies how they can prioritise, invest in and design for women's and girls' safety. In November we urged the government's use of the Code to give VAWG the same level of priority reflected in the mandatory Codes on terrorism and on child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Throughout the year we've called on the government to make two simple changes to ensure the Bill delivers for survivors of domestic abuse. We are pleased that the Secretary of State listened to our recommendation to include controlling or coercive behaviour in the list of priority offences in the Bill, requiring technology companies to both address and prevent coercive control from occurring on their platforms. We remain concerned that the government is still overlooking the urgent need for a specific VAWG Code of Practice, and we continue our call that its regulator Ofcom should take ownership of the guidance that technology companies clearly need.



What we've delivered this year



Economic abuse

Vulnerable customers need better support

Given the rise in online banking methods over recent years, economic abuse and tech abuse are becoming increasingly intertwined. Our specialist team saw a 39% increase in demand between September 2022 and February 2023, compared to the same period last year. In partnership with The Co-operative Bank, we've shared with the banking sector what we've learned from survivors and from our work with the Online Banking Commission. Most banks subsequently opted to raise public awareness of economic abuse and improve the support they offer to customers who are survivors by adopting our two key recommendations:

1. Introduce a safe online tool so survivors can contact their bank to request support from their vulnerable customer support team in relation to economic abuse.
2. Ensure that this tool is accompanied by appropriate signposting to tech abuse advice and support from specialist domestic abuse organisations, given the high coincidence of tech and economic abuse.



“Despite me earning more than twice his monthly salary, my partner refused to put my name on a utility bill which prevented me from acquiring my own bank account. As a result, my wages were deposited into his account for which he did not provide me with the passwords. I would later discover that he spent the majority of my earnings without my knowledge or consent.
Rachel*



Responses and evidence

Sharing our insights and expertise

We've submitted 29 consultation responses and evidence submissions this year on a wide range of policy areas including children's social care, the legal aid means test, the social housing rent cap and police VAWG action plans. And we've won the case for changes to statutory guidance, codes of practice and sentence guidelines.

Police accountability

Calling for a police service women can trust

A significant proportion of our consultation responses this year have related to issues across the police service. We've influenced the College of Policing guidance on misconduct and violence against women and girls. We've reported on the woefully low charging rates for intimate image offences. And we've boldly challenged police perpetrated abuse and misogyny following the crimes of David Carrick and other police officers.

The findings of the Baroness Casey Review, that the Metropolitan Police is institutionally misogynistic, racist and homophobic, resonated with our own insights on the number of times women disclosed that their perpetrators were police officers. We welcomed her findings and continue to campaign for their full implementation.

Our survivor panel

Amplifying survivors' voices

This year we've strengthened our policy and campaigning work by forming a panel of survivors and former Refuge service users. Passionate about improving policy responses to domestic abuse and violence against women and girls, members of our survivor panel influence our advocacy work and share their experiences directly with policymakers.



What we've delivered this year

Priority 4

Prevent violence against women and girls through awareness raising and changing harmful and pervasive societal attitudes

Shining the spotlight

Helping more women spot the signs of abuse

The media is a vital ally. Domestic abuse is becoming more complex and increasingly multidimensional. Many women endure abuse, in one or more of its forms, managing their own behaviour for fear of how their perpetrator will react. By working with media channels, we can get our message out to as many people as possible – women and men – on what abuse is and the help that's available to escape and survive it.

This year Refuge has been mentioned in almost 9,500 articles, reaching an estimated readership of just under 180 billion. Our chief executive Ruth Davison has been mentioned just under 2,000 times, getting our message across to an estimated 20 billion readers. We've proactively placed over 900 articles.



Domestic violence charity Refuge 'increasingly concerned' by 'misogynistic and abusive behaviours' on Love Island



Domestic abuse charity urges government to stop cash machine closures to protect victims



Campaign to end coercive control - 'We must teach all 16 to 19-year-olds'

A domestic abuse survivor has called on the Education Secretary to make lessons about coercive control mandatory in sixth forms and colleges. University student Faustine Petron, 22, wants to see all women and girls feel safe at home. She has joined forces with women's charity Refuge to urge officials to make lessons on domestic abuse compulsory in post-16 education.



“This is not one bad apple. This is a systemic problem across policing. Unless radical change to the way the policing system works across the country happens immediately, then women and girls will remain unsafe, and they will not have the confidence to come forward and report the violent crimes committed against them.
Ruth Davison, Refuge CEO.

How many more bad apples?

Calling out a trust-destroying culture

Police services across the country have found themselves in the media spotlight throughout this year. Scrutinised by Baroness Casey's review of the Metropolitan Police, and by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services' inspection into vetting, misconduct and misogyny across the police service, a culture of misogyny, sexism and predatory behaviour towards women has been exposed. This systemic problem has been underlined with horrific accounts of gender-based crimes committed by individual officers and the collusion of their colleagues.

Alongside the underfunding and under-resourcing of public protection, which includes domestic abuse, stalking, rape and sexual offences, this culture poses a serious threat to public trust. In 2021-2022, only 14.4% of women who had experienced abuse perpetrated by a partner told the police¹. It is vital that women's trust is restored if they are to feel safe and confident to report the violent crimes they experience.

As the extent of this issue emerged, we responded frequently and forthrightly, calling for unequivocal commitment to radical reform of the culture and practices across the police and a zero-tolerance policy of violent misogyny. We were also working on our frontline, noting the number of times women disclosed that their perpetrators were police officers and providing extra support on how to report safely.

With growing confidence in staging high-impact, awareness-raising stunts, we placed 1,071 rotten apples outside New Scotland Yard, drawing the country's attention to the number of Metropolitan Police officers under investigation for allegations of domestic abuse or violence against women and girls.

We also launched an open letter to Home Secretary Suella Braverman, signed by over 20,000 supporters, demanding mandatory suspension pending investigation for all officers and staff accused of VAWG, better training and improved vetting and disciplinary procedures.



What we've delivered this year

#MakeltMandatory

Giving young people the knowledge they need to protect themselves

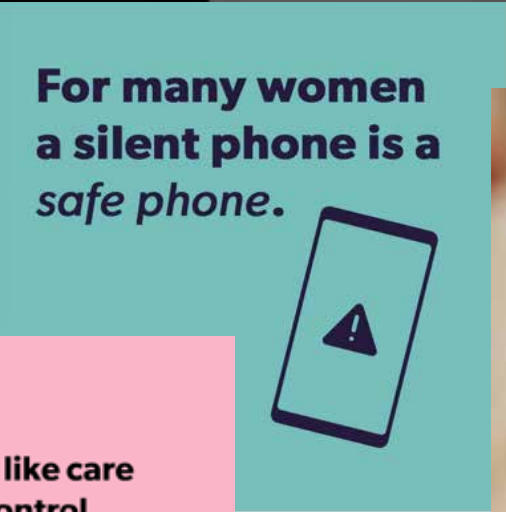
In September 2022 we joined with survivor and #MakeltMandatory campaigner Faustine Petron to urge the government to make mandatory post-16 education on domestic abuse and controlling or coercive behaviour.

In February 2023 we joined Faustine and her campaigners in delivering 90,000 petition signatures to Number 10 Downing Street. And we launched an email campaign, urging the Secretary of State to join us in discussing how the government can plug the legislative gap that leaves young people in sixth form and education colleges vulnerable.

The cost of living crisis shouldn't cost her life

Calling for crisis funding

Throughout this year we've alerted the government to the increased impact the cost of living crisis is having on survivors fleeing abuse. We engaged the public in this call, asking them to urge the Chancellor and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to increase Universal Credit and other benefits. And we asked our supporters for financial help to cope with our rising costs at a time of greater need for our services.



The national Emergency Alerts test

Alerting women to secure their hidden phones

We knew that the national test of the Emergency Alerts service, at 3pm on Sunday 23 April, might place many women in greater danger. Secret phones could receive warning alerts, even if set to silent, revealing a survivor's hidden lifeline. In preparation, we shared step-by-step guidance on our website showing how to opt out of the emergency alert and secure a hidden phone. We raised awareness through our social channels and the media, reaching 15.6 billion viewers with 1,788 online and print articles via 476 outlets. And our practical video was viewed over 200,000 times and shared across multiple media outlets.



Campaign video launch with Georgia Harrison

Holding tech companies to account

As the Online Safety Bill appeared before Parliament for its second reading, TV personality and campaigner Georgia Harrison joined us in outlining the scale of intimate image abuse. Her video outlined the urgent change needed within the Bill to make social media companies bear more responsibility for protecting women and girls from online abuse by reacting quicker to reports of intimate image abuse.

“Having your intimate images shared without your consent is one of the most terrifying and violating things that can happen to you. Social media companies need to understand how scary it is, and they need to act faster to take images down.”

Georgia Harrison, TV personality and campaigner



What we've delivered this year

Priority 5

Build partnerships to share and grow our expertise and expand our impact

Stronger together

Forging alliances and partnerships

Our partnerships strengthen us and the wider sector. It's rare that we campaign, influence or shape our services without working with others. So, this year, we've recruited a head of sector alliances and partnerships to develop our strong, supportive relationships across the VAWG sector and beyond. This role will help us continue to collaborate to ensure women and children receive the specialist support they need, where they need it and when they need it most.

Learning together

Sharing insights and expertise

The work of our new head of sector alliances and partnerships enables us to do more by sharing complementary skills across our sector. The drafting of the VAWG Code of Practice for technology companies, published with other VAWG charities, campaigners and academics. The landmark High Court ruling against the servicing of court papers to women in refuges achieved by Latin American Women's Aid. Raising public awareness, in support of the #MakeItMandatory campaign, of the need for mandatory post-16 education on domestic abuse and coercive behaviour. Forging a partnership with Equation, a Nottingham based charity that specialises in supporting male victims of abuse. As a network, we're growing in expertise and influence.

Better together

Lifting standards and extending our reach

By working in partnership with other domestic abuse services we can offer choice and dignity to more women and children. As a lead partner in the Ascent Pan-London Floating Support Service, we're collaborating with ten other specialist domestic abuse organisations, many of whom are rooted in the communities they serve. Together we're delivering trauma-informed, wrap-around, survivor-led support for those in safe accommodation. This service is being run in addition to and alongside existing local services, to supplement and support current domestic abuse service provision.

Many of the partner organisations are already established in their communities and have links and referral pathways. In working together, we can help survivors of domestic abuse to create a life for themselves, free from fear and abuse.

Louder together

Raising long-term awareness and support

We marked International Women's Day by announcing our new, year-long partnership with The Independent. The news brand's rich history of campaigning makes them the perfect media partner at a time when awareness of domestic abuse, in its different forms, has never been needed more.



What we've delivered this year

Our supporting priorities

Leadership, behaviours and culture

Creating a high performing and diverse workforce

Our staff and volunteers go above and beyond. And we know they've faced another extremely tough year. Our employee engagement survey revealed the pride our people feel working for Refuge. It also refocused our attention on the cost they carry in striking the right balance between work and homelife.

We want to engage our people without overloading them even more. And we're still trying to find the right balance. We focus our monthly all-staff meetings on topics that concern everyone: our employee assistance programme, our employment engagement survey results, and our invitation to employees to speak up and share their views and experiences.

We also run 'Latte and learn' sessions, focusing on equality issues with input from other organisations representing the experiences and insights of a wide range of communities. Our chief executive Ruth Davison provides a weekly, Refuge-wide update. And we share progress in our monthly People & Culture newsletter.



We're learning from listening to our staff and volunteers. Our seven Equality Network Groups provide a safe space for staff to share their lived experiences and to challenge our organisation to do better. And our Staff Forum, with fifteen representatives, directly contributes to our policies around employee issues.

This year we reviewed our values, creating opportunities for everyone to contribute to make sure that our new values represent where Refuge stands today.

We've developed an organisation-wide performance management framework to encourage regular feedback and development conversations between managers and team members. And we've signed up to the VAWG sector anti-racism charter, adding our voice to the call for an end to the systemic marginalisation of Black and minoritised women.

We're making progress on our journey towards becoming a culture where everyone at Refuge feels respected, valued and safe. Our Respect, Inclusion and Belonging strategy and action plan will help us maintain a diverse team of incredible people and an inclusive culture that celebrates our diversity.



Good governance, impact and transparency

Improving our infrastructure, processes and systems

What we're learning from our people is helping us review and update our employment policies. Our pay and reward review has looked at grading, pay policy, salary benchmarking, and pay and non-pay rewards, including flexible working, enhanced family leave and other employee benefits.

We've refreshed our approach to induction and training, implementing a learning management system and an e-learning platform to make learning accessible to all, whatever their role or working pattern. And we now offer clinical supervision to all our people – staff and volunteers.

Like other organisations across our sector, we find that some of our roles are difficult to recruit to. The resulting challenge on service delivery and workload can negatively impact retention. We've initiated a review of our on-call arrangements across Refuge, piloting alternative service models to identify best-practice caseloads and working practices. We want Refuge to become an employer of choice.



What we've delivered this year

Survivors at the heart of our work

Engaging survivors and strengthening our safeguarding

This year we've created the role of survivor engagement lead. The team is tasked with developing new opportunities for survivors to raise awareness and influence policy and practice. However, we know many survivors face barriers to being directly involved in this work. We're tackling them by helping with expenses, holding hybrid meetings and using interpreters and accessible venues. We've also appointed a head of safeguarding to embed informed consent throughout our work.

We are grateful to every survivor who has partnered with us to bring about change.



Bryony's* story

Bryony shared her experience with officials at the London Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to inform their work to recommission domestic abuse services:

“ When talking with MOPAC I felt at ease and felt that I was able to share my story and views whilst being listened to. They were compassionate and I would happily work with them again in the future.

Influencing, collaborating, mobilising

Secure statutory funding

Organisations like ours need to be able to access secure, long-term funding to provide the high-quality safe accommodation and community-based services that domestic abuse survivors deserve. This year we secured £3.9 million of additional funding from our statutory partners. This enabled us to extend our services and provide better support by recruiting additional posts to reduce high caseloads for our frontline staff. Statutory Safe Accommodation Framework funding from the Greater London Authority and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime helped us deliver across London in a year when women faced increased financial challenges. It meant we could achieve best-practice caseloads of four clients per refuge worker across our London refuges. It gave us the resources we needed to recruit Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs), housing IDVAs and community engagement workers to help survivors access greater security in their own homes, as well as education, volunteering and employment opportunities. It enabled us to open a new refuge as part of our specialist service for Black African and Caribbean women in Lambeth. And it powered our partnership with ten other specialist domestic abuse organisations to deliver the trauma-informed, wrap-around, survivor-led Ascent Pan-London Floating Support Service.

Ministry of Justice funding for our services in Warwickshire, Derby and Hertfordshire equipped us to resource specialist roles to support our community-based services. This funding, committed to March 2025, means we can support women going through family courts or those facing multiple disadvantages.

Enthusiastic, dedicated supporters

From individuals to communities, we depend on the goodwill of thousands of supporters to maintain our services. We grew our email list to over 200,000 this year and recruited 1,627 new monthly givers with a projected four-year value of over £733,000. With two London Marathons this year, two incredible teams of runners raised £121,000. In our first-ever overseas challenge, fifteen people trekked the Himalayas, raising £54,000. All over the UK, supporters ran, walked, cycled, swam and skydived. Others signed up in their thousands to join our programme of virtual challenges, raising an amazing £1 million through everything from sporting events to crochet. And communities raised over £515,000 through yoga challenges, head shaves, live streams, 90s fancy dress discos and many more creative events.



What we've delivered this year

Avon

2023 marks fifteen years of our partnership with Avon and we are incredibly grateful for their longstanding commitment. Together we've collaborated on campaigns, set up volunteering opportunities, educated others on the signs of domestic abuse and raised funds. Since January 2022, Avon has donated £110,000 through grants, employee fundraising and product sales profits, boosted by £26,000 gift-in-kind donations.

Barclays

Barclays continued to provide vital support for our technology-facilitated abuse and economic empowerment team, as well as providing advertising space in 312 of their branches and on 2,150 ATMs to help publicise our Helpline. We are proud that our work together this year led to us to win a 'Highly Commended' in the Banks and Financial Services category of the Business Charity Awards in May 2023. We are excited to continue our partnership together.

The Co-operative Bank

The Co-operative Bank's tireless fundraising continues to support our specialist technology-facilitated abuse and economic abuse services. As part of their 150th anniversary celebrations, they donated an additional £23,000 at a time when Refuge and survivors were heavily impacted by the cost of living crisis. We are proud to deepen this partnership, year on year, and to tackle economic abuse together.



The Tech Lending Community Fund

Supported and administered by Hubbub, Virgin Media and O2, the Tech Lending Community Fund has generously donated a number of tablets to help Refuge residents use technology safely. This makes a real difference to the women and children we serve, enabling them to stay connected and access the resources they need to rebuild their lives.

The Brook Trust

We are proud to have the steadfast support of The Brook Trust whose unwavering commitment has helped save the lives of women and their children who have experienced domestic abuse. As we approach our fifteenth year of working together we want to thank them for their kindness and transformational support that has been critical to the success of Refuge so far.

Lily Safra

We are deeply saddened by the passing of Lily Safra, an extraordinary philanthropist whose support of Refuge for nearly twenty years has left an indelible mark on our organisation and the survivors of domestic abuse we serve. Our deepest condolences go out to Lily's family and everyone at the Edmond J Safra Philanthropic Foundation. Her contributions to our organisation and our mission will never be forgotten, and we will honour her memory by continuing to work tirelessly to advocate for and support survivors of domestic abuse.

The Queen

Her Majesty The Queen continues to be a strong and passionate advocate for survivors of domestic abuse. Through her involvement across the sector, with numerous domestic abuse charities and organisations, she has undoubtedly made a significant difference to many individuals and families who have experienced abuse. By lending her voice, time, and resources, she has shown a deep commitment to ending domestic abuse and helping survivors to rebuild their lives. Her advocacy and efforts have been incredibly inspiring, and we are thankful for the leadership that she has demonstrated.

Legacy support

This year we emailed all our supporters to offer our free online will service, many of whom responded by pledging a gift to Refuge or letting us know they had already done so. With this encouragement, we've worked with creative agency Consider to create a new online guide to leaving a gift in your will.



What we've delivered this year

Our ambassadors

This year saw a huge change in the reach and diversity of our portfolio of celebrity ambassadors. Ranvir Singh, Saffron Hocking, Sharon Gaffka and Billie Piper joined us, bringing their unique experiences, skills and passions. They've contributed to our events, highlighted our campaigns, shared our messages on social media, opened up their networks and raised funds. We are hugely grateful for the support of all our ambassadors.

We have been privileged this year to work with seven survivor ambassadors who have generously shared their experience, commitment and support to help us raise awareness and influence change. As part of our review and development of survivor engagement, we made the decision to end our survivor ambassador programme and continue to work with many of them as survivor advocates in their own right.



Everything I Ever Wanted to Tell My Daughter About Men

Starring Jason Isaacs, Nathan Fillion, Lorian Haynes and Issy Knopfler, this powerful film traces the impacts of sexual assault on a woman's choices and her relationship experiences from teen pregnancy to infidelity and addiction.

Directed by Lorian Haynes, Everything I Ever Wanted to Tell My Daughter About Men was screened at Clapham and Marylebone Picturehouse cinemas in November 2022 and February 2023, with all proceeds donated to Refuge.

Reflections on our 50-year history

Hosted by our new ambassador Ranvir Singh, we held a celebration dinner for our community of philanthropists and advocates to reflect on our 50-years of service and to share our priorities and ambitions. We are incredibly grateful to everyone who gives their time, money and voice to support our mission and empower women to rebuild their lives, and we were delighted that over £60,000 was raised on the night.

“I wanted to partner with Refuge for Everything... as a survivor myself, encouraging women to tell their own stories. This is mine. And I know from experience how painful it is to speak out. Women's voices and survivors' stories are often side-lined. In telling my own I wanted to put my heart on my sleeve, jump and encourage other women to do the same.

Lorien Haynes, director and lead actress

What we've delivered this year

Our thanks

To all our loyal supporters and generous partners. To the families of those who left a gift in their will. To our ambassadors and donors. Your commitment to our cause is truly phenomenal. And, in this challenging year, the hard work carried out by our dedicated Refuge team could not have been achieved without your help.

Thank you.

Alex Scott
AMVBBDO
Avon Cosmetics
Barclays
Battersea Dogs and Cats
BBC Children in Need
BBH
Benefit Cosmetics
Billie Piper
Brian Woolf Trust
Catriona Cannon
Cecil Gee Charitable Trust
Charles Russell Speechlys
Cherie Blair
Christopher A. Holder
CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang LLP
Colt Technology Services
Credit Suisse
David Morrissey
EasyJet (via Business in the Community)
Evan Cornish Foundation
Fiona Bruce
Firebird Foundation
Fleishman Hillard
Fox Williams
Garfield Weston Foundation
Google (via Business in the Community)
Harrison-Frank Family Foundation
Helen Mirren

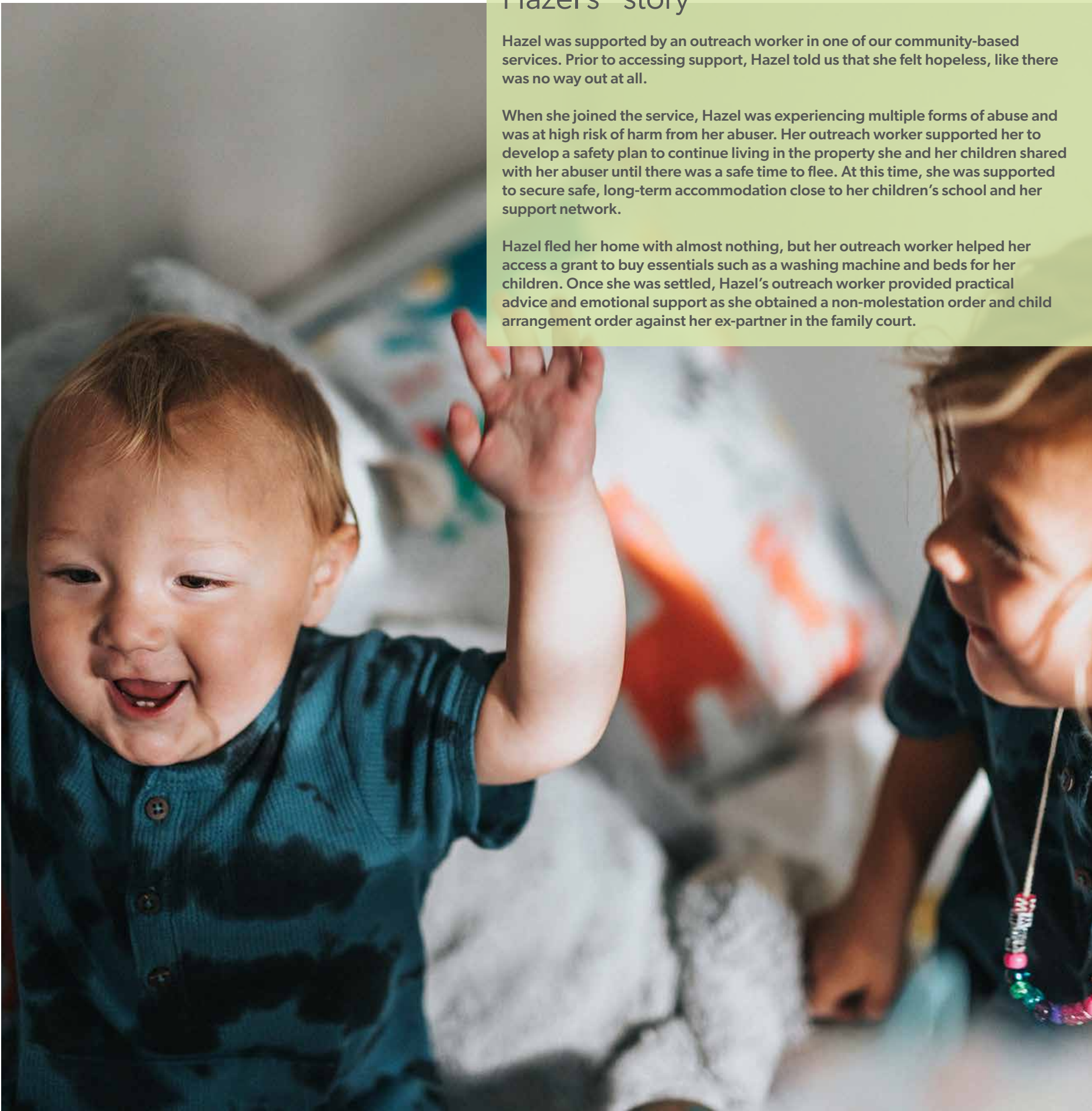
Helena Kennedy
Hubbub
TP ICAP via ICAP Charity Day
Index Ventures
Izzy and Alexander Leslie
Jennifer Payne
Kew Women's Institute
Lorien Haynes
McCann
Morson Group
Neil Amos
Olivia Colman
One Hundred Shoreditch
PA Consulting
Patrick Stewart
PayPlan
Picturehouse Cinemas
Pilkington Charities' Fund
Ranvir Singh
Saffron Hocking
Sharon Gaffka
Squarepoint Foundation
Stratford Town Trust
The Alan Edward Higgs Charity
The Alchemy Foundation
The Barratt Foundation
The Brook Trust
The Buchanan Programme
The Co-operative Bank
The Dahan Family Foundation
The John Coates Charitable Trust
The National Lottery Community Fund
The Olwyn Foundation
The Pye Foundation
The Randal Charitable Foundation
Travers Smith
Turn2Us
Two Magpies Fund
Vanguard
Weightmans LLP
Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP
Wendy Turner-Webster

Hazel's* story

Hazel was supported by an outreach worker in one of our community-based services. Prior to accessing support, Hazel told us that she felt hopeless, like there was no way out at all.

When she joined the service, Hazel was experiencing multiple forms of abuse and was at high risk of harm from her abuser. Her outreach worker supported her to develop a safety plan to continue living in the property she and her children shared with her abuser until there was a safe time to flee. At this time, she was supported to secure safe, long-term accommodation close to her children's school and her support network.

Hazel fled her home with almost nothing, but her outreach worker helped her access a grant to buy essentials such as a washing machine and beds for her children. Once she was settled, Hazel's outreach worker provided practical advice and emotional support as she obtained a non-molestation order and child arrangement order against her ex-partner in the family court.



Looking ahead

Every two minutes, someone turns to Refuge for help

Domestic abuse is at epidemic levels. In England and Wales, one in four women will experience domestic abuse at some point in their lifetime. Many will experience multiple forms of abuse, from physical violence to tech abuse, economic abuse, and coercive control. As perpetrators find new ways to abuse, our job gets harder.

That’s why our focus, looking ahead, must be on what women and children need, and on how their needs are changing. Not all are able or want to flee to a refuge. This is why community-based services are so vital.

We support survivors to make their own decisions about their next steps

Our experience aligns with research by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner for England and Wales ¹. Most survivors seek practical advice and emotional support. And most want both from a community-based service rather than an accommodation-based service. Frontline workers draw on their broad expertise – including safety planning, legal remedies, housing, the welfare benefits system and the dynamics of domestic abuse – to tailor support to a survivor’s individual needs. Whatever their situation, survivors are supported to make their own decisions about the next steps in their journey.



We’re also tackling the barriers women face all around them

Just one in five of the women we support will report to the police. For those who do, community-based services provide vital emotional and practical support, helping them to understand their rights, navigate the criminal justice system and access legal support. For Black, Asian and minoritised survivors, and migrant women, these barriers are yet more pronounced as institutional racism and poor police practice around data-sharing with Immigration Enforcement create further fears around reporting.

The biggest barrier is insecure, insufficient funding

The government has made progress in creating a legal duty to fund emergency safe accommodation. But there is no similar commitment for community-based services. Most are funded by local authorities through competitive commissioning, with contract values often less than the cost of running a safe and effective service. And while the Ministry of Justice has committed some funding to community-based services within the Victims Funding strategy, it simply isn’t enough to meet the demand across the



“You’re not forgotten. You’re not just another woman they’ve got on their caseload. It feels like you’re important, and it matters.”

country. Specialist providers are forced to rely on insecure, fundraised income to provide lifesaving services. Last year, more than half of Refuge’s income was generated from fundraised sources.

Relying on the good will of donors is fundamentally unsustainable for us. It’s even harder for specialist ‘by and for’ organisations. There needs to be greater consistency in funding for the entire network of community-based support. This is particularly needed for mental health support, early intervention, and support for children and young people.

Research by the Domestic Abuse Commissioner ¹ found that less than half of survivors who wanted to access community-based services in 2022 were able to. D/deaf and disabled, LGBTQ+, Black, Asian and minoritised survivors, and migrant women face even greater barriers to accessing support.

When we invest in survivors, everyone benefits

An economic analysis published by Women’s Aid ² in February 2023 shows that every pound invested in domestic abuse support services will make at least £9 savings to the public purse. When survivors are not able to access domestic abuse services in their community, they are often forced to turn to statutory services such as the police, NHS, and social care. This comes at a huge cost to society. In 2022, the estimated economic and social costs of domestic abuse in England was a staggering £78 billion per year. Community-based services make savings by preventing further abuse, relieving pressure on public services, and managing the far higher costs incurred when a survivor moves into refuge accommodation.

Survivors seek specialist support from community-based services because they are effective. Of all the survivors who left Refuge’s community-based services between April 2021 and March 2022, 97% said they felt safer, 96% said they felt less frightened, 95% said their quality of life had improved, and 99% said they felt confident knowing how to access help.

We will continue to campaign and influence for a national network of community-based services

But we – and our sector – can’t do it alone. Join us in urging government to provide adequate, secure and sustainable funding for community-based services to ensure that all survivors and their children can access the range of support they so desperately need.



Legal, administrative and governance

Administrative details

Charity number: 277424
Company number: 1412276
Regulator of Social Housing number: 4730

Principal office:

3rd Floor
One America Square
17 Crosswall London
EC3N 2LB

Auditors:

Moore Kingston Smith LLP, 9 Appold Street, London, EC2A 2AP

Bankers:

HSBC Bank Plc, 281 Chiswick High Road, London W4 4HJ
Barclays Bank Plc, 1 Churchill Place, London E14 5HP

Investment Managers:

Charles Stanley & Co, 70-72 Chertsey Street, Guildford, Surrey GU1 4HL

Solicitors:

Bindmans LLP, 236 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8HB
Bates Wells, 10 Queen Street, London, EC4R 1BE
Mishcon de Reya, Africa House, 70 Kingsway, London, WC2B 6AH
Radar Limited, 6 Beacon Way, Hull, HU3 4AE
Cooley (UK) LLP, 69 Old Broad Street, London, EC2M 1QS

Trustees, officers and advisers

Under its Memorandum and Articles of Association, Refuge was originally incorporated as Chiswick Family Rescue on 30th January 1979 as a company limited by guarantee not for profit and not having share capital. The name was subsequently changed to Refuge on 5 March 1993.

It is a charity with a registered office at 3rd Floor, One America, Square, 17 Crosswall, London, EC3N 2LB. On 13 August 2012 Refuge became a Registered Provider of Social Housing regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency. A Board of Trustees (whose members are also directors of the charitable company) oversees Refuge’s policies and the execution of its activities. Members are elected upon a resolution of the Board and may resign their membership by notice in writing to the company.

The members of the Board who held office during the year were:

Board of Trustees:

Hetti Barkworth–Nanton (Chair)
Dheepa Balasundaram
Andrea Daniels
Elizabeth Edwards
Ayanna Nelson
Jon Rowney
Selina Sagayam
Ruth Smith
Kirsten Walkom (to 12.10.2022)

Ambassadors:

Cherie Booth CBE KC
Fiona Bruce (to 13.03.2023)
Olivia Colman CBE
Sharon Gaffka (from 31.10.2022)
Saffron Hocking (from 27.05.2022)
Baroness Helena Kennedy KC
Dame Helen Mirren
Billie Piper (from 29.09.2022)
Ranvir Singh (from 27.05.2022)
Sir Patrick Stewart OBE

Chief Executive

Ruth Davison

Company Secretary

Sally Oglesby (to 16.05.2023)
Lornette Pemberton (17.05.2023 - 04.06.2023)
Michaela Chamberlain (from 05.06.2023)

Principal Officers

Abigail Ampofo, Director of Service Delivery
Tracy Blackwell, Director of Strategic Insights and Partnerships
Gabi Field, Director of Fundraising and Communications (Maternity Cover to 14.03.2023)
Louise Firth, Director of Fundraising and Communications
Lornette Pemberton, Director of People and Culture
Shameem Sadiq-Tang, Interim Director of Operational Change (to 28.04.2023)
Jameela Khan, Director of Corporate Services (to 7.10.2022)
Trevor Richards, Interim Director of Corporate Services (from 28.11.2022 to 31.05.2023)
Cathryn Symons, Director of Technology (from 30.1.2023)
Michaela Chamberlain, Director of Corporate Services (from 05.06.2023)

Governing document

Refuge is a charitable company limited by guarantee, originally incorporated as Chiswick Family Rescue on 30 January 1979 and registered as a charity on 31 March 1979. The company was established under a Memorandum of Association which established the objects and powers of the charitable company and is governed under its Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up members are required to contribute an amount not exceeding £1.

Recruitment and appointment of The Board

The directors of the company are also charity trustees for the purposes of charity law. There shall be a minimum of five and a maximum of twelve Trustees who are appointed by a decision of the Trustees. Appointments are made on an initial three-year term of office. Under the requirements of the Articles of Association each Trustee shall retire from office at the third Annual Retirement Meeting following the commencement of his or her term of office, this being the meeting of the Trustees at which the accounts of the Charity are adopted. Retiring Trustees may be a reappointed for a maximum of three consecutive terms of office.

Periodic skills audits are undertaken to ensure that the skills/ experience of the Board of trustees align with those necessary for the management of the Charity’s business. Where necessary Trustees are recruited and appointed to meet any skills gaps.

The Board of Trustees induction and training

All new members of the Board receive an induction pack containing detailed information about Refuge, its organisation and its work. They also spend time with the Chief Executive, Chair and senior staff to familiarise themselves with Refuge’s activities and their role and responsibilities as a charity trustee. Training is provided to introduce trustees to their legal and governance duties, including mandatory dynamics of domestic abuse, data protection/GDPR, safeguarding, cybersecurity and EDI training. There are regular visits to services, opportunities for specific training and presentations by staff at board meetings. All trustees have received a copy of the Charity Commission publication ‘The Essential Trustee’.

Organisation

The Board of Trustees are responsible for the overall governance of Refuge. The charity’s Board of Trustees meets regularly to agree and monitor the strategic direction of the organisation. Refuge’s chief executive Ruth Davison, is responsible for the day to day management of the charity and the implementation of policy, supported by a highly dedicated and professional team of staff and volunteers.

Partnerships

In pursuit of its charitable aim of providing safe accommodation for women and children escaping domestic abuse Refuge works in partnership with a number of different housing associations and local authorities.

Housing associations:

BPHA, Central and Cecil, Clarion Housing Group, Derby Homes, Peabody, Gateway, Hexagon, London and Quadrant, Metropolitan Thames Valley, Notting Hill Genesis, Orbit, Paragon, Sanctuary Housing, Home Group, Southern Housing and Tuntum.

Statutory partners:

The London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hillingdon, Kingston upon Thames, Lewisham, Lewisham CCG, Lambeth, Merton, Redbridge, Southwark, Waltham Forest, Wandsworth and Westminster. The counties of Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire and Warwickshire. The city of Derby, Derby Homes and the borough of Warrington. The Greater London Authority. London Councils.

Police Crime Commissioners (PCC):

Derbyshire, Hertfordshire, MOPAC, Warwickshire
IRISi, Violence Reduction Unit, Home Office, National Children’s Bureau, Ministry of Justice, Young Londoners’ Fund, Commonweal

Objectives

The objects of the company are:

- To provide for the relief of women and their children or other victims who have been subject to:

(i) physical, sexual, emotional and/or mental abuse within an intimate or “family” relationship (“domestic abuse”); or
(ii) other gender-based abuse, which term, for the purposes of these Articles, shall include but not be limited to rape, prostitution, gang abuse, sex-trafficking or female genital mutilation, in either of cases or (ii) above, throughout the United Kingdom and abroad

- To provide specialist supported housing and social housing and any associated amenities in England, designed to meet the needs of women and children who are the victims of domestic abuse and/or other gender-based abuse, and other services designed to facilitate their onward progression; and

- To advance public education, research and training on understanding of the issues of domestic abuse and gender-based abuse throughout the United Kingdom and abroad.

Refuge’s mission continues to be that of providing

emergency accommodation and support to women and children escaping domestic abuse whilst raising awareness and understanding of the issue. Its principal aims and objectives are to:

- Provide a range of high quality specialist services to women and children escaping domestic abuse including a Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline, a growing number of safe houses with additional specialist support services for women and children, outreach and floating support services, refuges and outreach for black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee (BAMER) women, independent domestic abuse advocates and specialist support.
- Raise public awareness of the issues surrounding domestic abuse and campaign to ensure the voices of survivors are heard.

Public benefit statement

Refuge operates for public benefit. The trustees confirm that they complied with the duty in section 17 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to the Charity Commission’s general guidance on public benefit, “Charities and Public Benefit”.

Respect, Inclusion and Belonging

Respect, inclusion, and belonging are fundamental to what we want to achieve in all that we do at Refuge. We aim to build a culture where our staff, volunteers, trustees, service users, survivors, partners, and all who work with or alongside us are valued and respected. As an intersectional feminist organisation committed to challenging inequality across society; equality and equity remain at the forefront in helping us to achieve our strategic priorities. To this end, this year we created a Respect, Inclusion and Belonging strategy (2022-26) and action plan. These will help us to develop a diverse team of incredible people and an inclusive culture that celebrates diversity and support us in having a workplace of allies where all forms of discrimination and less favourable treatment is challenged.

Fundraising

At Refuge, we are conscious of the trust that supporters place in us when they donate towards our work. We are members of the Fundraising Regulator and abide by their Fundraising Promise and the Code of Fundraising Practice. We are deeply committed to protecting the data and privacy of our supporters and adhere to all relevant legislation and best practice in the sector.

We are committed to providing the highest levels of supporter care and value any feedback we receive regarding our fundraising activities.

In 2022/23 we received 191 complaints, which were resolved without any being escalated to the Fundraising Regulator. We responded to all complaints within three working days.

In 2022/23, we worked with three professional fundraising organisations for payroll giving recruitment. We aim to ensure any agencies we employ also observe the highest standards in terms of fundraising practice, and we ensure that the work of the suppliers is regularly monitored.

We work with companies across a variety of sectors to build mutually beneficial partnerships. We encourage our Corporate Partners to commit to raising a minimum level of £25,000 of funds. This can be raised through a range of mechanisms including commercial participation, staff or customer fundraising, events and company donations. We are also grateful for the support of a number of corporate supporters and donors which fund us through one off or regular donations or gifts in kind at a level that suits them best

We conduct due diligence as part of our research process in relation to both proactive and reactive fundraising from businesses, trusts, foundations and high net worth individuals. This is to ensure alignment with our ethical policy as well as assess potential risks by association.

Whilst we generally seek unrestricted funding, we do work with some partners and philanthropists who prefer to restrict their support to particular areas of our work.

Financial review

Like much of the charitable sector, Refuge is experiencing significant financial challenges as a result of the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. As noted on page 8 of this report, we are tackling the triple impact of greater demand, increased costs and lower income. Inflation is increasing our expenditure while restricting donors’ ability to give. Two thirds of our income is from central and local government, and government funding to the sector has been declining in recent years.

It is in this context that Refuge generated a deficit of £4.7m in 2022/23, of which £4.3m was unrestricted. This is significantly higher than the deficit generated in 2021/22 (just under £1m, or £0.8m unrestricted). The reason for this is that while income grew year-on- year, expenditure grew more considerably (see ‘Income’ and ‘Expenditure’ below). Refuge’s reserves are sufficient to cover this deficit this year (see ‘Reserves and other funds’ below), and in the longer term we are implementing plans to move to a break even position (see ‘Looking ahead’).

Income

Income totalled £25.4m in 2022/23, which is £1.1m (4%) higher than 2021/22. Income from operating activities, including grants, contracts and housing management income, has increased by £2.7m (19%) as a result of new contracts secured and uplifts on existing contracts. Partly offsetting this is a £1.6m (16%) decline in donations and legacies. Much of this movement is due to an exceptional legacy of just under £1m received in 2021/22. The remainder is driven by a decline in local fundraising and events income, which are trends seen across the sector due to a combination of the cost-of-living crisis and a volatile events market post-COVID-19.

Expenditure

Expenditure totalled £30.1m, which is £4.8m (19%) higher than the prior year. This is primarily driven by increased spend on people. Payroll costs are up £2.6m (18%) year-on- year, while spend on temporary staff and consultants is up £1.6m (120%).

As noted on page 31, our three-year strategy includes measures to improve our infrastructure, processes and systems, improving our long-term sustainability as an organisation by investing in our people and building efficiency. This has required increased headcount and short-term support in some enabling teams, alongside the implementation of a new, sector- benchmarked pay structure for the whole organisation following our pay and reward review.

Headcount has also increased in service delivery teams as a result of new contracts.

In addition to increased staff and consultancy spend, high inflation has pushed up non-staff costs across the board in 2022/23.

Looking ahead

Refuge entered 2022/23 with healthy reserves which are more than sufficient to cover the deficit generated in the year while remaining well above Reserves Policy levels (please see ‘Reserves and other funds’ below). However, it would not be sustainable to continue generating deficits of this magnitude in the long term.

We have therefore implemented a financial sustainability plan which includes income growth and reductions to expenditure. As a result of this, we expect to generate a smaller deficit in 2023/24 (covered by reserves) and reach a break-even position in 2024/25.

Reserves and other funds

Refuge’s reserves, shown on the balance sheet as ‘general funds’, are its unrestricted funds not designated by the Board for any other purpose. They provide resilience in the event of financial shocks, such as an unexpected decline in income.

The Reserves Policy determines the target level for reserves. At the end of 2022/23, the Board have set the policy at a minimum of three months’ unrestricted expenditure (per the budget for 2023/24), or £6.2m.

The reserves balance of £8.4m is currently £2.2m higher than the policy minimum. However, as noted under ‘Looking ahead’ above, this headroom will be utilised to cover a further expected deficit in 23/24, driven by the cost-of-living crisis. Refuge expects to reach a breakeven position in 24/25 through the implementation of a financial sustainability plan.

Designated funds are unrestricted funds set aside for a specific purpose by the Board. As at 31st March 2023, Refuge has one designated fund. The Fixed Asset Fund has been created this year to hold the balance of all tangible and intangible fixed assets. This reflects the fact that these assets are not available to be expended in the same way reserves are, as they are utilised in Refuge’s day-to-day operations and are not readily realisable as cash.

In 2021/22, four designated funds were created to set aside funds for innovation in service delivery, the strengthening of support infrastructure, diversification of income streams and repairs of leased and owned properties. During 2022/23, the decision was taken to manage this ongoing spend through general funds. This will enable Refuge to continue these closely interlinked activities under a broader umbrella, thus reducing the administration around tracking separate and often overlapping funds.

Restricted funds relate to income which must be used for a specific purpose, as stipulated by the donor, and which has not yet been expended.

Further information on Refuge’s funds can be found in notes 20-22 of the accounts.

Principal risks

The Board of Trustees is responsible for establishing and monitoring internal control systems within Refuge. The Board reviews the major risks which may impact on the operations of Refuge on a regular basis and are satisfied that the system of internal control currently in place is sound and effective, whilst recognising that it is designed to manage rather than eliminate risk. This year, the Board and staff have worked to improve and refine our risk register, ensuring it is clear, informative and reviewed each quarter. The Board of Trustees agree that the following are the principal risks that Refuge faces:

- Safeguarding. The nature of Refuge's work leads to a high risk of safeguarding issues. We have improved and strengthened our policies, processes and ways of working to meet our high safeguarding standards including comprehensive external reviews of services where issues have been raised. Due to the nature of our work, this will always remain high risk for us and an area of ongoing governance focus.
- Financial Health and Sustainability. As noted in the 'Financial review' above, Refuge continues to draw on reserves to fund our vital work and invest in longer term efficiencies, in line with our 3 year strategy. This is not sustainable indefinitely and moving forward consolidation will be essential alongside income maximisation, ensuring we have a viable business model.
- Staff capacity, continuity and capability. We have invested heavily into our workforce and will continue to focus on this, recognising the challenges we have with recruitment and retention in our sector. This is due to the high pressured and traumatic nature of our work, the lack of multi-year funding or contracts as well as our desire to be an employer of choice.
- Effective and efficient systems. Refuge continues to strengthen our robust data security measures and to invest into our IT team, policies and procedures to mitigate risks. Financial plans for future years include capital investment to improve our systems.
- Continuity of services. There are a number of significant contracts due for recommissioning during 2023. In order to maintain and extend contracts a local engagement and 'win' strategy is prepared for each service. Maintaining good relations with commissioners, negotiating contract extensions where possible and tight budgeting and control of costs are priorities.

Investment powers

The Articles of Association contain powers for the Board of Trustees to invest funds in any investments, securities and properties. As at 31st March 2023, Refuge holds £642k of investments. This is £67k lower than the prior year holding. Losses on the portfolio have been driven by economic downturn, resulting from inflationary pressures and the ongoing war in Ukraine. The portfolio is managed by Charles Stanley. Further information is provided in note 15 to the accounts.

Statement of the Board of Trustees responsibilities

The Board of Trustees (whose members are also directors of Refuge for the purposes of company law) is responsible for preparing the trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the Board of Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of the affairs of the company and of the outgoing resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the company for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Board of Trustees is required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Observe the methods and principles in the Housing and Charities SORP
- Make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- State whether applicable UK Accounting Standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business

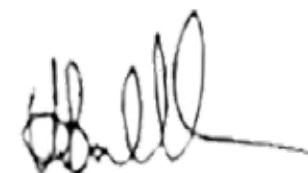
The Board of Trustees is responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

As far as the Board of Trustees is aware:

- There is no relevant audit information of which the charitable company's auditor is unaware; and
- The Board of Trustees has taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditor is aware of that information

The Board of Trustees is responsible for ensuring that the pay and remuneration of key management personnel is reasonable and appropriate. Director salaries are determined annually by the People, Nominations and Remuneration Committee (PNRC). A separate policy outlines the approach to CEO pay which is capped relative to other salaries.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees



Hetti Barkworth-Nanton, chair

This report acts as a directors' report for the charitable company as required by s415 of the Companies Act 2006 and includes the Strategic Report which has been approved by the Board of Trustees in their capacity as company directors.



Independent auditors report to the members of Refuge

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Refuge (‘the parent charitable company’) for the year ended 31 March 2023 which comprise the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities, the Group and Parent Charitable Company Balance Sheets, the Consolidated Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including FRS 102 ‘The Financial Reporting Standard Applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland’ (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion the financial statements:

- Give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company’s affairs as at 31 March 2023 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended;
- Have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice including FRS102 the Financial Reporting Standard applicable to the UK and Republic of Ireland, the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, and the Accounting Direction for Registered Providers of Social Housing 2019; and
- Have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Act 2011.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor’s Responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC’s Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the trustees’ use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the charitable company’s ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the trustees with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor’s report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the strategic report and the trustees’ annual report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the strategic report and the trustees’ annual report have been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the strategic report or the trustees’ annual report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 and Charities Act 2011 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- The parent company has not kept adequate and sufficient accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- The parent charitable company’s financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- Certain disclosures of trustees’ remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- We have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees’ responsibilities statement set out in the Statement of The Board’s Responsibilities, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company’s ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor’s Responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor’s report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

As part of an audit in accordance with ISAs (UK) we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.

- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purposes of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the charitable company’s internal control.

- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the trustees.

- Conclude on the appropriateness of the trustees’ use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the charitable company’s ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor’s report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor’s report. However, future events or conditions may cause the charitable company to cease to continue as a going concern.

- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Explanation as to what extent the audit was considered capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below.

The objectives of our audit in respect of fraud, are; to identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements due to fraud; to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the assessed risks of material misstatement due to fraud, through designing and implementing appropriate responses to those assessed risks; and to respond appropriately to instances of fraud or suspected fraud identified during the audit. However, the primary responsibility for the prevention and detection of fraud rests with both management and those charged with governance of the charitable company.

Our approach was as follows:

- We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory requirements applicable to the charitable company and considered that the most significant are the Companies Act 2006, the Charities Act 2011, the Charity SORP, the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, the Accounting Direction for Registered Providers of Social Housing 2019, the Housing SORP, and UK financial reporting standards as issued by the Financial Reporting Council]

- We obtained an understanding of how the charitable company complies with these requirements by discussions with management and those charged with governance.
- We assessed the risk of material misstatement of the financial statements, including the risk of material misstatement due to fraud and how it might occur, by holding discussions with management and those charged with governance.

- We inquired of management and those charged with governance as to any known instances of non-compliance or suspected non-compliance with laws and regulations.

- Based on this understanding, we designed specific appropriate audit procedures to identify instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. This included making enquiries of management and those charged with governance and obtaining additional corroborative evidence as required.

There are inherent limitations in the audit procedures described above. We are less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations that are not closely related to events and transactions reflected in the financial statements. Also, the risk of not detecting a material misstatement due to fraud is higher than the risk of not detecting one resulting from error, as fraud may involve deliberate concealment by, for example, forgery or intentional misrepresentations, or through collusion.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company’s members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company’s members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor’s report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to any party other than the charitable company and charitable company’s members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Moore Kingston Smith LLP

Andrew Stickland (Senior Statutory Auditor)
for and on behalf of Moore Kingston Smith LLP, Statutory Auditor
Date: 28 September 2023

9 Appold Street

London

EC2A 2AP



Statement of financial activities for the year ended 31 March 2023
(incorporating the income and expenditure account)

		Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Total
		Funds	Funds	Funds	Funds
Note		2023	2023	2023	2022
		£	£	£	£
Income and endowments from:					
Donations and legacies	4	6,726,086	1,749,795	8,475,881	10,110,107
Operating activities					
Contracts for Support Services	5	7,074,400	-	7,074,400	6,405,717
Housing Management		4,546,451	-	4,546,451	4,412,821
Grants	6	-	4,942,497	4,942,497	3,174,699
Other trading activities	8	118,526	-	118,526	169,239
Investments	7	141,676	-	141,676	26,889
Other income		88,600	-	88,600	-
Total income and endowments	3	18,695,739	6,692,292	25,388,031	24,299,472
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds	9	4,392,144	-	4,392,144	3,322,184
Operating activities					
Refuge provision		7,688,394	1,356,692	9,045,086	8,826,545
Advocacy		4,414,203	965,657	5,379,860	4,003,811
Integrated services		4,538,107	737,750	5,275,857	3,995,444
Outreach and Floating Support		428,717	2,038,853	2,467,570	1,493,407
National Domestic Abuse Helpline		1,101,980	2,020,508	3,122,488	2,281,707
Public information		326,664	46,099	372,763	1,347,356
Specialist support services		165	-	165	27,783
Total Expenditure	3,11	22,890,374	7,165,559	30,055,933	25,298,237
Net (losses)/ gains on investments	15	(63,635)	-	(63,635)	20,515
Net (expenditure)/income		(4,258,270)	(473,267)	(4,731,537)	(978,250)
Net movement in funds		(4,258,270)	(473,267)	(4,731,537)	(978,250)
Reconciliation of funds:					
Fund balances brought forward		13,424,509	1,021,881	14,446,390	15,424,640
Fund balances carried forward at 31 March 2023	20, 21,22	9,166,239	548,614	9,714,853	14,446,390

Approved by the Board on 27th September 2023


Hetti Barkworth-Nanton


Jon Rowney

The notes on pages 55-75 form part of these financial statements
All the activities of the charitable company related to continuing operations. There were no recognised gains and losses other than those included in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Balance sheet as of 31 March 2023

	Note	Group 2023 £	2022 £	Charity 2023 £	2022 £
Fixed Assets					
Tangible assets	13	615,490	759,614	615,490	759,614
Intangible assets	14	146,955	225,633	146,955	225,633
Investments	15	641,737	709,022	641,738	709,023
		1,404,182	1,694,269	1,404,183	1,694,270
Current Assets					
Debtors	16	3,552,480	4,027,942	3,600,542	4,027,942
Cash at bank and in hand		9,685,030	13,929,303	9,630,028	13,929,303
		13,237,510	17,957,245	13,230,570	17,957,245
Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year	17	(4,806,839)	(5,085,124)	(4,799,900)	(5,085,125)
Net Current Assets		8,430,671	12,872,121	8,430,670	12,872,120
Total Assets less Current Liabilities		9,834,853	14,566,390	9,834,853	14,566,390
Provisions for liabilities and charges	19	(120,000)	(120,000)	(120,000)	(120,000)
Net Assets		9,714,853	14,446,390	9,714,853	14,446,390
Represented by:					
Unrestricted Funds	20				
General		8,403,794	10,420,140	8,403,794	10,420,140
Designated Funds		762,445	3,004,369	762,445	3,004,369
		9,166,239	13,424,509	9,166,239	13,424,509
Restricted Funds	21	548,614	1,021,881	548,614	1,021,881
Total Funds	22	9,714,853	14,446,390	9,714,853	14,446,390

Approved by the Board on 27th September 2023


Hetti Barkworth-Nanton


Jon Rowney

The notes on pages 55-75 form part of these financial statements
Company number: 1412276

Cash-flow statement for the year ended 31 March 2023

	Note	2023	2022
		£	£
Statement of Cash Flows			
Net Cash (Outflow) from Operating Activities	1	(4,325,006)	(1,688,931)
			-
- Investment income received	7	141,676	26,889
Capital Expenditure and financial investment			
- Payments to acquire Tangible Fixed Assets	13	(64,593)	(764,583)
- Payments to acquire Intangible Fixed Assets	14	-	(17,712)
- Payments to acquire Financial Investments	15	(98,220)	(83,276)
- Investment disposal proceeds	15	103,809	91,156
Increase in Cash and Cash Equivalents	2	(4,242,334)	(2,436,457)
Notes to the Statement of Cash Flows			
Reconciliation of Changes in Resources to Net Cash Outflow from Operating Activities			
Net movement in funds		(4,731,537)	(978,250)
Depreciation		208,717	98,099
Amortisation		78,678	69,477
Investment income		(141,676)	(26,889)
Unrealised/Realised losses/(gains)		63,635	(20,515)
Decrease/ (Increase) in trade and other Debtors		475,462	(1,326,792)
(Decrease)/Increase in trade and other Creditors		(278,285)	625,776
Movement in provision		-	(129,837)
		(4,325,006)	(1,688,931)
Reconciliation of Net Cash Flow to Movements in Net Funds			
Increase in Cash and Cash at Bank in the year		(4,242,334)	(2,436,457)
(Decrease)/Increase in net funds		(4,242,334)	(2,436,457)
Net funds at 1 April 2022		13,963,736	16,400,193
Net funds at 31 March 2023		9,721,402	13,963,736
Reconciliation of net funds to cash at bank and in hand			
Net funds		9,721,402	13,963,736
Cash held with investment managers		(36,372)	(34,433)
Cash at bank and in hand		9,685,030	13,929,303
Notes on pages 55-75 form part of these financial statements			

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

1. Accounting policies

Basis of accounting

The financial statements are prepared on the historical cost convention of accounting, as modified by the revaluation of Fixed asset Investments and in accordance with applicable Accounting Standards and in compliance with The Accounting Direction for Private Registered Providers of Social Housing 2019, Housing SORP 2018, the Statement of Recommended Practice “Accounting for Registered Social Providers”, the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with “The Financial Reporting Standard Accounts applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland” (“FRS 102”), The Charities Act 2011 and the requirements of the Companies Act 2006. The charity is a public benefit entity for the purposes of FRS 102.

Going concern

Refuge’s financial statements have been prepared on the going concern basis. Per FRS 102, an entity is a going concern unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the entity or to cease operating, or has no realistic alternative but to do so. Refuge’s Trustees have assessed Refuge’s ability to continue as a going concern for twelve months after the signing of the 2022/23 accounts, i.e. until September 2024, based on projections of Refuge’s income, expenditure and cashflow over that period.

Refuge has generated a deficit of £4.7m in 2022/23. (See the annual report’s financial review for more information.) Despite this, year end reserves of £8.4m are well above the Reserves Policy minimum of £6.2m, and the cash balance remains healthy at £9.7m.

Reserves and cash are therefore expected to be sufficient to cover a further, smaller expected deficit in 2023/24. From 2024/25 onwards, Refuge expects to break even. These financial results will be delivered through a two-year financial sustainability plan incorporating both income growth and expenditure reductions. This plan is already underway and is being closely monitored by the Board.

Should Refuge experience an unexpected short-term drop in liquidity, mitigating actions are available, including the liquidation of £642k of investments.

After considering the current level of reserves and cash, the forecast to September 2024, and the mitigation actions available, it is the opinion of the trustees that the Group has adequate financial resources to continue its activities for the foreseeable future and that there are no material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the charity to continue as a going concern. Accordingly, these financial statements have been prepared using the going concern basis of preparation.

Basis of Consolidation

The consolidated financial statements comprise Refuge together with its wholly owned subsidiary, Refuge Trading Ltd. Refuge Trading Ltd was incorporated on 14 December 2021 and began trading in 2022/23. A summarised profit

and loss account for the subsidiary is given in note 26. The results of the subsidiary have been consolidated on a line by line basis. As permitted by section 408 of the Companies Act 2006 no separate statement of financial activities is presented in respect of the parent charity. The net movement of funds attributable to the parent charity is £4,731,537.

Tangible Fixed Assets - Depreciation

Tangible fixed assets costing more than £1,000, except items of high wear and tear for refuges, have been capitalised and recorded at cost. Depreciation is provided on all fixed assets at rates calculated to write off the cost of each asset over their estimated useful lives or the length of the contract/project for which the fixed assets were acquired.

Leasehold improvements	5 years straight line
Freehold buildings	50 years straight line
Fixtures and fittings	4 years straight line
Office equipment	4 years straight line

Intangible Fixed Assets - Amortisation

Intangible assets costing more than £1,000 are recognised at cost and are subsequently measured at cost less accumulated amortisation. Amortisation is recognised so as to write off the cost of assets over their useful lives on the following bases:

Software	4 years straight line
Website	4 years straight line

Income

All income is accounted for when the company has entitlement to the funds, receipt is probable and the amount can be measured reliably. Donations and legacies include donations, gifts, legacies and some grants receivable.

Gifts in kind and intangible income are treated either as donations in the period the gift or intangible income is received, or as an asset, in both cases at a reasonable estimate of the gross value to the charity.

Contractual income and legacies are recognised as income where there is entitlement, probability of receipt and measurability.

Fundraising income is shown gross except for small fundraising events where the cash is received net of expenditure.

Investment income is accounted for on a receivable basis.

Grants are recognised when the entitlement to the grant is confirmed and any conditions not within the company’s control have been met.

Grants that provide core funding, or are of a general nature provided by the government and charitable foundations, are recorded as voluntary income.

1 Accounting Policies (Continued)

Costs of raising funds

Fundraising expenditure comprises costs incurred encouraging people and organisations to contribute financially to the charity’s work. This includes costs of advertising and staging of special fundraising events.

Governance costs

Governance costs comprise all expenditure not directly related to the charitable activity or fundraising ventures including audit fees. The costs are allocated over the activities on the same basis as other administrative costs.

Provisions

Provisions relate to the Board’s estimate of the present value of the cost of dilapidations work that is required to be undertaken on expiry of and in accordance with the terms of the company’s lease on the premises at Head Office and an estimate of future deficits concerning Refuge’s Admitted Body Status of Hertfordshire LGPS scheme, a final salary scheme for one former employee.

Bad debts

Bad debts are recognised when all arrears and debt collection procedures have been exhausted. Bad debts are written off on a percentage basis depending on their age and the probability of collection.

Investments

Investments are held in the balance sheet at market value at the year end. Any change from market value at the previous balance sheet date or from cost if purchased during the year, is included in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Stocks

No value has been ascribed to stocks of publications on the basis that the majority of these are normally given away and therefore it is considered prudent to account for the costs of all publications in the period they are incurred.



Cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents include cash in hand, deposits held at call with banks, other short-term liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less, and bank overdrafts. Bank overdrafts are shown within borrowings in current liabilities.

Financial instruments

The company has elected to apply the provisions of Section 11 ‘Basic Financial Instruments’ and Section 12 ‘Other Financial Instruments Issues’ of FRS 102 to all of its financial instruments.

Financial instruments are recognised in the company’s balance sheet when the company becomes party to the contractual provisions of the instrument.

Financial assets and liabilities are offset, with the net amounts presented in the financial statements, when there is a legally enforceable right to set off the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis or to realise the asset and settle the liability simultaneously.

Basic financial assets

Basic financial instruments, which include trade and other receivables and cash and bank balances, are initially measured at transaction price including transaction costs and are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method unless the arrangement constitutes a financing transaction, where the transaction is measured at the present value of the future receipts discounted at a market rate of interest.

Other financial assets

Other financial assets, including investments in equity instruments which are not subsidiaries, associates or joint ventures, are initially measured at fair value, which is normally the transaction price. Such assets are subsequently carried at fair value and the changes in fair value are recognised in the SOFA, except that investments in equity instruments that are not publicly traded and whose fair values cannot be measured reliably are measured at cost less impairment.

Impairment of financial assets

Financial assets, other than those held at fair value through the SOFA, are assessed for indicators of impairment at each reporting end date. Financial assets are impaired where there is objective evidence that, as a result of one or more events that occurred after the initial recognition of the financial asset, the estimated future cash flows have been affected. The impairment loss is recognised in the Statement of Financial Activities.

Derecognition of financial assets

Financial assets are derecognised only when the contractual rights to the cash flows from the asset expire, or when it transfers the financial asset and substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership to another entity.

Pension funds

Refuge operates a defined contribution pension scheme for all staff. The amount charged to the Income and Expenditure Account in respect of pension costs is the contributions payable in the year.

Operating lease agreement

Rentals applicable to operating leases where substantially all of the benefits and risks of ownership remain with the lessor are charged to the SOFA on a straight line basis over the period of the lease.

Research and development

Research and development costs are expensed to the SOFA in the year that they are incurred.

Fund account

Restricted funds represent monies received for specific projects undertaken by the charity. Designated funds represent monies set aside by the trustees for a specific purpose. General unrestricted funds of the charity are available for the general purposes of the charity.

Status

Refuge is a registered social landlord with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The register number is 4730.

The company is limited by guarantee and does not have a share capital. It is also a registered charity (Number 277424). In the event of the company winding up, members are required to contribute a sum not exceeding £1.

Judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty

In the application of the company’s accounting policies, the trustees are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources.

The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

Critical judgements

The following judgements (apart from those involving estimates) have had the most significant effect on amounts recognised in the financial statements.

The company has an obligation to pay dilapidations on expiry of the company’s lease. The cost of these reinstatements and the present value of the obligation depend on a number of factors including the expected rise in cost of building maintenance, uncertainty over the timing of the cost of reinstatements, and the discount rate. Management estimates these factors in determining the net dilapidation provision in the balance sheet. The assumptions reflect historical experience and current trends. See note 19 for the disclosures relating to the dilapidation provision.

The company makes an estimate of the recoverable value of trade and other debtors. When assessing impairment of trade and other debtors, management considers factors including the current credit rating of the debtor, the ageing profile of debtors and historical experience. See note 16 for the net carrying amount of the debtors and associated impairment provision.

The annual depreciation charge for property, plant and equipment is sensitive to changes in the estimated useful economic lives and residual values of the assets. The useful economic lives and residual values are re-assessed annually. They are amended when necessary to reflect current estimates, based on technological advancement, future investments, economic utilisation and the physical condition of the assets. See note 13 for the carrying amount of the property, plant and equipment and note 1 for the useful economic lives for each class of asset.

Similarly the amortisation charge for intangible assets is sensitive to changes in the estimated useful economic lives and residual values of the assets. The useful economic lives and residual values are re-assessed annually. They are amended when necessary to reflect current estimates, based on technological advancement, future investments and economic utilisation of the assets. See note 14 for the carrying amount of the intangible assets and note 1 for the useful economic lives for each class of assets.



Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

2. Comparative statements of financial activities for the year ended 31 March 2022 and 31 March 2023

		Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total
		Funds	Funds	Funds	Funds	Funds	Funds
Note		2023	2023	2023	2022	2022	2022
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Income and endowments from:							
Donations and legacies	4	6,726,086	1,749,795	8,475,881	8,793,664	1,316,443	10,110,107
Operating activities		-	-	-	-	-	-
Contracts for Support Services	5	7,074,400	-	7,074,400	6,405,717	-	6,405,717
Housing Management		4,546,451	-	4,546,451	4,412,821	-	4,412,821
Grants	6	-	4,942,497	4,942,497	-	3,174,699	3,174,699
Other trading activities		118,526		118,526	169,239		169,239
Investments	7	141,676	-	141,676	26,889	-	26,889
Other income	8	88,600	-	88,600	-	-	-
Total income and endowments	3	18,695,739	6,692,292	25,388,031	19,808,330	4,491,142	24,299,472
Expenditure on:							
Raising funds	9	4,392,144	-	4,392,144	3,322,184	-	3,322,184
Operating activities			-		-	-	
Refuge provision		7,688,394	1,356,692	9,045,086	8,017,376	809,169	8,826,545
Advocacy		4,414,203	965,657	5,379,860	3,388,853	614,958	4,003,811
Integrated services		4,538,107	737,750	5,275,857	3,618,450	376,994	3,995,444
Outreach and Floating Support		428,717	2,038,853	2,467,570	234,167	1,259,240	1,493,407
National Domestic Abuse Helpline		1,101,980	2,020,508	3,122,488	727,189	1,554,518	2,281,707
Public information		326,664	46,099	372,763	1,347,356	-	1,347,356
Specialist support services		165	-	165	-	27,783	27,783
Total Expenditure	3, 11	22,890,374	7,165,559	30,055,933	20,655,575	4,642,662	25,298,237
Realised (losses)/ gains on investments	15	(63,635)	-	(63,635)	20,515	-	20,515
Change to Net (expenditure) / income		(4,258,270)	(473,267)	(4,731,537)	(826,730)	(151,520)	(978,250)
Transfers between funds	20, 21	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net movement in funds		(4,258,270)	(473,267)	(4,731,537)	(826,730)	(151,520)	(978,250)
Reconciliation of funds:							
Fund balances brought forward		13,424,509	1,021,881	14,446,390	14,251,239	1,173,401	15,424,640
Fund balances carried forward at 31 March 2023	20,21, 22	9,166,239	548,614	9,714,853	13,424,509	1,021,881	14,446,390

3a. Particulars of turnover, cost of sales, operating costs and operating surplus

	2023	2023	2023	2022	2022	2022
	Turnover	Operating Costs	Operating Surplus/(deficit)	Turnover	Operating Costs	Operating Surplus/(deficit)
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Social housing lettings	4,546,450	5,201,068	(654,618)	4,412,821	4,978,711	(565,890)
Other social housing activities:						
Contracts for Support Services	2,130,826	2,523,931	(393,105)	2,280,289	2,252,959	27,330
Other grants and donations	744,905	744,905	-	1,152,312	1,152,312	-
	7,422,181	8,469,904	(1,047,723)	7,845,422	8,383,982	(538,560)
Non-social housing activities	17,965,850	21,586,029	(3,620,179)	16,454,050	16,914,255	(460,205)
Total:	25,388,031	30,055,933	(4,667,902)	24,299,472	25,298,237	(998,765)

3b. Particulars of income and expenditure from social housing lettings

	2023	2022
	£	£
Social housing income		
Rent receivable net of identifiable service charges	1,487,050	1,897,927
Service charges receivable eligible for Housing Benefit	3,196,386	2,774,150
Service charges receivable ineligible for Housing Benefit	282,582	271,720
Rent losses due to voids	(419,568)	(530,976)
Turnover from social housing lettings	4,546,450	4,412,821
Expenditure on social housing lettings		
Services	1,382,092	1,382,111
Management	1,902,556	1,687,649
Routine maintenance	245,298	351,685
Planned maintenance	250,126	124,143
Bad debts	171,314	60,840
Lease charges	1,248,315	1,371,599
Property depreciation	1,367	684
Operating costs on social housing lettings	5,201,068	4,978,711
Operating surplus/(deficit) on social lettings	(654,618)	(565,890)
Social housing units		
The number of supported housing units under management at the end of the period:	2023	2022
	£	£
Owned and managed	8	8
Not owned but managed	291	293
	299	301

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

4. Donations and legacies

	Unrestricted	Restricted	Total	Restated Unrestricted	Restated Restricted	Restated Total
	2023	2023	2023	2022	2022	2022
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Trusts	491,015	604,035	1,095,050	410,853	1,037,825	1,448,678
Corporates	471,686	862,532	1,334,218	601,377	179,549	780,926
Major donors	586,361	264,338	850,699	785,927	39,113	825,040
Private donors	4,824,289	18,890	4,843,179	5,747,025	22,118	5,769,143
	6,373,351	1,749,795	8,123,146	7,545,182	1,278,605	8,823,787
Legacies	281,383	-	281,383	1,153,123	1,000	1,154,123
Donations in kind	71,352	-	71,352	95,359	36,838	132,197
	6,726,086	1,749,795	8,475,881	8,793,664	1,316,443	10,110,107

The comparative figures have been restated to reflect the correct analysis between categories.

Private donors includes: Fundraising from events of £1.2m (2022: £1.4m), Local fundraising of £0.4m (2022: £0.8m) and Individual giving of £3.2m (2022: £3.5m)

5. Contracts for Support services

	2023 £	2022 £
Refuge provision	2,112,604	2,014,702
Advocacy	2,595,385	2,350,819
Integrated services	2,366,411	2,010,073
Outreach and floating support	-	30,123
	7,074,400	6,405,717

Support services under housing related support would encompass such activities that enabled the service user to develop the appropriate skills needed for maintaining independence in their own home once outside of the support service framework i.e. building local networks for support, making links into the community, understanding benefit entitlement and how to apply, developing personal finance awareness to pay rent and other associated household bills.

6. Grants

	2023 £ Restricted	2022 £ Restricted
Bain Capital	-	14,199
BBC Children in Need	-	25,783
Big Lottery Fund	-	20,135
Cambridgeshire Community Foundation	12,338	-
Cambridgeshire County Council	77,764	52,877
Comic Relief	-	29,167
Derby City Council	39,973	58,382
Derby Homes Limited	-	100,000
East Sussex County Council	-	9,162
Greater London Authority including MOPAC	2,312,523	498,448
Hertfordshire County Council	10,995	-
Home Office	1,001,019	807,874
Hounslow MHCLG	-	19,625
Job Centre plus	4,102	-
London Borough Barking and Dagenham	268,639	267,599
London Borough of Hounslow	45,913	43,315
London Borough of Hackney	25,275	-
London Borough of Lewisham	200,774	288,589
London Borough of Richmond upon Thames and Wandsworth	300,713	177,786
London Councils	290,436	127,613
Masonic Charitable Foundation	-	200,000
NHS Lewisham Clincial Commissioning Group	17,153	-
Stratford-on-Avon District Council	-	10,000
The Police and Crime Commissioner for Derbyshire	210,070	175,662
The Police and Crime Commissioner for Hertfordshire	51,374	-
The Police and Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire	41,479	61,139
The Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire	-	187,344
Warwickshire County Council	31,250	-
Others	710	-
	4,942,497	3,174,699

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

Refuge received a grant of £290,436 from London Councils in 2022/23 for the Pan-London Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helplines Project, funded under Priority 2, Service area 2.3, which Refuge runs in partnership with Women and Girls Network, Rape Crisis South London and Respect. As Lead Partner, Refuge retained £128,296 of this grant, which was spent on staff, delivery costs and overheads on the National Domestic Abuse Helpline. The following summary illustrates how money was allocated across the partnership and that it has been used for the purposes outlined in the grant agreement:

	Grant (£)	Grant Spent (£)
Lead Partner - Refuge	128,296	128,296
Delivery Partner - Women and Girls Network	80,818	80,818
Delivery Partner - Rape Crisis South London	69,704	69,704
Delivery Partner - Respect	11,618	11,618
	290,436	290,436

7. Investment income

	2023 £	2022 £
Listed investments	12,713	10,339
Interest receivable	128,963	16,550
	141,676	26,889

8. Other trading activities

	2023 £	2022 £
Logo licence	46,527	44,820
Commercial participants	71,999	120,896
Merchandise	-	3,523
	118,526	169,239

9. Costs of raising funds

	2023 £	2022 £
Staff costs	1,726,507	1,331,811
Depreciation and amortisation	23,733	1,457
Trading activities	76,757	48,168
Advertising, campaigns and events	1,373,610	1,399,041
Support costs	800,560	343,131
Other costs	390,977	198,576
	4,392,144	3,322,184

10. Governance costs

	2023 £	2022 £
Auditors’ remuneration (net)	30,950	21,250
Auditors’ remuneration (net) prior year	1,264	-
Auditors’ remuneration non-audit (net)	1,035	850
Irrecoverable VAT	6,650	4,920
Grant audit	-	2,500
Total auditors’ remuneration inclusive of VAT	39,899	29,520
Legal advice and recruitment of trustees	1,200	16,816
Tax review	984	2,444
Total governance costs	42,083	48,780

Governance costs for the year which are included in support cost in note 11 are £42,083 (inclusive of irrecoverable VAT) (2022- £48,780) representing less than 1% of our total costs.



Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

11. Total expenditure

2023

	Cost of Raising Funds £	Refuge Provision £	Advocacy £	Integrated services £	Outreach and Floating Support £	National Domestic Abuse Helpline £	Public Information £	Specialist Support Services £	2022/23 Total £
Direct Costs including Operational Support	3,591,584	7,154,801	3,912,078	3,969,624	1,948,590	2,383,939	268,967	165	23,229,748
Support Costs*	800,560	1,890,285	1,467,782	1,306,233	518,980	738,549	103,796	-	6,826,185
	4,392,144	9,045,086	5,379,860	5,275,857	2,467,570	3,122,488	372,763	165	30,055,933

*Support Costs include governance costs of £42,083 incl. VAT

2022

	Cost of Raising Funds £	Refuge Provision £	Advocacy £	Integrated services £	Outreach and Floating Support £	National Domestic Abuse Helpline £	Public Information £	Specialist Support Services £	2021/22 Total £
Direct Costs including Operational Support	2,979,053	6,780,056	3,159,255	3,509,693	1,163,569	1,891,938	856,759	23,872	20,364,195
Support Costs	343,131	2,046,489	844,556	485,751	329,838	389,769	490,597	3,911	4,934,042
	3,322,184	8,826,545	4,003,811	3,995,444	1,493,407	2,281,707	1,347,356	27,783	25,298,237

	2023 £	2022 £
Staff costs	16,897,547	14,341,315
Temporary staff	1,205,243	629,113
Consultants	1,665,733	673,307
Other staff costs	827,636	846,886
Property costs	2,383,028	2,645,058
Equipment costs	25,610	11,176
Telephone	532,153	545,030
Audit	44,997	29,520
Depreciation and amortisation	287,388	167,576
Other costs	6,186,598	5,409,256
	30,055,933	25,298,237

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

12. Staff Costs

	2023	2022
	£	£
Wages and salaries	14,520,247	12,388,377
Staff benefits	57,069	45,600
Social security costs	1,501,437	1,199,810
Pension costs	818,794	707,528
	16,897,547	14,341,315

These include Redundancy and termination payments of £231,075 (2022: £179,449).

The number of employees, analysed by operating activities, during the year was:

	2023	2022
	No.	No.
Refuge provision	114	101
Advocacy	88	66
Integrated Services	77	70
Outreach and Floating Support	27	34
National Domestic Abuse Helpline	43	44
Public information	10	11
Specialist services	-	4
Other Refuge services	56	26
	415	356

The number of employees whose remuneration (including benefit in kind but excluding employers' National Insurance and employers' pension contributions) was in excess of £60,000.

	2023	2022
	No.	No.
£60,001 - £70,000	9	-
£70,001 - £80,000	3	2
£80,001 - £90,000	2	2
£120,001 - £130,000	2	1
	2023	2022
	£	£
Employers' Pension contributions in respect of employees whose remuneration was in excess of £60,000 during the year	69,243	36,057

The remuneration paid to the key management personnel of Refuge (the Chief Executive, the Director of Technology, the Director of Fundraising and Communications, the Director of Corporate Services, the Director of People and Culture, Director of Service Delivery, Director of Strategic Insights and Partnerships and Interim Director Operational Change) was:

	2023	2022
	£	£
Emoluments (including pension contributions, employers' National Insurance, benefits in kind and termination payments)	829,534	743,736
Emoluments include amounts paid to the highest paid member of key management personnel (including employers' National Insurance, benefits in kind and termination payments but excluding pension contributions):	139,960	135,486

During the year 3 (2022: 2) members of the Board of Trustees received reimbursement of expenses totalling £984 (2022 - £312). No members of the Board of Trustees received any remuneration during the year (2022 -£Nil).

Remuneration Policy

The Board of Trustees is responsible for ensuring that the pay and remuneration of key management personnel is reasonable and appropriate. Director salaries are determined annually by the People, Nominations and Remuneration Committee (PNRC). A separate policy outlines the approach to CEO pay which is capped relative to other salaries.



Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

13. Tangible Fixed Assets

Group and Charity	Freehold Property £	Leasehold Improvements £	Fixtures and Fittings £	Office Equipment £	Total £
Cost					
At 1 April 2022	34,173	100,743	584,766	672,344	1,392,026
Additions	-	-	6,288	58,305	64,593
At 31 March 2023	34,173	100,743	591,054	730,649	1,456,619
Depreciation					
At 1 April 2022	17,102	1,199	366,667	247,444	632,412
Charge for the year	683	21,188	57,070	129,776	208,717
At 31 March 2023	17,785	22,387	423,737	377,220	841,129
Net Book Value					
At 31 March 2023	16,388	78,356	167,317	353,429	615,490
At 31 March 2022	17,071	99,544	218,099	424,900	759,614

14. Intangible Fixed Assets

Group and Charity	Website £	Software £	Total £
Cost			
At 1 April 2022	312,614	126,367	438,981
Additions	-	-	-
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31 March 2023	312,614	126,367	438,981
Amortisation			
At 1 April 2022	89,142	124,206	213,348
Charge for the year	76,517	2,161	78,678
Disposals	-	-	-
At 31 March 2023	165,659	126,367	292,026
Net Book Value			
At 31 March 2023	146,955	-	146,955
At 31 March 2022	223,472	2,161	225,633

Intangible assets held at the year end comprise the National Domestic Abuse Helpline website in addition to costs of software with long term use across the organisation for specific purposes such as fundraising CRM, rent register and accounting software.

15. Investments

a) Financial investments - Group and Charity

	2023 £	2022 £
Investments at market value at beginning of the year	674,589	661,954
Additions at cost	98,220	83,276
Disposal proceeds	(103,809)	(91,156)
Unrealised/Realised (losses)/gains	(63,635)	20,515
	605,365	674,589
Cash held with investment managers	36,372	34,433
	641,737	709,022
Market value at end of the year	641,737	709,022
Historic cost at end of the year	558,580	563,322
Comprising:		
Global fixed interest	97,403	113,204
UK equities and funds	149,757	176,127
Overseas equities and funds	300,885	326,587
Property	9,956	14,975
Alternatives	47,364	43,696
Cash	36,372	34,433
	641,737	709,022

All investments are listed on a recognised stock exchange.

There were no individual holdings the market value of which is considered to be material in the context of the portfolio as a whole.

b) Charity Investment in Trading Subsidiary

	2023 £	2022 £
Issued share capital	1	1

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

16. Debtors: Amounts falling due within one year

	Group 2023 £	Group 2022 £	Charity 2023 £	Charity 2022 £
Trade Debtors	1,990,002	1,372,650	1,971,252	1,372,650
Bad debt provision	(49,184)	-	(49,184)	-
Prepayments	507,085	472,698	507,085	472,698
Rent deposit	42,860	201,377	42,860	201,377
Other Debtors	1,061,717	1,981,217	1,061,717	1,981,217
Intercompany Debtors	-	-	66,812	-
	3,552,480	4,027,942	3,600,542	4,027,942

17. Creditors: Amounts falling due within one year

	Group 2023 £	Group 2022 £	Charity 2023 £	Charity 2022 £
Trade Creditors	2,495,228	2,769,565	2,495,228	2,769,565
Accruals	1,178,399	1,158,539	1,172,459	1,158,539
Deferred income (note 18)	679,861	695,161	679,861	695,161
Other taxes and social security	391,879	374,205	391,879	374,205
Other Creditors	61,472	87,654	60,473	87,655
	4,806,839	5,085,124	4,799,900	5,085,125

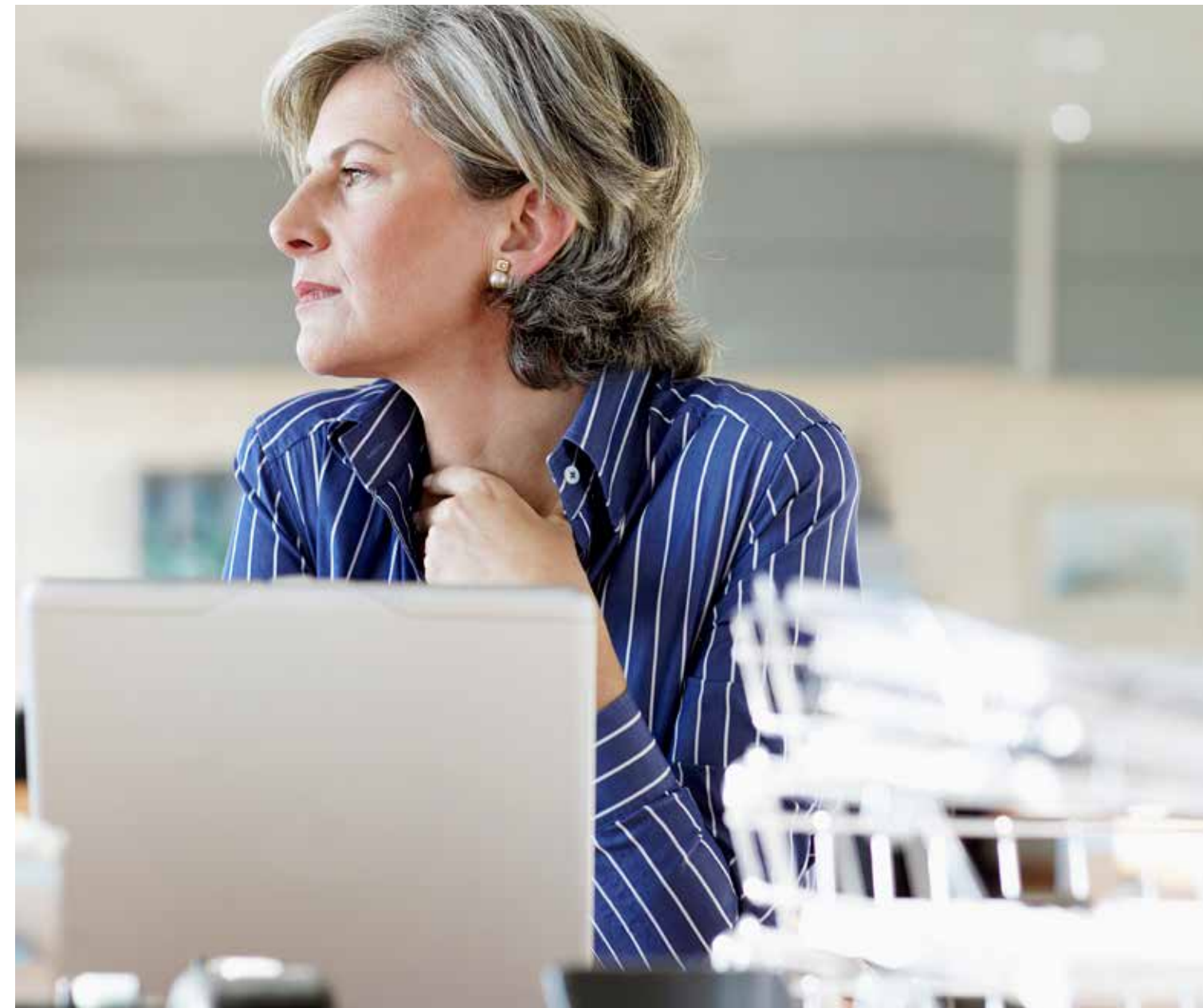
18. Deferred income

	Group 2023 £	Group 2022 £	Charity 2023 £	Charity 2022 £
Balance as at 1 April	695,161	1,056,820	695,161	1,056,820
Created in the year	1,016,882	3,666,074	1,016,882	3,666,074
Released in the year	(1,032,182)	(4,027,733)	(1,032,182)	(4,027,733)
Balance as at 31 March	679,861	695,161	679,861	695,161

19 Provisions for liabilities and charges

	2023 £	Restated 2022 £
Group and Charity		
Provision at beginning of the year	120,000	370,000
Created during the year	-	50,000
Released during year	-	(300,000)
Balance at the end of the year	120,000	120,000

The total provision brought forward of £120,000 relates to a dilapidations provision of £50,000 in accordance with the terms of the lease of the head office and a further £70,000 which relates to estimated future deficits concerning Refuge's Admitted Body Status of Hertfordshire LGPS scheme, a final salary scheme for one ex-employee. The rent creditor of £120,165 included in the comparative in last year's financial statements has been reanalysed to accruals in these financial statements.



Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

20. Unrestricted Funds

20. Unrestricted Funds								At
	1 April							31 March
Group and charity -	2022		Incoming		Outgoing		Transfers	2023
Current year	£		£		£		£	£
General	10,420,140		18,695,739		(22,954,009)		2,241,924	8,403,794
Designated								
Property Fund	360,000		-		-		(360,000)	-
Quality Assurance Fund	112,000		-		-		(112,000)	-
Automation Fund	50,000		-		-		(50,000)	-
Performance Improvement Fund	2,482,369		-				(2,482,369)	-
Fixed Asset Fund	-		-				762,445	762,445
	13,424,509	-	18,695,739	-	(22,954,009)	-	-	9,166,239

	1 April				At
Group and Charity - Prior Year	2021	Incoming	Outgoing	Transfers	31 March 2022
	£	£	£	£	£
General	10,414,166	19,828,845	(19,822,871)	-	10,420,140
Designated	3,837,073		(832,704)	(3,004,369)	0
Property Fund		-	-	360,000	360,000
Quality Assurance Fund		-	-	112,000	112,000
Automation Fund		-	-	50,000	50,000
Performance Improvement Fund		-		2,482,369	2,482,369
	14,251,239	- 19,828,845	- (20,655,575)	- -	13,424,509

General funds

These funds are available for Refuge's general purposes

Designated funds

The Board has created a new designated Fixed Asset Fund in 2022/23 to hold the balance of all tangible and intangible fixed assets separately from general funds. This reflects the fact that these assets are not available to be expended in the same way general funds are, as they are utilised in Refuge's day-to-day operations and are not readily realisable as cash.

In 2021/22, four designated funds were created to set aside funds for innovation in service delivery, the strengthening of support infrastructure, diversification of income streams and repairs of leased and owned properties. During 2022/23, the decision was taken to manage this ongoing spend through general funds. This will enable Refuge to continue these closely interlinked activities under a broader umbrella, thus reducing the administration around tracking separate and often overlapping funds.

21. Restricted Funds

	1 April				31 March
Group and charity - Current year	2022	Incoming	Outgoing	Transfers	2023
	£	£	£	£	£
Refuge provision	504,184	1,002,964	(1,356,692)	-	150,456
Outreach and Floating Support	31,833	2,113,648	(2,038,853)	-	106,628
Integrated Services	15,191	722,559	(737,750)	-	-
Big Lottery Fund	-	-		-	-
National Domestic Abuse Helpline	327,815	1,765,787	(2,020,508)	-	73,094
Specialist Services	-	-	-	-	-
Advocacy	142,858	1,041,235	(965,657)	-	218,436
Others	-	46,099	(46,099)	-	-
	1,021,881	6,692,292	(7,165,559)	-	548,614

	1 April				31 March
Group and Charity - Prior Year	2021	Incoming	Outgoing	Transfers	2022
	£	£	£	£	£
Refuge provision	543,263	766,661	(805,740)	-	504,184
Outreach and Floating Support	40,335	1,250,738	(1,259,240)	-	31,833
Integrated Services	27,943	364,242	(376,994)	-	15,191
Big Lottery Fund	3,429	-	(3,429)	-	-
National Domestic Abuse Helpline	327,815	1,554,518	(1,554,518)	-	327,815
Specialist Services	-	27,783	(27,783)	-	-
Advocacy	230,616	527,200	(614,958)	-	142,858
	1,173,401	4,491,142	(4,642,662)	-	1,021,881

Notes to the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023

22. Analysis of Net Assets between Funds

Group and charity - Current year	Unrestricted	Restricted	
	Funds	Funds	Total
	£	£	£
Tangible fixed assets	615,490	-	615,490
Intangible fixed assets	74,007	72,948	146,955
Financial Investments	641,738	-	641,738
Net current assets	7,955,004	475,666	8,430,670
Provisions	(120,000)	-	(120,000)
	9,166,239	548,614	9,714,853

Group and Charity - Prior year	Unrestricted	Restricted	
	Funds	Funds	Total
	£	£	£
Tangible fixed assets	759,614	-	759,614
Intangible fixed assets	117,669	107,964	225,633
Financial Investments	709,022	-	709,022
Net current assets	11,958,204	913,917	12,872,121
Provisions	(120,000)	-	(120,000)
	13,424,509	1,021,881	14,446,390

23. Commitments

At the year-end the company had future minimum lease commitments under non-cancellable operating leases as set out below:

	2023	2023	2022	2022
	Land and	Other	Land and	Other
	Buildings		Buildings	
	£		£	£
Up to one year	457,445	1,404	575,952	1,537
Between one and five years	231,316	2,106	559,371	-
Later than five years	-	-	-	-
	688,761	3,510	1,135,323	1,537

Operating lease costs in the year amounted to £510,281 (2022: £665,914) in respect of land and buildings and £25,610 (2022: £8,703) in respect of other leases.

The figures for 2022 have been revised to reflect the minimum commitment due in line with the break clause in the Head Office agreement.

24 Related Party Transactions

During the year 3 trustees (2022: 2) received reimbursement of expenses totaling £984 (2022 - £1,583). Donations from trustees during the year were £NIL (2022: £NIL).

During the year the charity received income of £12,823 from its trading subsidiary for the use of charity staff, data and facilities and for the use of the charity logo. At the year end the trading company owed the charity £66, 812 (2022: £NIL).

25. Net income for the year is stated after charging

	2023	2022
	£	£
Depreciation (see Note 13)	208,717	98,099
Amortisation (see Note 14)	78,678	69,477
Auditors' remuneration		
- external audit	30,950	21,250
- Grant audit	-	2,500
Auditors' remuneration (net) prior year	1,264	-
Auditors' remuneration non-audit (net)	1,035	850
Tax review	984	2,444
Non recoverable VAT	6,650	4,920
Operating leases – property	510,281	665,914
Operating leases – other	25,610	8,703

26. Subsidiary Undertakings

Refuge has a wholly owned subsidiary, Refuge Trading Ltd, incorporated in the UK and registered in England with its registered office at One America Square, 17 Crosswall, London EC3N 2LB. The company registration number is 13799550. The purpose of Refuge Trading Ltd is to manage the corporate partnerships of the charity, including the use of the charity logo, and the sale of Refuge merchandise. Each year the distributable profits of Refuge Trading Ltd will be donated to Refuge under Deed of Covenant.

	2023	2022
	£	£
(a) Investment in Subsidiary Undertaking	1	1

Refuge's investment in Refuge Trading Ltd is £1, being the whole of the issued share capital of that company.

	2023	2022
	£	£
Total Income	28,750	-
Cost of Sales	(6,883)	-
	21,867	-
Admin Costs	(5,940)	-
Net Profit gifted to Refuge	(15,927)	-
Retained Profit for the year	-	-

At 31 March 2023 Refuge Trading Ltd had net assets and called up share capital of £1 (2022: £1).

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Refuge is the largest specialist provider of gender-based violence services in the country, supporting many thousands of women and children on any given day. Refuge opened the world's first refuge in 1971 in Chiswick and now provides: a national network of 44 refuges, community outreach programmes, child support services, and independent advocacy services for those experiencing domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence.

We also run specialist services for survivors of tech abuse, economic abuse, modern slavery and female genital mutilation.

Refuge runs the 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline which receives hundreds of calls and contacts from women experiencing domestic abuse every day and can be reached on 0808 2000 247.

www.refuge.org.uk
www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk
www.refugetechsafety.org