Safety Net

Impact Report 2023-24

1. Foreword

I'm delighted to present Safety Net's 2023-24 Impact Report, showcasing our achievements over the past year.

This year's report highlights the dedication and innovation of the Safety Net team. Despite increasing referral numbers and an ongoing cost of living crisis, we've found creative solutions to extend our support to more individuals than ever before. We've enhanced our assessment processes and developed a comprehensive package of safety and stabilisation support to assist people. Our therapy team have also supported more people than ever before, enabling us to reduce the waiting time for therapy from nine months to six months.

When I joined Safety Net in 2015 my role was as an Integrated Support Worker, which has now developed into the Trauma Informed Practitioner role. Throughout my time at Safety Net, I've been encouraged to develop and implement ideas for improving services. This pushed me out of my comfort zone, and led to the achievement of goals such as facilitating training for agencies, and presenting Safety Net's services to other stakeholders.

Between Jan 2021 and October 2022, I worked at another charity to further my knowledge around working within the Family Courts as a McKenzie Friend. Since returning to Safety Net, I've been able to use this experience and knowledge to assist Safety Net's service users who may be going through a court process.This is something something I'm very passionate about.

Last year I was successful in applying for the role of Senior Trauma Informed Practitioner which led to greater responsibilities. This culture of support and career development is a cornerstone of Safety Net and a key reason why I wanted to return. As part of my senior role, I lead on various projects such as our refugee and asylum seeker support. The positive feedback from these service users, many of whom have endured horrific experiences, shows the significant impact we're making in their lives.

Over the years, the Trauma Informed Practitioner role has evolved from general support work to more specialised trauma informed practice. Our team now delivers foundational therapeutic work to help service users achieve safety and stability. We educate individuals on how trauma works and provide techniques to manage its symptoms. This work is crucial, as individuals often struggle if they feel they cannot stabilise and manage the effects of trauma. In addition, not all service users want to discuss their experiences in therapy; some prefer to learn coping and wellbeing strategies. Our team supports all needs effectively and everyone within the Safety Net team brings their own specialist expertise, which is invaluable. Now, our team is the largest it has ever been, a growth I'm incredibly proud of.

I hope you find this year's report insightful. We really value your comments and feedback - please feel free to contact us at office@safetynetuk.org

Laura Bell
Senior Trauma Informed Practitioner
Safety Net

Chair's Foreword

It is with great pride that I present our Impact report for 2023-2024.

This year, our team has continued to provide high-quality, specialist trauma-informed support and therapy to the people of Cumbria. Despite increasing demand, our primary outcomes remain outstanding, with 80% of adults and 78% of children and young people showing significant improvements in wellbeing, and 82% of adults and 89% of children and young people improving their trauma symptoms.

These excellent figures are an improvement on last year's, and they reflect the real difference we are making in the lives of local people. But as we look to the future, we acknowledge there is more work to be done. So many people are in desperate need of our support – with this in mind, we intend to generate more vital income to be able to serve more people across our county. We also want to reduce barriers to people accessing our services – especially older people and people from minoritised groups - and embed learning from our recent accreditation review of our services.

As I reflect on our progress, Maya Angelou's words resonate deeply: "I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it." This quote embodies our trauma-informed approach— accepting trauma, managing it, recovering from it - and thriving, despite it.

I extend my deepest gratitude to our dedicated team, whose hard work and passion drive our mission forward.

Yours sincerely,
James King,
Chair, Safety Net

"The support I received was absolutely invaluable - it allowed me to pursue a safer and happier life for me and my children."

– adult service user

2. Introduction

Safety Net is a charity supporting the recovery of those affected by rape, exploitation, sexual and domestic abuse across Cumbria.

We offer advice, support, counselling and therapy to adults, children and young people, who have been affected by abuse and trauma. Our approach is holistic, inclusive, LGBTQ+ friendly and trauma informed.

We work in partnership with other professionals and community groups, with the aim of improving wellbeing and quality of life.

In this report you can find out about the impact of our work in 2023 - 2024, and the difference we are making to lives in the local area.

*To protect the identities of our service users, names and identifying features have been changed in all testimonials included in this report.

3. The scale of the problem

Sadly, rape, exploitation, domestic and sexual abuse are common in our society. Figures from the Office of National Statistics show that in the year to March 2023, Cumbria experienced:

• 9814 domestic abuse incidents and crimes – a reduction by 1.7% from the year before.

• 1717 sexual offences – up 0.7% from the year before, and the highest amount since records began.

The effects of trauma

Abuse inflicts deep trauma – the effects of which can last a lifetime if left untreated. In 2023 – 2024, over 70% of adults and 88% of children and young people at initial assessment had moderate to high trauma symptoms.

Trauma effects a person's physical health, emotions, impulse control and self-image. It also affects their ability to think, learn, concentrate and form relationships. Many people who have been abused have mental health problems and suffer from depression, anxiety and PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). Common side effects include nightmares, panic attacks, self harm, and thoughts and attempts of suicide.

In response to the abusive experience, people can develop a range of complex feelings, including anger, shame and guilt. Many find it difficult to trust others and to form relationships. Poor self-care and low levels of confidence and self-esteem can occur, as well as poor physical and mental health. Adults and young people often turn to drugs and alcohol as coping strategies. Many self-harm and have eating disorders.

As a result of Safety Net's support, our service users are able to process and recover from the trauma they have experienced. This results in improved mental and physical health, as our outcomes show on pages 30-31. Many find employment or go back to education. Some get involved in their local community, expanding their circle of social support. All of this enables our service users to heal and move past their abusive experiences, with the aim of improving their lives.

"The support I received has given me the tools to help look after myself so much better. It's helped me look at the way I feel and understand it more, also help me to calm my mind when my emotions start to run."

– adult service user

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM IN CUMBRIA IN 2023:

9814

domestic abuse incidents and crimes.

1717

sexual offences - a slight increase from the year before, and the highest amount since records began.

SAFETY NET SUPPORTED:

1037

people directly - a 5% increase on the year before

1098

people through our enquiry desk - an increase of 55% on the year before.

...THESE ARE THE HIGHEST AMOUNT OF PEOPLE SUPPORTED SINCE OUR CHARITY WAS FOUNDED.

70% OF ADULTS AND 88% OF CHILDREN SUPPORTED BY SAFETY NET HAVE MODERATE TO HIGH LEVELS OF TRAUMA WHEN THEY COME TO OUR CHARITY.

Samira - refugee project case study

Samira, a refugee from the Middle East, was referred to our charity by a Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner from NHS North Cumbria Talking Therapies. She had endured years of an abusive marriage in her home country, leaving her grappling with severe anxiety and depression. Her journey towards recovery began with face-to-face trauma-informed support sessions.

In our early sessions, we focused on helping Samira understand the nature of abuse and validating her experiences. This was a crucial first step in her recovery, as she found relief in sharing her story and having her feelings acknowledged. We explored the mechanisms behind flashbacks and triggers, helping Samira comprehend the effects of trauma on the brain. Various strategies were introduced to help her manage her symptoms, including breathing techniques and grounding methods.

A significant challenge for Samira was being separated from her family in London, compounded by still having relatives in the Middle East. We provided support letters advocating for a relocation closer to her family, although this request was initially denied. We revised coping strategies and self-care practices to help her manage the stress, and gave her letters detailing her journey to support communication with new agencies despite language barriers.

Eventually, Samira was relocated to shared accommodation in the North of England, where she began forging new friendships and attending college. Our sessions then focused on the opportunities around her and the barriers she faced. When Samira was invited for her Home Office interview regarding her immigration status, we provided support letters to help her avoid the trauma of recounting her experiences. Samira was eventually granted Right to Remain status for five years.

Currently, our work is centred on securing housing for Samira to be closer to her family to support her ongoing recovery. Despite the challenges, Samira has diligently applied the techniques and strategies from our sessions. She engages with friends and family, enjoys walking, and has a passion for cooking. Her resilience and determination have been truly inspiring, making her journey a highlight in our work.

4. Our key achievements in 2023 – 2024

Every year the number of people we support increases. 2023 - 2024 was no exception – the number of service users we supported increased by 5%.

Despite these increased pressures, our outcomes remain consistently high across all areas, with 80% of adults and 78% of children and young people showing improvements across their wellbeing scores (see page 30 for information). This shows the real difference we are making to the lives of local people. In 2023-2024, we provided 1:1 trauma-informed therapy and support to:

- 634 adults
- 403 children and young people

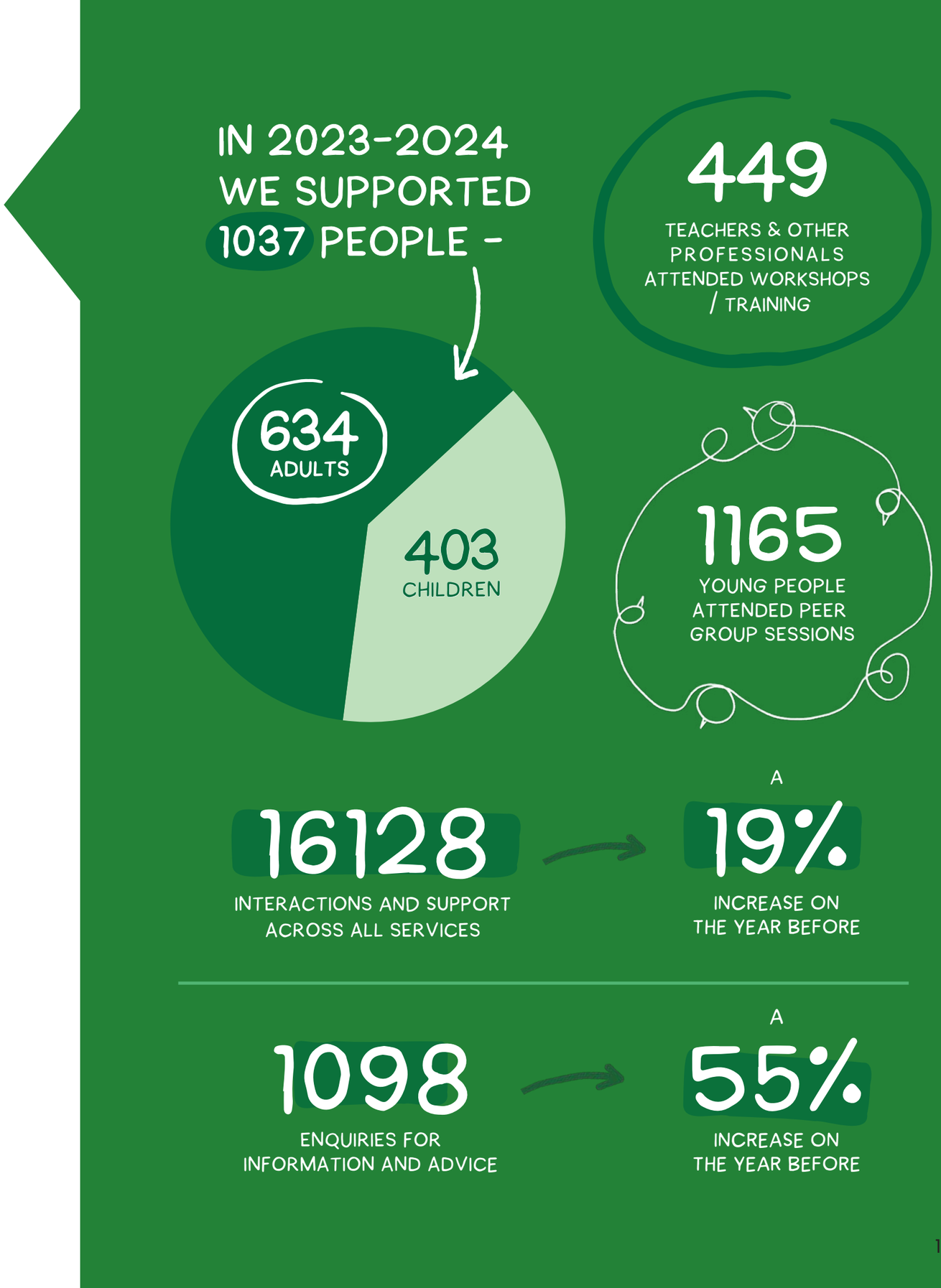
This is a 5% increase from the year before, when we supported 998 people. We believe this figure would have been much higher if we had not had to pause our referral system for two months due to an ever-growing waiting list. During this time we continued to honour our contracts for supporting the most vulnerable, high risk people by taking referrals from the Sexual Assault Referral Centre, health partners and schools. As a result of this measure, we were able to actively reduce our waiting lists from a nine month wait to a six month wait for the average service user. We were also able to increase the support provided through our enquiry desk and website, so local people were not left without any information or support whatsoever. We managed 1098 enquiries for information and advice last year – a 55% increase on the year before.

There are many reasons why our referrals increase every year:

- Safety Net's profile has improved due to our partnership working and communications. We are known, trusted and have a good reputation locally.
- National campaigns are raising awareness of domestic and sexual abuse, so there's greater understanding of these issues.

In addition to increasing numbers of referrals, over the last few years we have found that our service users have increasingly complex support needs. We think this is because the cost of living crisis maybe exacerbating mental health needs, in addition to the trauma service users have experienced. In addition, people are having greater difficulty accessing public services including their GP, due to a mismatch in funding against demand. To support people through this challenging period, we have provided additional assistance around benefits, housing, mental health, family court and pre-trial support, food bank referrals, Criminal Injury Compensation claims and cost of living grants.

Safety Net is also supporting service users who require therapy for longer than our usual 12 or 24-week timescales, and this has a direct effect on our overall capacity as a service.



"The most consistent support I have had from any service. It has really helped me come to terms with trauma and to blame myself less for what happened." – adult service user

– adult service user

"My counsellor listened to me, engaged with me, helped me face some challenging situations and guided me in dealing with past trauma. She couldn't have done a better job and has truly helped me."

– adult service user

"Safety Net has helped in showing me better coping strategies for PTSD and anxiety.
In all my sessions I have felt like I was listened to, and my past trauma was taken very seriously."

- adult service user

5. Who we are

Our Trustees

ADE KEVERN
CAROL TRAVERS
MELISSA AURELIA
KATE DIXON
MARK HATTRICK
ELEANOR HANCOCK
RACHAEL RHINEBACH
JAMES KING

Our Management

JULIA CARVER
JO BIRCH
FIONUALA WAREING

Business Support

SALLY
GIO
LESLEY

Our Therapy Team

LORNA
HELEN
ANGELA
MANDY
CAROLINE
KATE

1037 People

supported by...

Our Trauma Informed Practitioners

LAURA
FLORA
SHARON
JASMINE
NORIKA
LYNSEY
MAEGAN
LIZ
REBECCA

Our Volunteer Coordinator:

WENDY

Our volunteers:

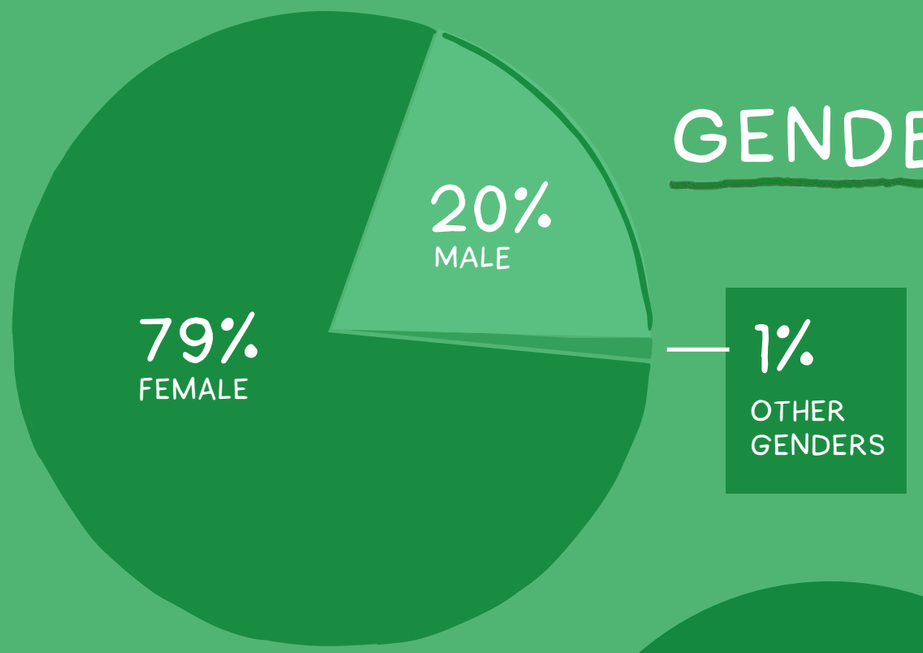
14 VOLUNTEERS

Our Freelance Therapists

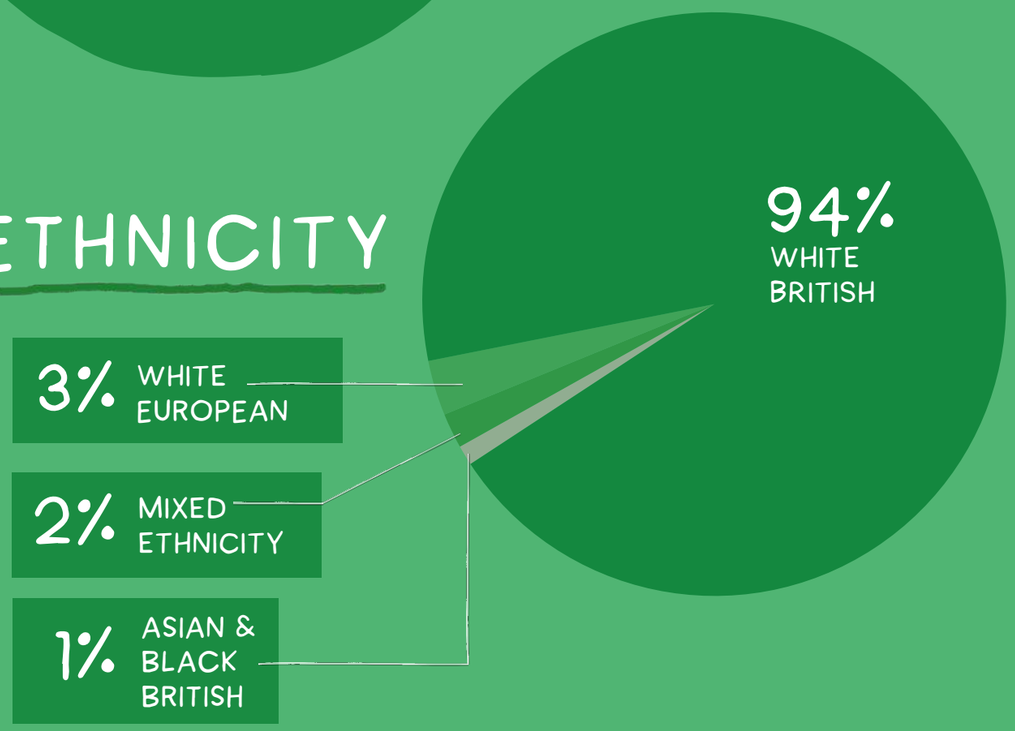
JO D
JAN
KAREN
GILLY
ALLY
JO T
BECKY
KEITH

6. Who we support

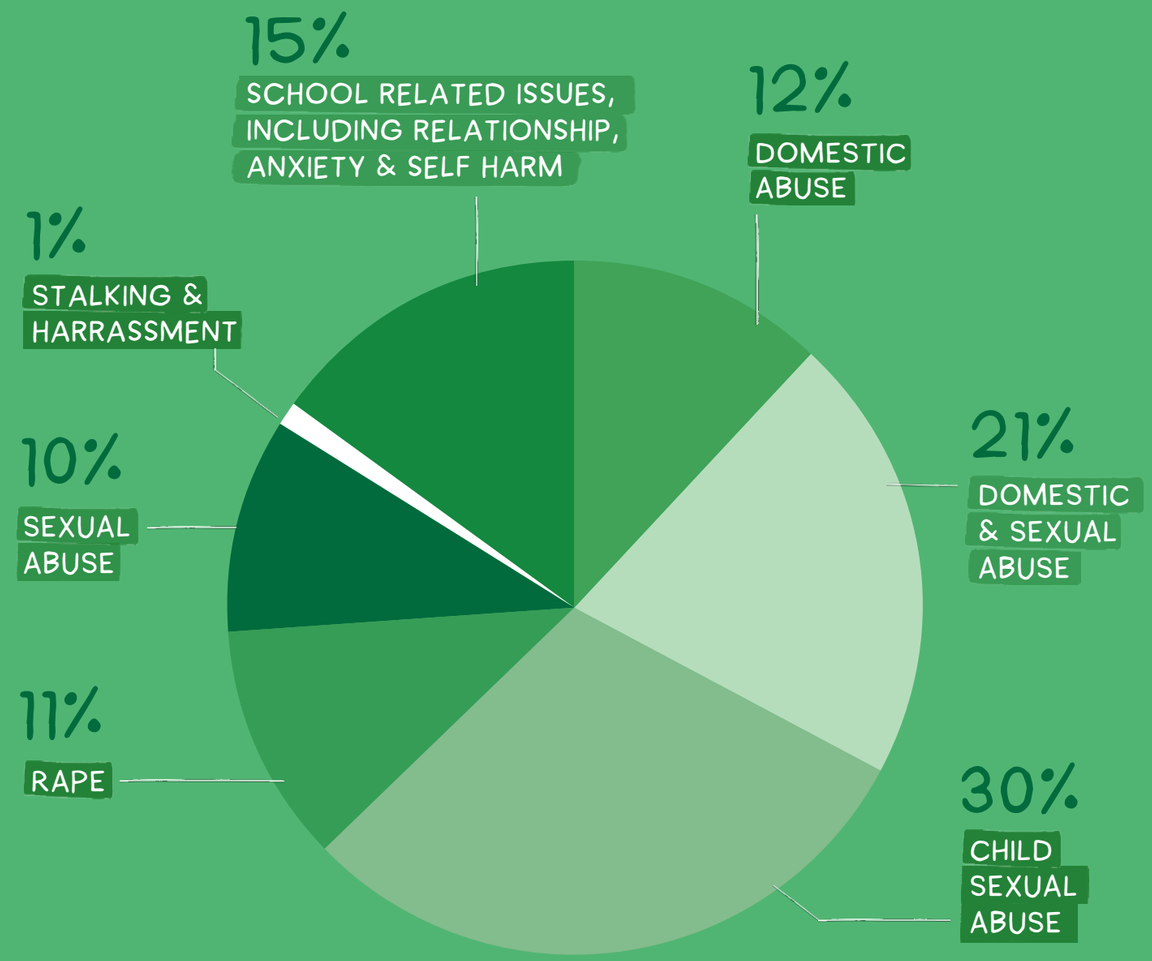
GENDER



ETHNICITY



MAIN PRESENTING INCIDENT



"Through the schools' workshop, I learned that no amount of porn can ever love you back."

– schools service user

7. Our vision, mission & values

Our vision:

Communities free from abuse.

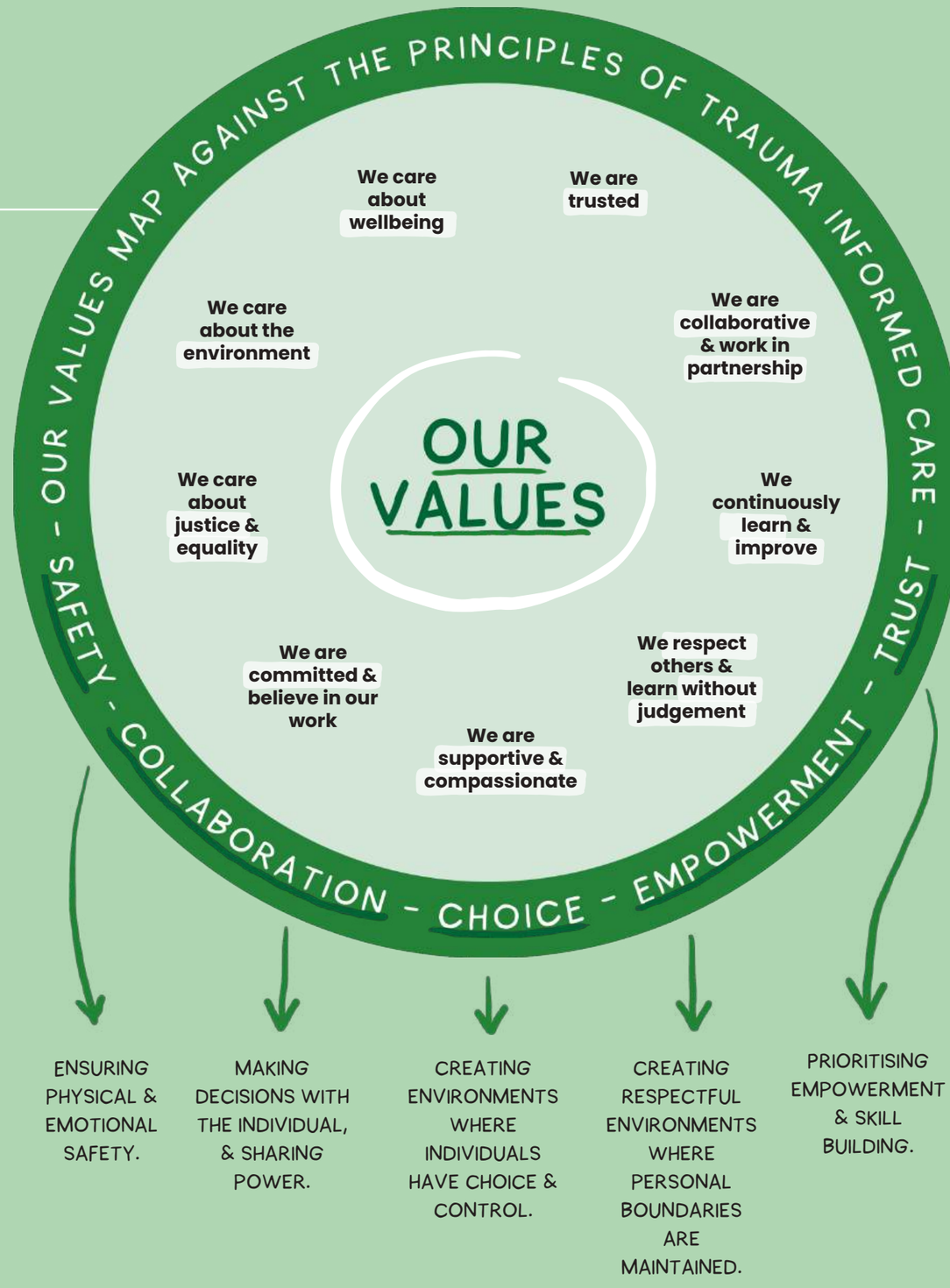
Our mission:

Safety Net supports those affected by rape, exploitation, domestic and sexual abuse across Cumbria.

We offer advice, support, therapy and a safe space to help people recover from the trauma of abuse.

"My experience with Safety Net has been very positive... any time I have felt unsure or worried about anything, I've received insight, signposting, strategies and support from my therapist. I feel that the rapport we've built has boosted my self-confidence and I've looked forward to sharing my personal wins with her each week."

– adult service user



8. How we work

We offer a 4-tiered approach, based on a risk and needs-led assessment that combines therapy with wrap-around support.

Tier 1:

Information and advice:

Advice and support to individuals, professionals and family members. Includes signposting to other agencies and services, pre-trial and court procedures advice.

Tier 2:

Emotional and practical support through our Trauma Informed Practitioners:

Help with safety, stabilisation and wellbeing. Includes mindfulness, relaxation, sleep and self-care techniques, plus education on the impact of trauma (up to 12 sessions).

Tier 3:

Trauma-focused counselling or therapy:

Helps service users process and cope with the impacts of trauma. Includes pre-trial therapy.

Tier 4:

Reintegration into the community:

Art therapy groups, a men's group, peer mentoring, befriending and volunteering.

We also deliver prevention and education work, through a whole schools approach. This includes 1:1 support work with children and young people in schools, through our new programme Your Space. The aim is for young people to develop resilience, self-esteem and confidence to tackle situations that are impacting on their wellbeing. These include:

- Relationships with peers / romantic partners, that are unhealthy or abusive
- Family relationships where domestic abuse is prevalent
- Child sexual abuse
- Child sexual exploitation, sexual assault or rape
- Gender identity issues
- Sexuality and sexual health
- Online safety
- Self-harming
- Anxiety / low mood

Sessions are led by our Trauma Informed Practitioners and supported by the therapy team. Within each session, we provide advice, explore healthy relationship skills, and look at safety and coping strategies. We use a range of techniques including mindfulness, creative therapy and multi-sensory resources to support emotional regulation.

Your Space includes peer group sessions, led by our team, that support the Relationships and Sex Education agenda. Topics include:

- Consent
- Sexuality and sexual health
- Online safety
- Sending nude photos
- Pornography
- Healthy relationships
- Toxic masculinity

We also provide training and information to other professionals and parents. This supports safeguarding, Early Help Assessments, and muti-agency meetings.

"The support has been immeasurable, and I've made big strides forward because of it... It has been a lifeline to me. I know I have a long way to go but Safety Net has been invaluable. Thank you."

– adult service user

Evie – schools case study

Evie was referred to us through our school's project after living with parental relationship breakdown, including domestic abuse. She lived with her mother, and had regular contact with her father and his new partner. Although she had good relationships with both parents, she was feeling the impact of their contentious relationship, and also had some difficulties with her father's new partner. She requested someone to talk to, recalling the benefits of similar support from her previous school. Our Trauma Informed Practitioner worked directly with Evie to:

- Encourage self-expression through art, focusing on important people and memories.
- Help Evie recognise her own worth and ways for others to see it too.
- Advise on strategies to manage feelings arising from family arguments and interactions that caused self-doubt.
- Build aspirations and empower Evie to navigate these challenges confidently.

Evie attended 12 sessions regularly, where she explored her relationships, identifying which were supportive and which made her feel vulnerable or angry. We discussed cultural diversity in relationships, emphasising safety and empowerment. Recognising her own needs in the sessions boosted her confidence to express her feelings to her family.

As Evie progressed, she showed interest in other services that specialise in supporting families that have these issues. We signposted her to services that could help her further, and also explored healthy and unhealthy relationships and their impact on her emotional wellbeing.

By the end of our sessions, Evie felt more confident and informed. Her trauma symptoms had also significantly decreased, making day to day life easier to navigate. She was aware of other services available through our charity but chose not to pursue them. However, she was given the option for a re-referral in a few months if she needed further support.

Through our trauma informed support, Evie gained valuable strategies to manage her trauma, emotions and relationships, paving the way for a healthier, more empowered future.

10. Our outcomes - how we achieved our goals in 2023 - 2024

Goal 1:

Effective governance and long-term sustainability

Safety Net is a member organisation of The Survivors Trust, and in 2023-2024 our organisation was a pilot service for The Survivors Trust's new UCAS accredited inspection process, which we completed successfully. We are also organisational members of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy, and work within their ethical framework.

We are proud to evidence our trauma informed practice by working towards One Small Thing's silver quality standards accreditation for trauma informed organisations over the last year. This process means we have completed a top-down, trauma informed review of our service.

In 2023, our new Chair James King joined our board, and we also welcomed several other new board members with experience across a range of areas. We now have four board members (half of the board) with lived experience of abuse, who help ensure our services remain relevant and appropriate to the people we serve. Over the last year, we also worked with a consultant from Lloyds to improve leadership and management throughout our charity.

The majority of our funding is in place for 2024/25. Applications have been re-submitted to current funders including Henry Smith and Children in Need. We have secured funding from new foundations including the Masonic Charitable Foundation and the Leathersellers' Foundation. We also have new relationships with North East and Cumbria Integrated Care Board – with two contracts secured with them – one for counselling for the Sexual Assault Referral Centre, and one for providing support to refugees and people seeking asylum.

Safety Net has a long term business plan and funding plan in place. Our aim is to create more of our own income through potential trading opportunities, training and events, as well as community fundraising. This will give us a greater amount of financial stability over time.

To help us meet these ambitions, this year we have delivered a paid training event for professionals. Our Head of Strategy and Development has completed a trading and sustainability course, funded by Lloyds Bank. We've also increased our community fundraising, supported by volunteers.

Goal 2:

To challenge inequality and injustice, and campaign to influence strategy and policy

Last year, we worked with the umbrella organisation for sexual abuse services - The Survivors Trust - to influence policy through responding to national consultations and policy documents.

We also represented the third sector at strategic groups in Cumbria. In April 2023, Cumbria County Council was replaced by two new unitary authorities - Cumberland Council and Westmorland and Furness Council – so a key focus involved embedding relationships in these new organisations. As part of this work, we met with the Director of Public Health and Communities for Cumberland Council. We shared our learnings and recommendations to highlight the significance of trauma as a driver for mental health problems, and discussed how we can work in partnership moving forward.

In addition, we were keynote speakers at The North Community Mental Health Transformation Conference, speaking about the collaborative trauma informed work we delivered to refugees and people seeking asylum. We also supported a roundtable meeting with the Designated Family Court Judge HHJ Clive Baker, to discuss the barriers services are experiencing through this court process with the aim of improving the court process and experience for all involved.

We are linked in with many local decision-making groups. The groups influence local policy decisions around domestic abuse and sexual violence. This helps Safety Net to represent the voice of our service users, and to ensure domestic and sexual abuse remain high on the political agenda.

OUR PARTNER NETWORK

- ACTION FOR MENTAL HEALTH FORUM
- BRIDGEWAY LEADS GROUP
- CUMBERLAND SOCIAL PRESCRIBERS
- WESTMORLAND AND FURNESS SOCIAL PRESCRIBING
- CUMBRIA SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TASK AND FINISH GROUP
- THE SURVIVORS TRUST CHIEF OFFICERS FORUM
- WEST CUMBRIA MENTAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP
- WESTMORLAND AND FURNESS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STRATEGIC GROUP
- CUMBRIA SEXUAL VIOLENCE STRATEGIC GROUP
- CUMBERLAND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STRATEGIC GROUP
- CUMBRIA CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE REFERENCE GROUP
- WEST CUMBRIA FAMILY WELLBEING PARTNERSHIP
- NORTH CUMBRIA MENTAL HEALTH PARTNERSHIP
- MULTI AGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE (ACROSS CUMBRIA)
- RAPE AND SERIOUS SEXUAL OFFENCES SCRUTINY GROUP
- CUMBRIA COUNCIL FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICES - VOLUNTEER MANAGERS MEETING
- BEFRIENDING NETWORK MANAGERS MEETING
- TRAUMA INFORMED CUMBRIA STEERING GROUP

Over the last year, we got involved in national and local social media campaigns. These demonstrate our commitment to inequality and justice. These included:

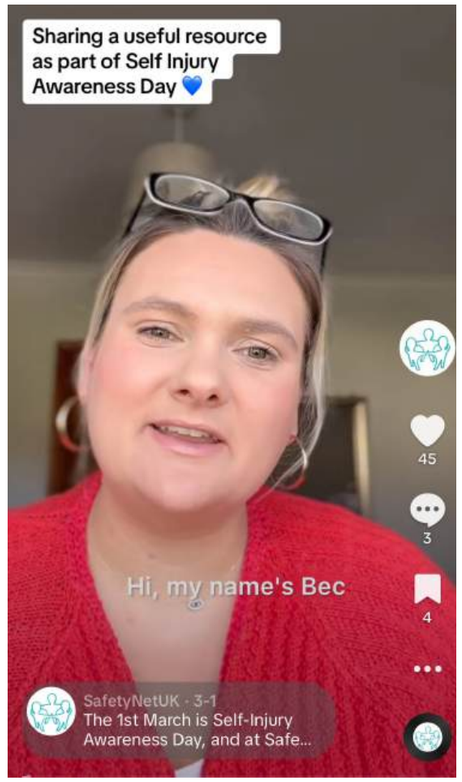
- **16 Days of Action Against Gender-Based Violence:** this campaign takes place in late November and early December every year, and it's led by the United Nations. We created social media content explaining the facts on gender-based violence.
- **A campaign for North West Sexual Violence Week:** These took place in early November. We created short form video social media content.
- **A campaign for International Women's Day,** which highlighted how older women can experience domestic abuse. We undertook this campaign in partnership with Age UK Carlisle and Eden. This included social media content and a coffee morning.

As a result of these and other campaigns, we received a total of 6854 impressions across our social media channels.

Throughout the year, we also worked hard to challenge misconceptions around domestic and sexual abuse and to promote Safety Net's services through effective communications, resulting in the following followers and visitors to our channels:

- **www.safetynetuk.org:** c.12,000 visitors – 28% increase from the year before, when it was 9100.
- **Facebook:** 1220 followers - 8% increase from year before when it was 1127.
- **Instagram:** 321 followers - 21% increase from year before when it was 264.
- **Twitter:** 982 followers - a marginal increase from the year before when it was 967.

We also started a new TikTok channel in recent months. This has 15 followers but the content we're producing is generating far more views than on other platforms - a total of 10,000 views from just seven posts so far. As TikTok is typically used by a Gen Z audience, we use content themes that we know are relevant to young people.



Goal 3:

To work collaboratively to deliver trauma-informed, needs-led and accessible services:

Last year, we briefly paused our Tier 2 and 3 referrals for two months in order to reduce our waiting list for these services. We used the time productively to review and improve our enquiry desk and Tier 1 services, and to actively reduce the waiting list for Tier 2 and 3. This initiative was successful and reduced the time that people wait for longer term therapy from nine months to six.

We also adapted our services to put in place more services for those who are on our waiting list and will be there for some time - see Tier 1 for information.

We have also extended our parenting support, acknowledging how important it is to work with adults who care for traumatised children. This included an increased amount of 1:1 support and groups, such as an online peer group and an equine therapy support group.

In 2023 – 2024, we offered further support to people who experience barriers to accessing help. We started developing two new housing-based projects: one for adults and children in a refugee hostel, and one supporting people living in short-term accommodation.

We worked closely with local partners, who provide many referrals - see pie chart, right.

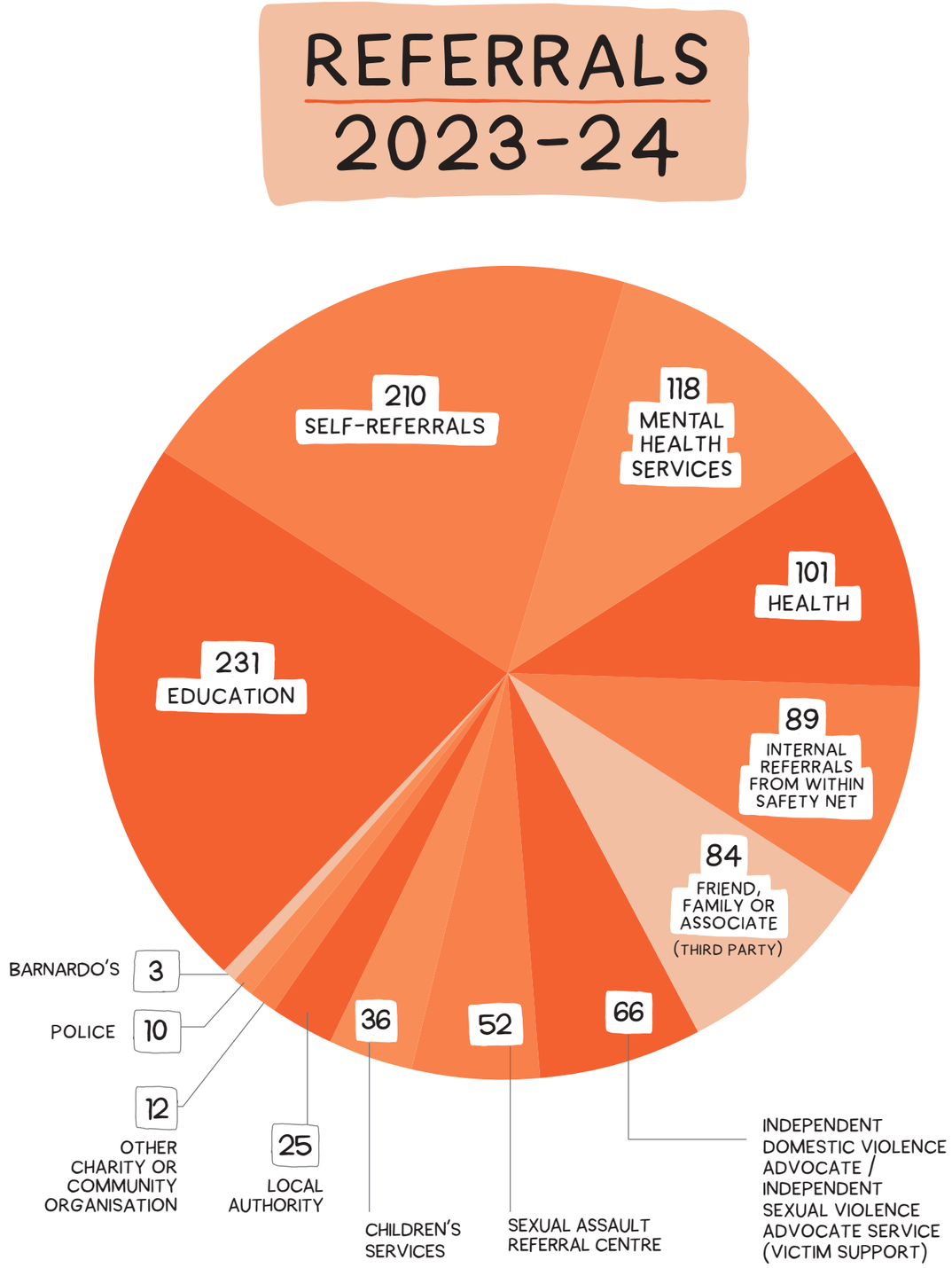
Tier 1: Information and advice

Last year we received 1097 contacts via our enquiry desk. This is an increase of 54% on the year before. 259 people were also offered short term support (less than three sessions).

In 2023 – 2024, we completely refreshed our approach to Tier 1 support. We now have a more rigorous process for assessing the risk and trauma profile of the people who approach us for support. This means that people who are at high risk of further harm will immediately be signposted to intervention services that can support them, for example the local Independent Domestic Violence / Sexual Violence Advisor Service.

People who are considered to be safe, but who have moderate to high trauma symptoms, will be offered up to five sessions of 'Looking Ahead' support from a Safety Net Trauma Informed Practitioner while they wait on our waiting list for therapeutic support. The Looking Ahead service includes emotional and moral support for service users who are proceeding through a criminal or family court case, as well as wrap around support in relation to benefits, housing and mental health.

In total, we provided much more wrap around support than the year before - a total of 16,128 interactions across all services, representing a 19% increase. As mentioned previously, we believe this is due to the cost of living crisis impacting on the mental wellbeing of the people we support.



Tier 2 and Tier 3: Support and therapy

576 people were supported with through either Tier 2 or 3 longer term therapeutic support. This is an increase of 32% on last year, when we helped 438.

159 people were supported with pre-trial therapy. This is an increase of 18% on last year, when we helped 135.

Tier 4: Reintegration back into the community

Our Tier 4 services support service users to reintegrate back into communities, through volunteering and peer mentorship. This creates social networks for ongoing support.

A dedicated part time Volunteer Coordinator and team of volunteers supports this work. All volunteers receive induction, monthly supervision, and clinical and wellbeing support. Many are ex-service users.

There were 16 volunteers during 2023 - 2024, providing 256 hours of support, plus over 300 hours of service support at events and workshops including Kendal Calling Festival, Cumbria Pride, volunteers and careers fairs, and safety events. One of these volunteers has now become a trustee of Safety Net and one has moved on to further education and training.

Our volunteers supported:

- 19 x peer-led coffee and craft groups for women, taking place over 61 hours across the year. 95 participants benefitted from these groups last year.
- A monthly men's group, taking place over 100 hours across the years. 45 participants benefitted from this group over the last year.
- 68 befriending sessions across the year, equating to 95 hours of befriending support for our service users. This included telephone chats, support with accessing local services, and support with shopping and leisure activities, for example attending the gym and walks.

"There is something quite special about being in the company of these great lads. It isn't easy learning to trust others when you have gone through such terrible trauma, but this group allows you to do just that. We are becoming more resilient and more positive in the face of the challenges of life. And when we are struggling, the lads are always in our corner with support and humanity in spades."

- men's group participant

ADULT SERVICES OUTCOMES

We check how well people are doing after they use our services, using outcome measures. This helps us to see if their trauma symptoms have got better. We continued to show improvements in our wellbeing and symptoms of trauma scores; the main scores that we measure the effectiveness of our service against. Other scores showed a slight dip compared to the year before. We believe this is due to the cost of living crisis exacerbating the mental health needs of our service users, as well as their safety – more people are presenting with complex needs.

IMPROVED WELLBEING / SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

80%
HAD IMPROVED HEALTH & WELLBEING.
(77% IN 2022-23)

82%
HAD REDUCED SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA.
(79% IN 2022-23)

REDUCED RISK & RISK TAKING BEHAVIOURS

72%
FELT THEIR PERSONAL SAFETY HAD IMPROVED
(79% IN 2022-23)

91%
HAD GREATER AWARENESS AROUND ONLINE SAFETY
(80% IN 2022-23).

IMPROVED EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE

80%
FELT THEY HAD BETTER COPING AND SELF-CARE STRATEGIES
(81% IN 2022-23).

70%
FELT MORE ABLE TO MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS
(78% IN 2022-23).

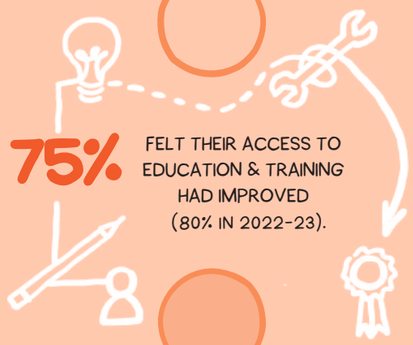
73%
HAD IMPROVED ABILITY TO INTERACT SOCIALLY WITH OTHER PEOPLE
(78% IN 2022-23).

74%
HAD BETTER ENGAGEMENT IN PRIVATE LEISURE ACTIVITIES / HOBBIES
(79% IN 2022-23).

INCREASED ABILITY TO COPE WITH PRACTICAL TASKS:

69%
FELT MORE ABLE TO SEEK & MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT
(87% IN 2022-23).

82%
FELT MORE ABLE TO MANAGE POLICE, CRIMINAL JUSTICE, AND COURT PROCEEDINGS
(70% IN 2022-23)



75%
FELT THEIR ACCESS TO EDUCATION & TRAINING HAD IMPROVED
(80% IN 2022-23).

72%
REPORTED A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THEIR MANAGEMENT OF HOUSING, FINANCES, & BENEFITS
(77% IN 2022-23).

72%
FELT BETTER ABLE TO PARENT & LOOK AFTER CHILDREN
(73% IN 2022-23).

70%
FELT BETTER ABLE TO MANAGE HOUSEHOLD TASKS
(77% IN 2022-23)

For a full breakdown of data, contact Safety Net.

Kerry, adults' therapy case study (Tier 3)

Kerry sought support from Safety Net after enduring childhood abuse, multiple relationships featuring domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault. Her past left her deeply traumatised, struggling with anxiety and low mood for many years.

Initially, Kerry received emotional and practical support from one of our Trauma Informed Practitioners. She returned to us to recover from her past experiences and to find a new sense of purpose through trauma-informed therapy.

At the beginning of her therapy journey, Kerry was overwhelmed with anxiety and had been using self-harm as a coping mechanism. Her Safety Net therapist worked to understand the roots of her anxiety and explore healthier coping strategies. This process allowed Kerry to regain a sense of control and consider different choices for managing her anxiety.

As sessions progressed, we focused on her feelings about past traumas and her sense of being stuck. Kerry had a young child currently living with a family member, and she expressed a desire to be more present in her son's life. Building her confidence and recognising her worth became central to our work.

Towards the end of her therapy, Kerry had stopped self-harming and started a new job. Her self-confidence and self-care behaviours improved, and this allowed her to demonstrate her capabilities to her family, enabling her to spend more time with her son.

By the end of her counselling, Kerry was navigating challenges that once seemed insurmountable. She was communicating better with her family, having her son stay over more frequently, and pursuing passions with newfound confidence.

Kerry described her counselling journey as difficult but essential. She fed back to our team that she felt heard and supported throughout. By the end of her therapy journey, Kerry's outcome measures reflected significant improvements in health, wellbeing, safety and lifestyle, mirroring the positive feedback she provided to Safety Net.

Goal 4:

To develop and embed our prevention and early intervention work with young people

We're now working in nine schools across the country through a 'whole school' approach that supports pupils, teachers and where required, parents.

As a result of this, 227 children and young people were referred for 1:1 support with our trauma informed practitioners.

1165 children and young people attended peer group education sessions in school, on topics such as emotional regulation, healthy relationships, toxic masculinity, online safety and the impact of pornography.

209 teachers and staff received training on relationship and sex education issues related to our work. In addition to this, 61 professionals were provided with support, information and advice.

We've also worked hard to increase our information resources for young people. We have developed a new TikTok channel with short form videos from our trauma informed practitioners outlining how to self-care. This has received almost 10,000 views in four months. Additionally we've created new leaflets to advertise Your Space across our schools.

"Through the peer to peer group in my school, I learned that porn can be addictive and change the way people have sex in real life."

– schools service user

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE OUTCOMES

The children and young people that we supported last year had improved primary trauma and wellbeing outcomes This shows the difference we are making to their lives:

IMPROVEMENT IN WELLBEING / SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

78% SHOWED **BETTER HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCORES** (77% IN 2022-23).

89% REPORTED **IMPROVEMENT IN SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA** (80% IN 2022-23).

REDUCTION IN RISK & RISK-TAKING BEHAVIOURS

91% REPORTED AN IMPROVEMENT, OR NO CHANGE, IN THEIR PERSONAL SAFETY (92% IN 2022-23).

87% HAD IMPROVED AWARENESS, OR NO CHANGE, AROUND ONLINE SAFETY (95% IN 2022-23).

IMPROVED EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE

85% REPORTED IMPROVEMENTS IN HOW THEY WERE COPING AND THEIR SELF-CARE(75% IN 2022-23).

69% REPORTED AN IMPROVEMENT WITHIN THEIR FAMILY LIFE AND CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS AROUND THEM (76% IN 2022-23).

73% REPORTED AN IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR ABILITY TO SOCIALISE WITH THEIR FRIENDS (79% IN 2022- 23).

63% INDICATED AN IMPROVEMENT IN THEIR SCHOOL LIFE, 24% REPORTED NO CHANGE. (83% IN 2022-23).

For a full breakdown of data, contact Safety Net.

Hannah*, children and young people’s therapy (Tier 3)

Hannah faced significant challenges at school. Her mother struggled with addiction and as a child she had witnessed domestic abuse between her parents. A student had abused her, and the trauma from this and her tumultuous childhood had resulted in self harming behaviours which caused her teachers to be concerned.

As a result, when Hannah was referred to Safety Net by her school, she was overwhelmed with suicidal thoughts and used self-harm to cope and regain a sense of control. She was very withdrawn when she first attended her support sessions with her Safety Net therapist, and it took her a long time to trust and open up.

Initially the sessions focused on her complex relationship with her parents and her feelings of self-worth. With her consent, our therapist maintained regular contact with her school’s pastoral support via email, phone, and text, ensuring a supportive environment. Our therapist also explored healthier coping mechanisms, addressing Hannah’s anxiety and fear of losing control. Over time, she began to feel better about herself.

Creativity became a new outlet for her emotions. She started drawing and listening to music, finding these activities helped her to cope. She also started attending social events and wearing t-shirts that showed her arms. Previously, she had felt too uncomfortable about her self-harm scars to do this.

When she left the service, Hannah expressed that as a result of the service she received, she was able to trust her therapist and let her in, and that the support she’d received had enabled her to grow as a person.

This case highlights the transformative power of trauma-informed therapy, demonstrating how trust, support, and creative expression can foster true healing and recovery.

Goal 5:

To embed a culture of continuous improvement and service development informed by service user experiences:

Our staff team is very important to us – without them, Safety Net could not do its important work. So, to prevent stress and burnout, last year we invested in staff wellbeing and other support for staff and volunteers. This included:

- Clinical supervision.
- Refreshed staff charter.
- Nine new professional development groups to support professional growth and skill sharing.
- Developing 14 staff champions who cover our core practice areas, these will be responsible for keeping up with the latest practice developments for these areas, and sharing learning in these issues with the wider team.
- A staff away day at a Forest School and Mindfulness Retreat, which promoted self-awareness and reflective practice. This development day was informed by our trauma informed working principles.
- Improved support for case and line management across our workforce.
- A single cost of living payment for each Safety Net employee.
- Comprehensive training and development - a total of 17 in-house and external training and conference opportunities across the course of the year.

"The two professionals that I have been speaking to for the last nine months, have been a fantastic help to my recovery. I honestly don't think I'd have got this far without Safety Net."

– adult service user

Goal 6:

To be recognised as a centre of excellence for trauma-informed work in Cumbria

In 2023 – 2024 we worked with The Birchall Trust and other partners to establish the steering group for our Trauma Informed Cumbria partnership. Our work with Trauma Informed Cumbria included implementing the first stages of trauma informed awareness training for agencies across the county. In November, we again worked with The Birchall Trust to produce Trauma Informed Cumbria's Annual Conference to over 200 professionals from across Cumbria.

11. Our Goals for the Future

Goal 1:

Effective governance and long-term sustainability

- Increase community fundraising and traded income to 5 - 10% of total income over the next three years, and 20 - 25% income over the longer term. We will achieve this by selling training, events and community fundraising. We are exploring the possibility of a business manager and a separate lead for training to drive this forward.
- Recruit a new treasurer and other trustees from a health background.
- Finalise our organisational empowerment plan, supported by Lloyds Foundation.
- Move our HQ to a greener and more sustainable building in Carlisle, with more outdoor space, and continue to use outreach buildings across the county to access more local people. We also intend to open a second main office in West Cumbria from June 2024.
- Upgrade to the new version of the case management system and streamline our referral process through embedding our case management system in our website.

Goal 2:

To challenge inequality and justice, and campaign to influence strategy and policy - both locally and nationally:

- Keep up-to-date with national best practice, and contribute to national and local policy and strategy.
- Continue to embed Safety Net staff champions to advocate for social justice in their special champion role.
- Link in with young people through our prevention project, and encourage them to support us to develop user generated content for our TikTok, with the aim of influencing Gen Z audiences across our county.

Goal 3:

To work collaboratively to deliver trauma-informed, needs-led and accessible services.

- Raise the profile of our services among minoritised communities, with a particular focus on older women. This includes building on our partnership work with Age UK Carlisle and Eden.

- Develop our housing projects: one supporting refugees and people seeking asylum in dispersed housing across the county, and one supporting people living in short-term accommodation.

- Continue to develop and expand our Tier 1 work. This includes sessions for service users to support with practical issues, and skills-based courses to encourage coping skills and improve health and wellbeing. We will also provide surgery slots for professionals who need advice and support.

- Create more volunteer and peer-led group work and befriending. This includes building a larger pool of trained befrienders with lived experience of abuse.

- Continue to develop short form video content featuring bite sized information on trauma and managing self care. This will enable us to share our support to more people through our social media and website.

- Support the development of the men's group through increased resources, identifying what is working well and sharing this learning with the wider team.

- Attract further funding to develop our Family Court Support and McKenzie Friend service, which has received a lot of positive feedback from service users.

- Develop our working relationship with the University of Cumbria, to provide placements for social worker and therapist students and to deliver sessions within their training.

Goal 4:

To develop and expand our prevention and early intervention work with young people:

- Articulate our schools service offer including training and development, and seek interest from other schools across Cumbria.

- Attract funding to deliver specialist training on harmful sexual behaviour between young people.

Goal 5:

To embed a culture of continuous improvement and service development informed by service user experiences:

- Embed trauma informed principles and any learning acquired from the One Small Thing accreditation process we've undertaken.

- Ensure that we do more to include the voices of service users in shaping our services. This includes developing a task and finish group to review how we implement feedback from service users, creating a service user reference group to inform service provision, and supporting our men's group to develop and influence services.

- Develop and expand our pool of volunteers with lived experience, to shape service delivery.

- Work collaboratively with staff, volunteers and ambassadors to develop further training opportunities around trauma and recovery work.

- Embed a culture of development and continue to prioritise staff wellbeing, to retain staff and support internal talent acquisition.

Goal 6:

To be recognised as a centre of excellence for trauma informed work in Cumbria.

- Work in partnership with The Birchall Trust to deliver and expand Trauma Informed Cumbria, including the 2024 Trauma Informed Cumbria conference.

- Achieve One Small Thing's silver trauma-informed quality assurance mark over the next year and achieve the gold quality assurance mark over the next two to three years.

- Attract funding to develop specialist trauma informed training and support around child to parent abuse, as we have identified a need in this area.

"The support I have received thus far has been incredible and I can honestly say that my therapist has totally changed my outlook on my healing journey. Support from the office and other staff has also been very good, I've never felt alone or unheard at any point - I have been treated like a person and not just a number."

– adult service user

12. Get Involved

Get involved in our work and help support victims of abuse in Cumbria:

Fundraise for us :
Each year, we are humbled and amazed by the creativity of our supporters, and the activities they undertake to raise funds for us. We can help with any fundraising challenge you have in mind, from running the Great North Run to a wing walk on a plane. Access our Fundraising Pack from our website to find out more.

Become a donor
Do you work for a funding body or are you a philanthropist with an interest in supporting social causes? We are always pleased to work in partnership with major donors, with the aim of making a real and lasting difference to people's lives. There are many areas of our service that we are hoping to grow in the future, including increased support for young people – with your help we could do this.

Volunteer for us
Taking action against domestic and sexual violence is a growing concern. By lending your energy to volunteering with Safety Net, you're challenging a culture where abuse and violence is the norm.

We have a number of opportunities in this area, including befrienders to support service users, and ambassadors to spread the word about our work.

Become a corporate partner
Do you work for a business that is looking to support a local charity? We have lots of things you can support us with, from volunteering to fundraising in your workplace, with bake sales and dress down days.

Spread the word for Safety Net
Only 1 in 5 people in Cumbria know about Safety Net. Help us spread the word far and wide by becoming an ambassador, giving talks at community groups about our work, following our social media and sharing our content.

Get in touch today and help us support more people in Cumbria:

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13. Thanks

Thank you to our staff, funders, partners and volunteers for the support we have received in 2023-2024. We could not have run Safety Net without your help.

The Henry Smith Charity founded in 1628
Lloyds Bank Foundation England & Wales
Copeland Community Fund
Francis Scott Trust
Garfield Weston Foundation
Family Wellbeing Transforming West Cumbria
Cumbria Community Foundation
Community Fund
Supported by BBC Children in Need
PCC Cumbria Peter McCall
Ministry of Justice
NHS North East & North Cumbria
The Leathersellers
Masonic Charitable Foundation
Cumberland Council
The Edward Gostling Foundation Enhancing Quality of Life for People in Need

We would also like to say a very big thank you to our service users. To recover from the trauma of abuse takes huge bravery. Thank you for trusting us and for working so hard to transform your lives.

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